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# I

## THE GREEK ALPHABET

1. The Greek alphabet consists of twenty-four letters. The pronunciation of these letters, briefly indicated in the right-hand column below, will be treated in detail in Lesson 2.

		FORM		NAME	PRONUNCIATION
CAPITALS	SMALL				
A a	Α α	Α	α	άλφα alpha	<i>a</i> in <i>father</i>
B b	Β β	Β	β	βῆτα bēta	<i>b</i> in <i>baboon</i>
G g	Γ γ	Γ	γ	γάμμα gamma	<i>g</i> in <i>gag</i>
D d	Δ δ	Δ	δ	δέλτα delta	<i>d</i> in <i>dawdle</i>
E e	Ε ε	Ε	ε	ἒ ψιλόν epsilon	<i>e</i> in <i>egg</i>
Z z	Ζ ζ	Ζ	ζ	ζῆτα zēta	<i>z</i> in <i>zoo</i>
Ē ē	Η η	Η	η	ῆτα ēta	<i>a</i> in <i>gate</i>
Th th	Θ θ	Θ	θ	θῆτα thēta	<i>th</i> in <i>thug</i>
I i	Ι ι	Ι	ι	ἰῶτα iōta	<i>i</i> in <i>picnic</i>
K k	Κ κ	Κ	κ	κάππα kappa	<i>k</i> in <i>kumquat</i>
L l	Λ λ	Λ	λ	λάμβδα lambda	<i>l</i> in <i>lump</i>
M m	Μ μ	Μ	μ	μῦ mu	<i>m</i> in <i>mud</i>
N n	Ν ν	Ν	ν	νῦ nu	<i>n</i> in <i>nonsense</i>
X x	Ξ ξ	Ξ	ξ	ξῖ xi	<i>x</i> in <i>vex</i>
O o	Ο ο	Ο	ο	ὀ μικρόν omicron	<i>ough</i> in <i>ought</i>
P p	Π π	Π	π	πῖ pi	<i>p</i> in <i>pepper</i>
R r	Ρ ρ	Ρ	ρ	ῥῶ rhō	<i>r</i> in <i>rarity</i>
S s	Σ σ, ς	Σ	σ, ς	σίγμα sigma	<i>s</i> in <i>success</i>
T t	Τ τ	Τ	τ	ταῦ tau	<i>t</i> in <i>tight</i>
U, y, v	Υ υ	Υ	υ	ὕ ψιλόν upsilon	German <i>ü</i> , French <i>u</i>
Ph ph	Φ φ	Φ	φ	φῖ phi	<i>ph</i> in <i>phosphorus</i>
Ch ch	Χ χ	Χ	χ	χῖ chi	German <i>ch</i> in <i>ach, ich</i>
Ps ps	Ψ ψ	Ψ	ψ	ψῖ psi	<i>ps</i> in <i>tipsy</i>
Ō ō	Ω ω	Ω	ω	ὦ μέγα omega	<i>o</i> in <i>oaf</i>

## ODYSSEY STUDY QUESTIONS<sup>1</sup>

### Books 1-6

1. Identify the following characters. What family relationships (e.g., "husband and wife") and political relationships (e.g., "king and subjects" or "allies in war") exist among these characters? Antinoös, Athene, Kalypso, Eurymachos, Helen, Hermes, Menelaos, Nausikaa, Odysseus, Orestes, Penelope, Poseidon, Proteus, Telemachos, and Zeus.
2. What characters in question 1 are gods? How are the gods different from humans in the *Odyssey*?
3. Look up the word '**epithet**' in a good English dictionary. What kinds of epithets are applied to characters in book 1?
4. Look up the word '**theodicy**'. At what points do people blame the gods for their problems? How does the *Odyssey* answer these charges? What are the similarities between this beginning and the beginning of Job? What are the differences between the explanations of the causes of suffering in Job and the *Odyssey*?

### Books 7-12

5. Arrange the events of books 1-24 in chronological order, moving from the fall of Troy to Odysseus' homecoming.
6. Identify Achilles, Aeolus, Agamemnon, Circê, Lotus Eaters, Persephone, Polyphemus, Teiresias, Scylla & Charybdis, Sirens.

### Books 13-24

7. What is the significance of the contest with the great bow?
8. Identify Eurycleia, Laertes, Mentor, Penelope's web.
9. Referring to the theodicy question above, describe the similarities and differences between the ending of the *Odyssey* and the ending of Job.
10. How does Odysseus prove his identity to Penelope? To Eurycleia? Laertes?
11. Look up the phrase **deus ex machina**. What does it mean? Where do you find an example of this literary device?

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<sup>1</sup>These questions are taken or adapted from Fisher 120-124.

INTRODUCTION TO  
*THE ILLIAD AND THE ODYSSEY*

**Date.** These epics are the oldest surviving works of Western literature. They were composed in the 8th century B.C. (750 for the *Iliad*, 720 for the *Odyssey*). They took their present form when Greeks learned to write using the N. Phoenician alphabet. Before that, the Greeks communicated it by oral tradition before that. The Greeks modified N. Phoenician alphabet. related to Heb. alphabet.

550-520. Peisistratus, dictator of Athens, had the official text determined.

**Author.** Homer. We have little reliable information about him other than that he was blind and may have been from island of Chios. He probably made money singing at festivals. Milman Perry in the 1920s speculated that Homer composed orally. He would not have memorized the epics word for word, but would have generated the story at short notice. It was therefore different every time Homer sang it. Perry got a Turkish singer to sing about 10,000 lines by lavishly praising him.

Homer used traditional material. A scribe probably wrote while Homer dictated, letting him plan as he waited for the scribe to catch up.

**Religion & Myth.** The Greeks worshipped two types of gods: Olympian and Chthonic. The twelve Olympian gods were Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Apollo, Artemis, Ares, Aphrodite, Hermes, Athena, Hephaestus, Hestia (Guthrie 111).

**Children of Kronos & Rhea**

1. **Zeus** was the head god, the god of thunder & lightning. He drew lots with Hades & Poseidon, his brothers, to choose territory. He got heaven & the universe; Poseidon got the sea; and Hades got underworld. They shared dominion over Mt. Olympus and the surface of the world.
2. **Hera** was Zeus' sister & wife. She was very jealous of Zeus's affairs. As his wife, she reigned as the queen of heaven. Hera was the patron of marriage.
3. **Poseidon.** God of the sea.
4. **Demeter.** Zeus' sister. Mother of Persephone. Goddess of agriculture.
5. **Hestia.** Zeus' sister. Goddess of family life & city hearth.

**Children of Zeus & Hera.**

6. **Athena.** The goddess of wisdom & crafts, both women's crafts (sewing) & men's (tool use, war strategy). She was born from Zeus' head after he swallowed Metis (mind). He swallowed Metis after learning of a prophecy that if she had a son, he would displace Zeus (Hesiod

143-147).

7. **Hephaestus** (= Vulcan) was born from Hera alone. He was the god of fire & metallurgy. He was also lame. He made thunderbolts for Zeus, and arms for gods & heroes. He Forged under Mt. Olympus & Mt. Etna, and the Cyclopes worked for him.
8. **Ares** (= Mars). son of Zeus & Hera. god of war. His war frenzy contrasts with Athena's rational approach to war.

#### Children of Zeus & Leto

9. **Apollo**. God of prophecy, purification, healing, sunlight, music
10. **Artemis**. Sister of Apollo. Goddess of moonlight, hunting, animals. Originally a fertility goddess, she became a virgin goddess in Greece but remained a fertility goddess in Ephesus.

**Son of Zeus & Maia** (daughter to Atlas, she was one of the stars in the Pleiades constellation (Hesiod 67, 149, 363)

11. **Hermes** (= Mercury). Messenger of the gods. Wings on head & feet. Patron of speed & wits, not strength (Guthrie 91). Currently delivers flowers for FTD.
12. **Aphrodite** (= Venus). Goddess of love & beauty. Married to Hephaestus, had affair w/ Ares. Led Paris to take Helen (Hesiod p. 491). Only Artemis, Athena, & Hestia are immune to her (Hesiod xxxviii). Cronus castrated Uranus (heaven) while Uranus was mating with Gaia (earth). Cronus threw down Uranus' testicles; some of which landed in sea, causing foam. Aphrodite emerged from the foam. Predated other Olympic gods. However, in some versions of the myth, she is daughter of Zeus (Odyssey 8. 305).

**Unity.** Most now think one person composed most of Iliad & one person composed Odyssey. We do not know if it was the same author who wrote both. If so, there was probably a 30-year gap between Iliad & Odyssey.

**Length.** *Iliad* 12,000 lines. *Odyssey* 15,000 lines. The division into 24 books was done later, perhaps at Alexandria.

**Genre.** Epic poem. A long, nationalistic poem in dactylic hexameter. A hexameter has six metrical feet. Dactylic hexameter consists of six dactyls or spondees. A dactyl is a long syllable followed by two short syllables. A spondee is two long syllables. An epic helps form the identity of a people.

**Scene.** The *Iliad* focuses on an event toward the end of the 10 year Trojan war, but works in references to past & future. Trojan War. Paris Alexandros sparked the war when he took Helen, who was the wife of his host, Menelaos. Menelaos' brother, Agamemnon, led the Greek coalition against Troy. The *Odyssey* picks up 10 years later, when Odysseus is about to return home; it then gives a flashback to the events of the ten-year trip.

The Trojan Cycle was a series of epic poems that covered the other events in the Trojan War.

1. *Cyprian Lays* by Stasinus of Cyprus or Hegesinus of Salamis. It related the first causes of the war. Zeus wanted to relieve overburdened earth, and Eris threw the apple of discord, leading abduction of Helen. Goes through the quarrel of Achilles & Agamemnon.
2. *Iliad*. The quarrel of Achilles & Agamemnon through the death of Hector.
3. *Aethiopis* by Arctinus of Miletus (776 B.C.). The Amazon Penthesilea comes after Hector's death to help Trojans. Ethiopian Memnon falls. Paris's arrow kills Achilles. Odysseus & Aias fight for Achilles weapons.
4. *Little Iliad* by Lesches (660 B.C.). Elaborates the *Sack*. Odysseus gets Achilles arms. Aias' (Ajax's) madness. Making wooden horse.
5. *Sack of Troy* by Arctinus. The wooden horse, Achaeans return from Tencos, sack Troy, divide spoils, burn city.
6. *Returns* by Agias or Hegias of Troezen. Dispute between Agamemnon & Menelaus, Menelaus' departure from Troy. Death of Agamemnon. Orestes' vengeance on Aegisthus. Menelaus' arrival back home.
7. *Odyssey* by Homer. The return of Odysseus to his home after the Trojan war. 1st travel-adventure story.
8. *Telegony* by Eugammon of Cyrene (568 B.C.) Odysseus adventures in Thesprotis after killing Suitors then returns to Ithaca. Killed by Telegonus, his son by Circe. Telemachus marries Circe; Telegonus marries Penelope; they all appear on the *Geraldo* show.

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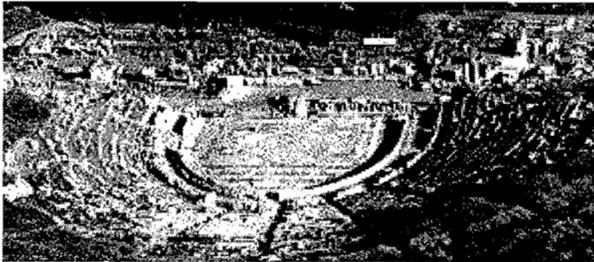


**DIDASKALIA**

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This is where it all began: the Theater of Dionysus in Athens.



According to legend, late in the sixth century BCE a man named Thespis first had the idea to add speaking actors to the performances of choral song and dance which occurred on many occasions throughout Greece. (That's why actors are sometimes called 'thespians'.) Masked actors performed outdoors, in daylight, before audiences of 10,000 or more at festivals in honor of Dionysus, the god of theater.

The comedy and tragedy which developed in Athens and flourished in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE have influenced nearly all subsequent Western drama, starting with that of the Romans. When the Romans conquered Greece they brought Greek literature back to Italy and set about making it their own. The New Comedy of fourth-century poets like Menander and Diphilus was particularly fertile material in the hands of the Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence.

The Romans, with their love of spectacle, soon took over the existing theaters in Greece and began renovating and rebuilding them for their own spectacles, which included everything from pantomime (closer to ballet than to the children's 'panto') to mock-naval battles. The remains of the Theater of Dionysus which we can see in Athens today date to Roman times and not the fifth century BCE.

**Ancient Stagecraft**

Although Didaskalia is primarily concerned with modern performances of ancient theater, successful productions depend on understanding the original performance conditions and dramatic conventions of antiquity. We are therefore expanding our central website to include an introduction to ancient theater in antiquity. These pages are still under construction, but you may find them helpful even so.

[Introduction to Greek Stagecraft](#)

[Introduction to Roman Stagecraft](#)



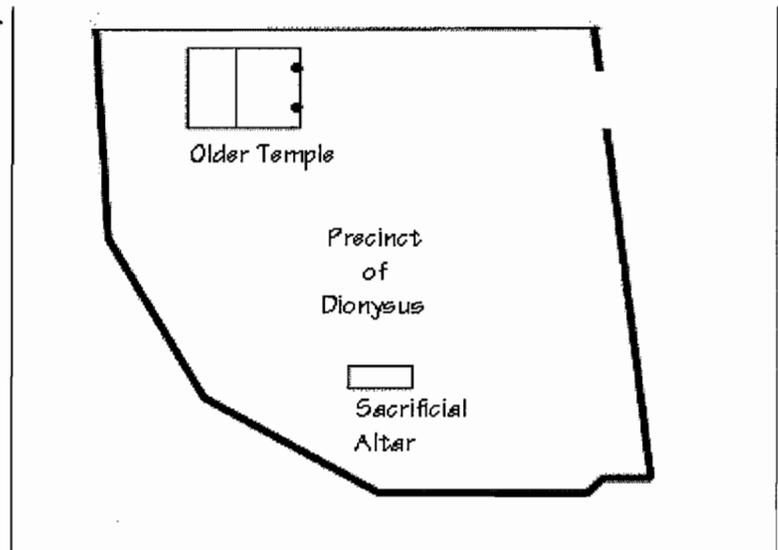
## Introduction to Greek Stagecraft



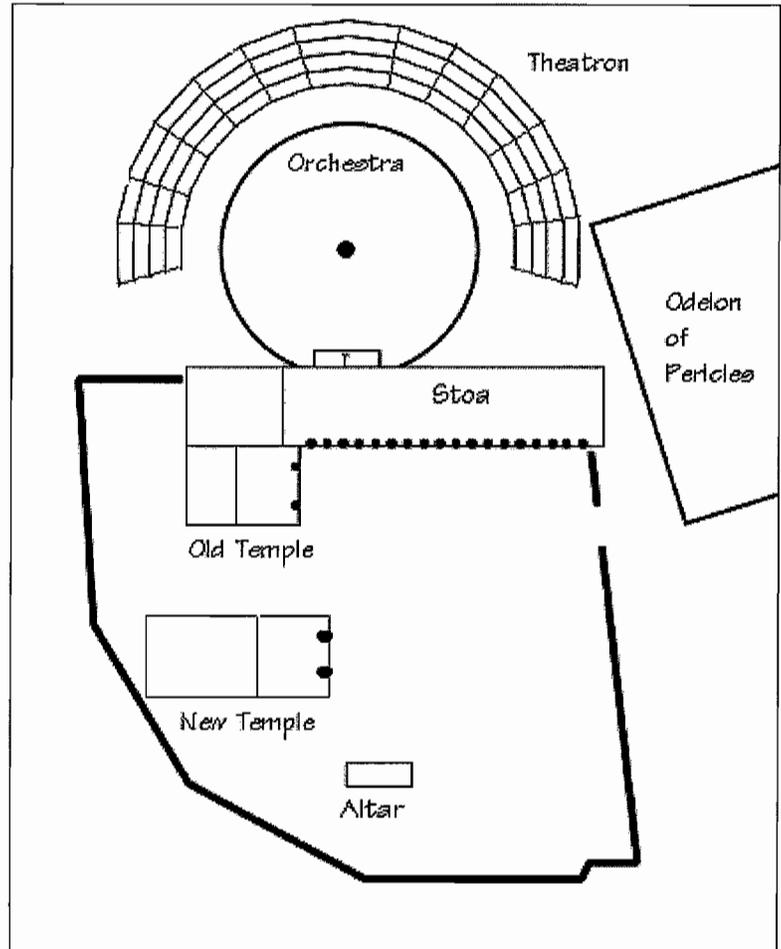
The tragedies and comedies of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE which remain to us today were all written for performance in the Theater of Dionysus at Athens. The TDA was first dug out of the slope beneath the south side of the Acropolis in the late 6th century BCE, possibly while Athens was still under Peisistratid rule. It was rebuilt and expanded many times, and so it is difficult to tell exactly what its original shape was. The illustrations here are reconstructions based on existing evidence and the opinions of the editors.

### The Precinct

The TDA was only one part of the precinct, or *temenos* of Dionysus. Initially the precinct contained only the Older Temple of Dionysus and a sacrificial altar. Later a hall, or *stoa*, was added, incorporating or obliterating the Older Temple, and a second temple built further south. The highest row of seats in the TDA was 125 feet above the lowest part of the precinct, and before the construction of the *stoa* and the *skene* the audience could easily see the temples and the sacrificial altars from the theater. More importantly, from the Athenian point of view, Dionysus himself (represented by his cult statue, which was seated in the front row) could observe not only the choral performances being given in his honor but the sacrifices which were made at his altar.



In the mid-fifth century, after rebuilding the ruins of the Acropolis, Pericles built a recital-hall or *odeion* to the east of the TDA. This building was roughly square in shape with a roof described as pyramidal or conical. The Odeion of Pericles was used for many purposes, one being the *proagon*, a ceremony in which the dramatic poets announced the titles of their plays and introduced their actors. Members of the chorus would wait in the Odeion to make their entrance.

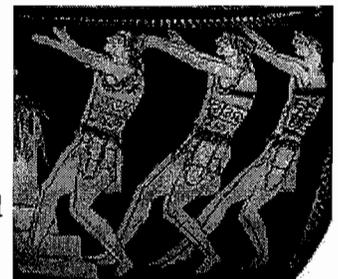


Pericles also introduced the *theoric fund* to subsidize the cost of theater tickets for the poor. The price of a ticket to the Theatre of Dionysus was two obols, as much as a laborer earned in a day.



## The Players

Because Greek tragedy and comedy originated with the chorus, the most important part of the performance space was the *orchestra*, which means 'a place for dancing' (*orchesis*). A tragic chorus consisted of 12 or 15 *choreuts* (dancers), who were young men just about to enter military service after some years of training. (Athenians were taught to sing and dance from a very early age.) The effort of dancing and singing through three tragedies and a satyr play was likened to that of competing in the Olympic Games.



In contrast with the chorus of twelve or fifteen, there were only three actors in fifth-century Athenian

tragedy. The original word for 'actor' was *hypokrites*, meaning 'answerer,' for the actor answered the chorus. Thespis is said to have introduced (and been) the first actor, later called *protagonistes* (literally 'first competitor'). The introduction of a second actor (*deuteragonistes*) is attributed to Aeschylus and the third (*tritagonistes*) to Sophocles. There are no one-actor plays remaining to us, though Aeschylus' earliest play, *Persians*, requires only two actors. 7C

Ordinarily each actor would undertake to play several different roles, and it is possible to divide the speaking parts in a Greek tragedy up by determining which characters were in the same scene. Often the division of roles had some thematic significance relevant to the play. (We know that the audience could tell one actor from another because a prize for the best actor was introduced in 449 BCE.) Very occasionally a single role would be divided between two or more actors, as in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*.

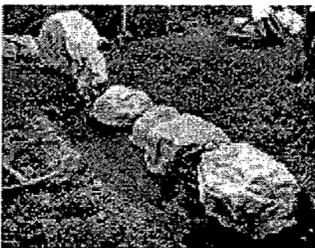
## The Dramatists

The tragic poets of the 5th century BCE, most notably Phrynicus and Aeschylus, not only composed the plays but acted in them, directed them, and choreographed them. Because they were said to have 'taught' (*edidaksen*) the chorus, the inscriptions recording the winners of the dramatic contests were called *didaskaliai*. At first there was only one actor, then two, and finally three, to divide among them the roles of the plays. Like the poets themselves, these actors were men of leisure with a passion for theater. Although a substantial cash prize was offered to the winning playwright, and later to the winning actor, playwrights and actors in the 5th century did not earn their living in the theater.

The Mining Company has produced a series of articles about the Greek tragic poets, all written by N.S. Gill:

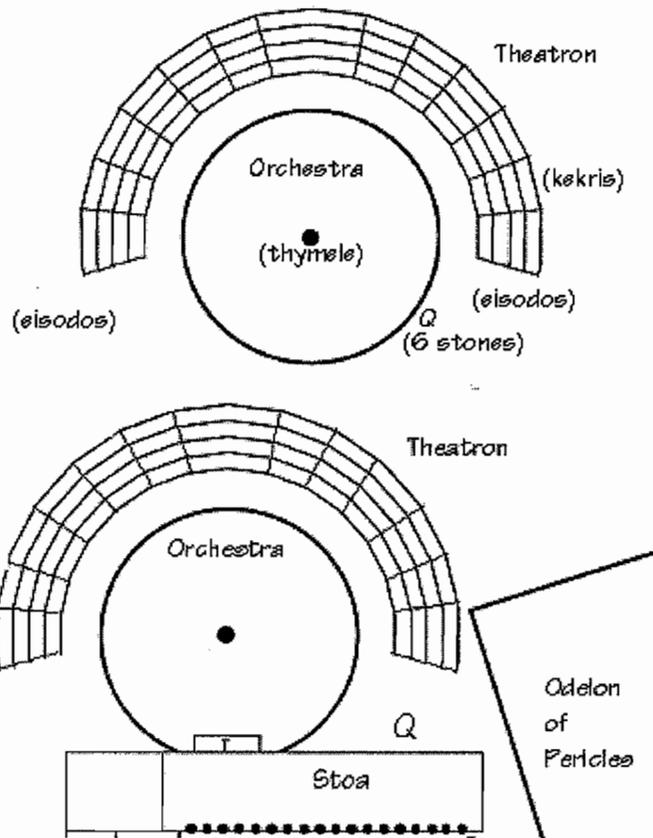
- [Aeschylus](#)
- [Sophocles](#)
- [Euripides](#)

## The Stage



The only remains of this first theater, used by Phrynicus, Aeschylus, and possibly Sophocles, are six of the stones which made up the wall of the *orchestra*. According to the original excavator, Dörpfeld, they once formed part of a circle some 85-88 feet (24-27 meters) in diameter. The stonework is in a rough style known as 'polygonal' which was used in early Greek times. The initial *theatron* may not have required much excavation of the hillside, but it was still necessary to shore up the *orchestra* with retaining walls and to move considerable quantities of earth to make an appropriately level place for the choruses (dithyrambic, tragic, comic, etc) to dance.

There was no stage building until roughly 460 BCE. Aeschylus' *Oresteia* is the earliest extant drama which uses the *skene*, or scene-building. His other four plays (*Persians*, *Seven Against Thebes*, *Suppliants*, *Prometheus Bound*) were meant to be performed in the *orchestra*, with the actors and chorus on the same level. Previous to the invention of the *skene*, entrances could only be made through the two *eisodoi*, or ramps, which led onto the *orchestra*.

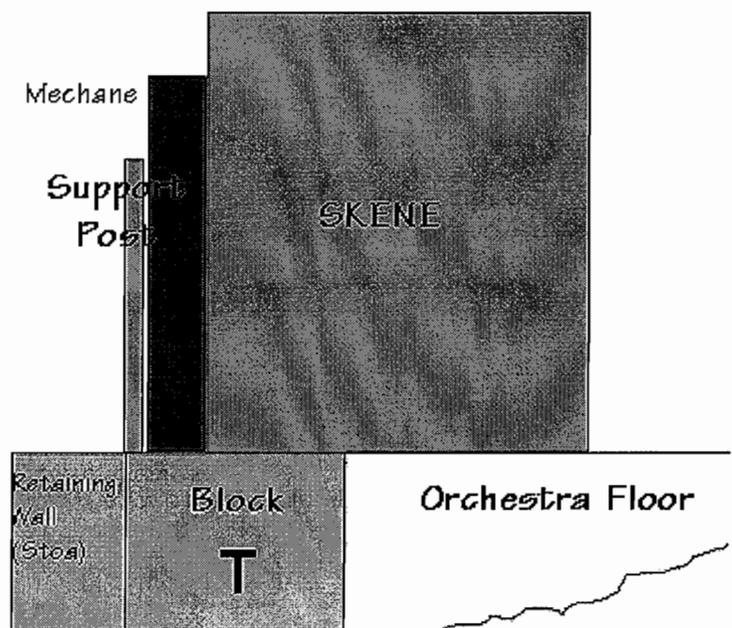


The archaeological evidence suggests that between 460 and 431 BCE (and probably at the time the Odeion was built) the *orchestra* was shifted north and west of its original position, and the hillside excavated further to make a more secure foundation for the wooden seats. (By this point it is likely that the seats were divided into at least ten different wedges, for the ten 'tribes' which made up the citizens of Attica. By the fourth century BCE, and possibly during the fifth, there were 13 of these wedges, called *kekrides* in Greek.) In front of the new terrace wall,

which became the rear wall of the *stoa*, was a projecting rectangle of stone 26 feet long and 23 feet 3 inches wide. The wooden posts which supported the temporary *skene* fit into grooves in the terrace wall.

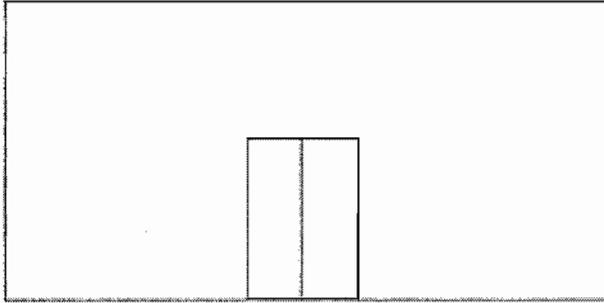
The fifth-century *skene* was not a permanent building, but a temporary construction of wood, placed across the rear of the orchestral circle for the dramatic performances at each year's festival. Nevertheless its invention brought about a massive change in theatrical practice and in the semiotics of space. The interior of this flat-roofed building was the 'backstage' area, but in visual terms it was not so much 'behind' as 'within', an enclosed space which, like a real house, was the dominion of female characters. As a rule, actors could and did step out of the *skene* and join the chorus in the *orchestra*, but the chorus did not enter the *skene*.

Side View of Skene



7E

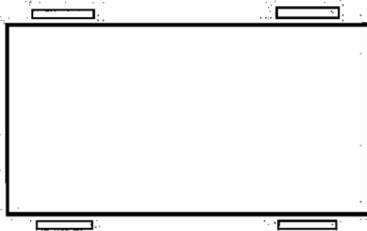
Skene  
Front Elevation



The fifth-century *skene* was a single-storey building with one central door, which could take on the identity of a palace, a temple, a hut, or indeed a cave if necessary. It is probable that some form of perspective painting was used on the front of the building (or on removable flats placed before it) to suggest the type of building required for a particular play, but such properties and scenery as existed were three-dimensional and more symbolic than illusionistic.

## Machinery

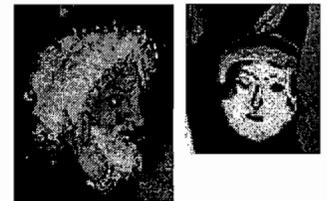
Divinities could appear suddenly on the roof via a trap door. Characters which were specifically stated to be flying (such as Bellerophon on Pegasus) could be swung into the air above the stage space by means of a simple crane, called the *mechane* or *geranos*. The earliest known use of the *mechane* was in the year 431, when Euripides used it at the end of his *Medea*. Because the *mechane* had to support considerable weights (and counterweights) it was probably supported by the projection of stone which extended into the *orchestra* from the terrace wall, and affixed to one of the posts which supported the *skene*.



Interior scenes could be brought outside by means of a low rolling platform called the *ekkyklema* ('thing which rolls out'). Because performances took place in daylight, and because of the angle at which the productions were seen (at a considerable distance, and usually from above the playing area), it was not possible to see the interior of the *skene*. (This is just as well, because the actors needed to change masks, attributes, and possibly costumes inside the *skene*.) The *ekkyklema* was used to display the bodies of those who had been killed indoors and to wheel out characters who were ill. The Old Comedy of Aristophanes frequently made fun of the stage machinery and drew deliberate attention to it, but it was an accepted convention in performances of tragedy.

## Masks

The large size of the theater (in its final form it seated 20,000 people) and the distance of even the nearest spectators from the performers (more than 10 meters) dictated a non-naturalistic approach to acting. All gestures had to be large and definite so as to 'read' from the back rows. Facial expression would have been invisible to all but the closest members of the audience; the masks worn by the actors looked more 'natural' than bare faces in the TDA. The masks of tragedy were of an ordinary, face-fitting size, with wigs attached and open mouths to allow clear speech. Contrary to some later theories, there were no 'megaphones' in the masks, and their decoration and expression was quite subtle, as vase paintings from the 5th and 4th centuries demonstrate.



Theatrical masks were made of wood (like the masks of Japanese Noh drama), leather (like the masks of the *Commedia dell'arte*, or cloth and flour paste (like many of the masks used at the Carnevale of Venice, and many masks made for modern productions today). Various theories are advanced in favor of each material, but no originals remain, only stone carvings which may have been used as mask-molds and the

paintings on pottery.



### Interactive Mask Model

Designed by Animagic for *Didaskalia*, this model will give you a better impression of a Greek tragic mask, inside and out.



Each set of three tragedies was followed by the performance of a satyr play, a short spoof of a myth related to the theme of at least one of the tragedies. The ordinary human characters in these plays wore tragic masks and costumes, but the chorus of half-human satyrs wore pug-nosed, pointy-eared, bearded masks, furry shorts, and normal-sized erect phalluses (probably made of leather.) Satyrs danced a special kind of dance called the *sikinnis*, in which they pranced like horses. The illustration is taken from the Pronomos Vase, which shows the entire cast of a satyr-play.

The masks of Greek Old Comedy were distorted caricatures, sometimes of real people. They were meant to be ugly and silly in keeping with the ludicrous padded costumes worn by comic actors. While tragic actors wore elaborate pattern-woven garments which were similar to the robes of priests and musicians, comic actors wore loose body stockings padded at the breast, buttocks, and stomach, with long floppy phalluses for the male characters. (Except in the case of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, where they were long erect phalluses.) The chorus of Old Comedy was often composed of non-human creatures, such as wasps, frogs, birds, or even clouds. The 24 choreuts of Old Comedy were adult men, as were the three speaking actors.

Greek New Comedy, which was first performed in the 4th century BCE, was in many ways more similar to Euripidean tragedy than to Greek Old Comedy. The masks were fairly naturalistic, the costumes devoid of padding. The plots went from the fantastical to the domestic. The TDA had been rebuilt in stone by the time Menander began producing New Comedies. The *skene* was more elaborate than before, and now had two or three doors instead of just one. The chorus was divorced from the action of the play and no longer the concern of the playwright at all.

During the Hellenistic era the TDA was again rebuilt, with a *skene* several storeys high. Actors formed a professional union called the Artists of Dionysus, and were used as diplomatic couriers. By this time theaters had been built in many parts of Greece, including Epidaurus/Epidavros. After their conquest of Greece in the late second century BCE, the Romans also built or redesigned theaters and other performance spaces in Greece. Many of the theaters which you can see in Greece today are actually Roman.



### 3D Reconstruction of the Theater of Dionysus in Athens

At present the reconstructions show the latest (Hadrianic) phase of the Theater of Dionysus, not the space as it was used in the Fifth Century.

# Theater of Dionysus Athens: Roman Period

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View of the Theater of Dionysus from the back of the *theatron*



[TDA index page](#)



[Greek Stagecraft](#)



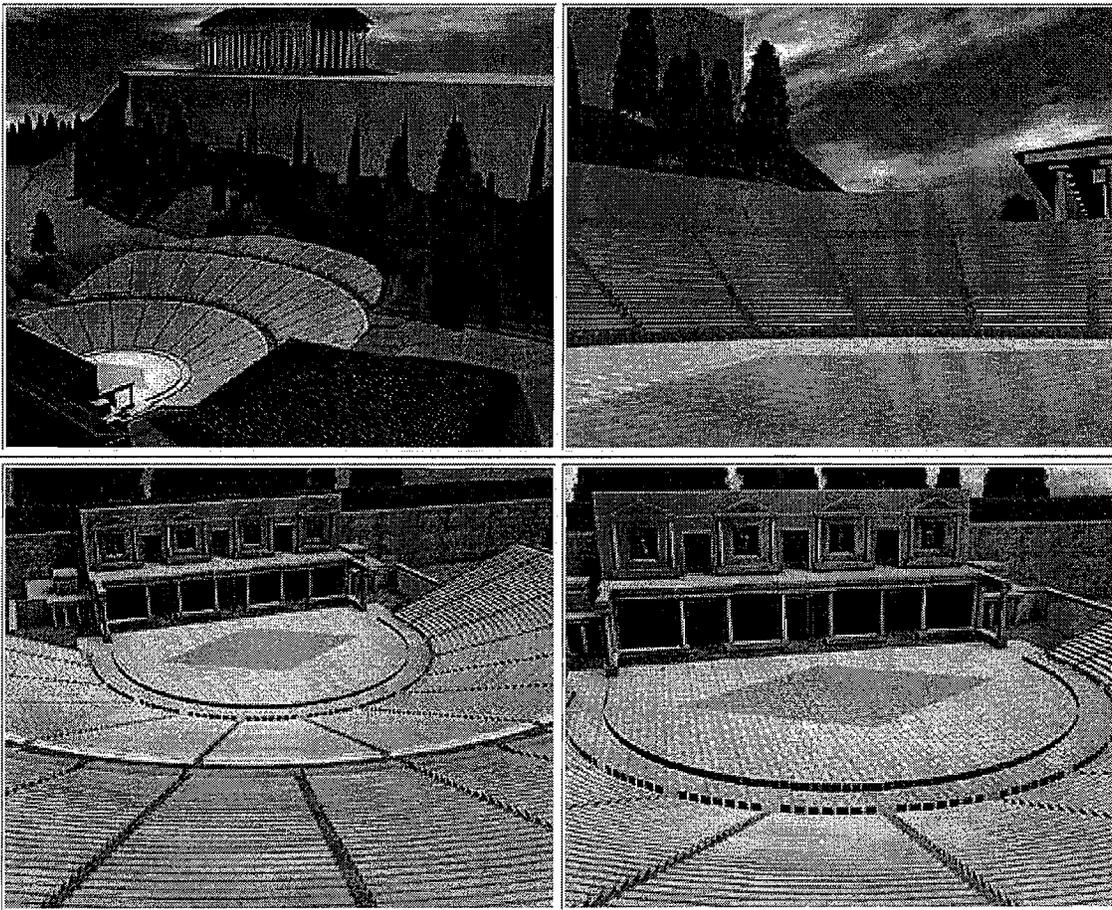
[Introduction to Ancient Theater](#)

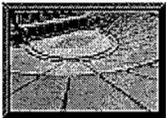
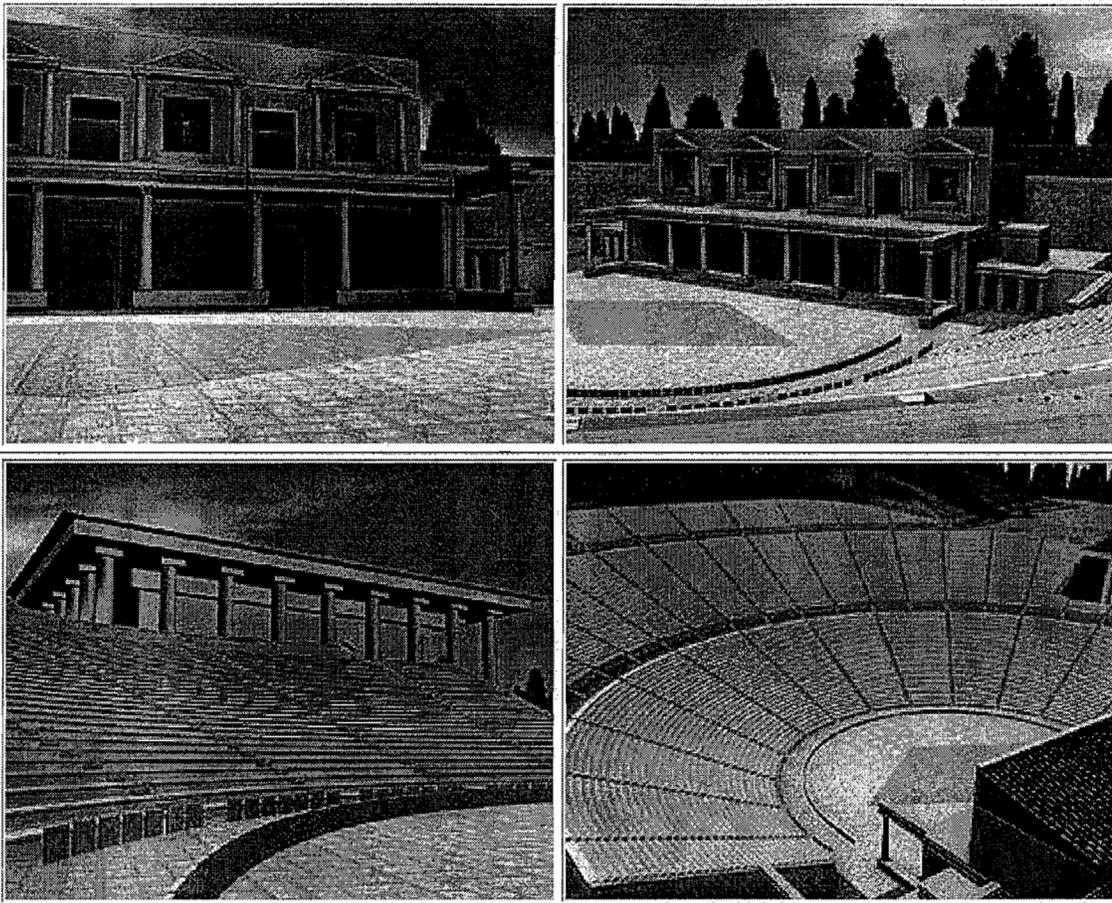
# Recreating The Theater of Dionysus in Athens <sup>TH</sup>

## Entrance to the Roman TDA

The restrictions created by our source material convinced us that we needed to begin from the latest phase and work backwards in time. Therefore the images on this page and those following represent the Theatre of Dionysus as remodeled by the Romans during and after the reign of the emperor Nero (54-68 CE).

**Click on any of the images to see a higher resolution version**





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## Introduction to Roman Stagecraft

The Stagecraft pages are works in progress; more detail and further illustrations will be added over the course of time. Please contact [the editors](#) of *Didaskalia* with comments or suggestions.

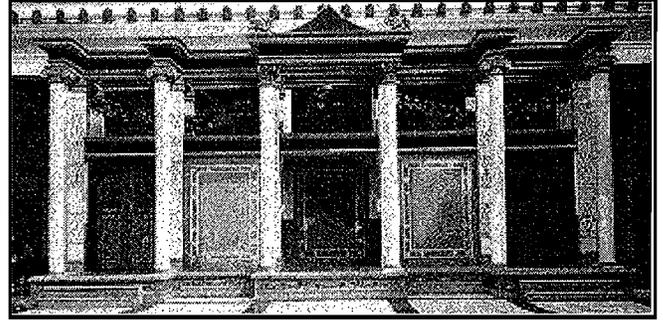
Roman drama has several origins, some native to Italy, some imported. One of the most important influences on Roman Comedy (called the *fabula palliata* in Latin, after the 'Greek' cloak or *pallium* worn by the actors) was the Atellan Farce, a non-scripted theatrical form which made use of stock masks (characters) and slapstick gags. (It was very similar to the *commedia dell'arte* of the Italian Renaissance, and not unlike improv theater today.)

These slapstick characters and pratfalls were welded onto the tradition of Greek New Comedy, which was imported into Rome after its conquest of Greece. New Comedy is the ancestor of sitcoms, with plots focusing on domestic issues, usually involving boy-meets-girl-parents-forbid-marriage and the intervention of a clever slave to save the day. The Greek versions were fairly genteel, but Plautus and the other early Roman comic playwrights added lively action, ferocious puns (in Latin and Greek), rude jokes, and lots and lots of physical comedy.

The actors of Roman comedy were all men, and about five of them shared out all the different roles in the play. The costumes were fairly simple, consisting of a tunic and a *pallium* (square cloak), which was long for female characters and short for male characters. The actors also wore masks, which were wildly distorted stereotypes, not very realistic, but funny.

These plays were performed at religious festivals sponsored by junior officials in the Roman government. The audience was clearly rowdy, and drama competed for audience attention with tightrope walkers, jugglers, and gladiatorial combats.

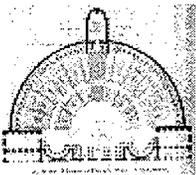
Permanent stone theaters were forbidden by the uptight Roman government, so the plays of Plautus and Terence were performed on temporary wooden stages like this one, used for performances at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, CA, October 1994. The design is based on theatrical wall paintings from Rome, Pompeii, and Oplontis, a good discussion of which can be found in Beacham, R.C., *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*, Harvard University Press (Routledge in the UK), 1991. Click the image to see a more complete illustration.



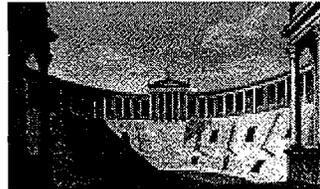
The Romans also produced tragedies, and these were more straightforward translations and adaptations of the Greek plays of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. Costumes, masks, and language were all rather inflated. Although tragedy was very popular in Rome in the heyday of the Republic, we have only fragments of Roman tragedy remaining, except for the works of Seneca, which date to between 40 and 60 CE (AD). Whether Seneca's tragedies were ever performed is a matter of considerable debate. We're also short on details of the stagecraft of tragedy, which was presumably presented at the same sorts of festivals as comedy was. It is possible that the Romans adhered to the Greek rule of 3 actors taking all the parts. Seneca violates the Greek tradition of having violence take place offstage.

The Romans also wrote historical plays and comedies set in Rome. (The comedies of Plautus, Terence, and their contemporaries were set in Greece, though the characters displayed a lot of Roman characteristics.) These seem to have died out with the Republic.

The first permanent stone theater in Rome was built by Pompey in 53 BCE. He was only allowed to build his theater by disguising it as a temple to Venus. Others soon imitated him, including the new emperor Augustus, who built the Theater of Marcellus in honor of his nephew.

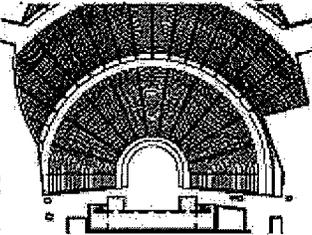


Theater of Pompey, plan.



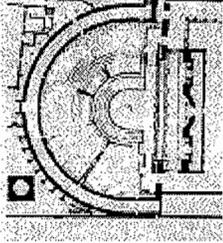
Theater of Pompey, reconstruction.

The Romans remodeled many existing Greek theaters, including the Theater of Dionysus in Athens, and the theaters at Pompeii. They fused the *skene* (*scaena* in Latin) with the *theatron* (*cavea* in Latin) and reshaped the *orchestra* into a semicircle. In some cases they built in trapdoors, underground passages, and facilities for flooding the *orchestra* in order to stage aquatic games and sea battles.



Plan of the Theater of Dionysus in Roman times.

7L



Plan of the Romanized theater at Pompeii.



### 3D Reconstruction of the Theater of Dionysus in Athens during the Roman Period

During later imperial times the Romans built many enormous stone theaters all over Europe, North Africa, and the Near East, like this one at Sabratha. Very little drama per se was performed in these theaters, which instead hosted mimes and pantomimes. Mimes were acrobatic and bawdy, and women acted in them; pantomime was an art much like ballet, and pantomime dancers became the rock stars of the ancient world.



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Richard Beacham on the Getty *Casina*  
Leslie Cahoon on Plautus in the Provinces.  
Anne H. Groton 'Rhyme, Women, and Song'  
Kenneth Hamma on the Getty *Casina*  
Judith Maitland's *Casina* in Western Australia  
William Slater, 'Pantomimes', *Didaskalia* 1.2.

## INTRODUCTION TO TRAGEDY

Tragedy was a phenomenon of Athens, Greece, in the fifth century B.C.

490 B.C. Persia was defeated at Marathon. This began golden era of democracy & building, as well as flowering of tragedy

404 B.C. Athens surrendered to Sparta, ending the era (McCall 12).

At Dionysian festival, Athens would have competition for best tragedies.. "In nearly every instance the centre of these festivals lay in extravagant sexual licentiousness, the waves of which overwhelmed all family life and its venerable traditions; the very wildest beasts of nature were let loose here, including that detestable mixture of lust and cruelty which has always seemed to me the genuine 'witches' draught'" (Nietzsche, Birth 30).

Tragedy grew out of songs sung @ Dionysian festival. Started having people act out the songs. Remained musical in form--Words sung rather than spoken.

The Dithyramb was the type of lyric used in Tragedy.

"Gr. Antiq. A Greek choric hymn, originally in honour of Dionysus or Bacchus, vehement and wild in character; a Bacchanalian song" (Oxford English Dictionary) .

Sung with flutes. Songs about Dionysus & other myths. Tragedy put characters in it.

Rules of tragedy. (McCall 14-15)

1. Length. 1,100-1,700 lines. Took less than 2 hours. Thus few characters, focus on one crisis.
2. Chorus present.
  - a. Sings about the action
  - b. Plays some part in the play--a suitable general role. Not an impersonal group.
  - c. Provides continuity. Present from beginning to end. Everything happens against the backdrop of the chorus.
3. Characters not as personal as in Shakespeare (Hamlet vs Orestes). Aristotle--tragedy is universal. They want to show what can happen to anybody. Focus on human destiny. Mask emphasized this. Focus is on what characters do, not who they are, on destinies, not personalities.

According to Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Apollo and Dionysus were the two deities of art in Greece. Apollo was the patron of plastic arts (sculpture, etc., and Dionysus of music. Apollo established the principium individuationis (the principle of individuation); Dionysus dissolved that principle in his ecstasies, resulting in a primordial unity. Apollo gave intuition (*Anschauung*) through dreams; Dionysus gave ecstasy (*Entzückung*) through drunkenness (*Geburt* 25-26, 28-29, 84, 103-104). Later tragedy, under the influence of Socrates and Euripides, replaced Apollonian intuition with thought and Dionysian ecstasy with passion (83-84).

Tragedy combines the Dionysian music with the Apollonian visual. The Dionysian group with the Apollonian individual.

The noble man does not sin, . . . through his action all law, all natural order, yes, the moral world may fall to the ground, but through this action a higher magic circle will be drawn from its effects, a new world founded from the Ruins of the overthrown old one (Nietzsche, *Geburt* 65).

APOLLO	DIONYSUS
Plastic arts (sculpture)	Music
Principium individuationis (principle of individuation).	Dissolves individual through ecstasy. Primordial unity.
Man is the artist.	Man is the work of art.
Intuition through dreams.	Ecstasy through drunkenness.
The music of Apollo was Doric architectonics in tones, but in merely suggested tones, such as those of the cithara. (Nietzsche, Birth 32)	The very element which forms the essence of Dionysian music . . . is . . . the thrilling power of the tone, the uniform stream of the melos, and the thoroughly incomparable world of harmony. Music that leads to ecstasy.
Norman Rockwell	Elvis for us, Richard Wagner for Nietzsche

### AESCHYLUS

Dates Born 525/524 B.C. Died 456/455 B.C.

Aeschylus fought at the Battle of Marathon when he was 35 years old & at Salamis in the Persian War (Podlecki 4).

Aeschylus started writing circa 500 B.C. Won his first victory in 484 (Podlecki 5).

Aeschylus died when an eagle dropped a tortoise on his head. His epithet said he was a soldier at Marathon, with nothing about his writing.

### INTRODUCTION TO PROMETHEUS BOUND

Date: 457/456 B.C. It was his last trilogy (Podlecki 110).

The Romantics felt drawn to the figures of Aeschylus' Prometheus and Milton's Satan, those defiers of divine will and purveyors of proscribed knowledge. By their willful exercise of power and distribution of knowledge, they establish their status as heroic criminals. Nor were they heroes in spite of their crimes; it was their crimes that made them heroes. The "innermost kernel of the Prometheus myth" (innersten Kern der Prometheussage) is "the necessity of crime impelling the titanically striving individual" (die dem titanisch strebenden Individuum gebotene Nothwendigkeit des Frevels) (Nietzsche, Geburt der Tragödie 70).

Prometheus is the mythic figure who best suits the uses of Romantic poetry, for no other traditional being has in him the full range of Romantic moral sensibility and the full Romantic capacity for creation and destruction. (Bloom 120)

Problem of play: Zeus has no redeeming traits (Podlecki 101).

The play is directed not against one tyrant but against tyranny (Podlecki 111).

510 B.C. Athens banished tyrant Hippias. Democracy started (Podlecki 116).

490 B.C. Persians invade to Greece. They are accompanied by Hippias. Aeschylus fought at Marathon (Podlecki 117).

Here Zeus is a tyrant. Might is a thug, a δορυφόρος (bodyguard to king).

Three aims of tyrant (Podlecki 121)

1. Keep subjects humble.
2. Make them distrust one another.
3. Keep them powerless so they won't try to rebel.

Zeus has the traits of human tyrants identified by Aristotle & others (Podlecki 105).

1. Unaccountable to others--no checks & balances.
2. Ignores traditional laws. Is above the law.
3. Mistrusts those closest to him.
4. Violence, esp. against women. βίαια. Io was exiled by Zeus' command in this version (lines 667-668) (Podlecki 106).
5. Zeus won't tolerate free speech, others fear to speak freely (line 180) (Podlecki 107).
6. Has spies, like Hermes. Big Brother is watching (Podlecki 109).
7. Lops off outstanding people who might cause opposition. Encourages mediocrity (Podlecki 110).
8. Surrounds self with flatterers & courtiers. Oceanus is one. both cunning & naive. Thinks he has influence (Podlecki 109).

Herodotus 3. 80-82 discusses three types of government: monarchy, oligarchy, democracy. Aeschylus influences Herodotus, Plato, & Aristotle. Aristotle Politics 5. 8. Tyrant seeks own good only. Tyrant's pride (ύβρις) leads to subjects' wrath (οργή) (Podlecki 118).

## INTRODUCTION TO THE ORESTEIA

The theme of the Oresteia is Δίκη (Dikê, justice)—cosmic principle of order  
 "The scales of Justice weigh wisdom through suffering" (lines 260-261).  
 No help for one who ignores justice (lines 381-384) (Podlecki 63).

ἄτη (Atê) means "distraction, folly, delusion, judicial blindness sent by the gods, ruin." It is disproportionate. ["A life for a tooth, a life for an eye"]. No balance is sought. Balance important to Greeks. Each act of vengeance is out of balance & leads to further revenge. The punishment of the Trojans is too much for Paris' crime (Lattimore 73).

Cycle of ἄτη (Atê) in the Oresteia

1. Thyestes has an affair with Atreus' wife.
2. Atreus feeds Thyestes' sons to him.
3. Paris takes Helen to Troy.
4. Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter to propitiate Artemis.
5. Clytemnestra has an affair with Aegisthus.
6. The Greeks destroy Troy. Is too much punishment on that city. Is also ruinous to the Greeks. Agamemnon leaves with 1,000 ships & returns with one (Lattimore 73).
7. Clytemnestra and Aegisthus assassinate Agamemnon.
8. Orestes kills Clytemnestra.
9. The Furies hound Orestes.
10. Orestes is freed in the first jury trial.
11. The Furies are pacified, ending the cycle of ἄτη by transforming their mode of action to the state & due process.

Each main character kicks down the altar of Δίκη.

Vendetta has blood-logic. Each death calls for another (Lattimore 74).

Problems of public good have been solved through private murder--not a real solution. They must channel these forces in positive ways so they won't be purely destructive (Lattimore 87).

Ultimately in the play, justice only works in rule of law. Glorifies civil order.

For Clytemnestra, Δίκη = Vengeance. Aegisthus is the same way. Revenge for crime of Atreus against his father (lines 1605-1616). She thinks she has ended cycle of retribution, as will Orestes. Both are wrong. (Lattimore 71).

Civic virtue ultimately channels the force of Dikê. City (πόλις, polis) replaces household (οἶκος, oikos) (Lattimore 78).

The conflicts are conflicts of right vs right. Each character is operating from several motives (Lattimore 74).

Agamemnon's motives

1. He is simple. Driven by pride. Each act leads to the next. From sacrifice of Iphigenia to persistence at Troy to affair with Cassandra. No single act where a proud king would do otherwise. Ruins the Greeks as well as the Trojans. Both he & wife unfaithful in the long absence (Lattimore 73-74).

Clytemnestra's motives (Lattimore 74-75)

1. Mother-resentment over Iphigenia's death (Lattimore 74). A minor motive--she doesn't seem too upset over her death (Hammond 92). She sacrifices another child--Orestes (Libation Bearers 13, right column).
2. Jealous of Cassandra
3. Adultery with Aegisthus
4. Desire for power herself. Her own pride--Clytemnestra unlike Cassandra & Briseis, who cling to their conquerors. She smashes codes she doesn't like, like the one where hero has a captive mistress. She protests the double standard (Libation Bearers 13, right column). Clytemnestra has a grand manner. She's an aristocrat. Overwhelms chorus (Lattimore 75).

## LIBATION BEARERS

Zeus is with Might AND Justice here (lines 244-245)--not in Prometheus.

Orestes' motives (Lattimore 85)

1. Outrage over loss of inheritance.
2. Jealous because mom chose Aegisthus over Agamemnon and HIM. She disowned him & sent him away (lines 132-134).
3. Vengeance for Agamemnon's death.

In Agamemnon, vice was alluring. In Libation Bearers, duty is repulsive (Lattimore 86).

## EUMENIDES

The sight of the Furies overwhelmed early audiences. Sent pregnant women into labor. The Chorus is the chief character of the drama. Furies clash with Apollo--conflicting divine judgments (Lattimore 87).

Apollo purifies Orestes. The Furies will have none of it. They accuse Apollo of injustice (162-163), as he does them (217-222).

Agonistic form of justice. New venue for the contest. Trial by persuading jury rather than by combat. How can both sides agree? Must compete before impartial jury. Δίκη expressed in a court of law (δικαι, dikai). Legal justice.

### Levels of struggle in Eumenides

1. Struggle between offices. Furies have an office (λάχος) to perform. Apollo interferes.
2. Old order vs new order. New gods (150, 162, 731, 778f) Athena respects their age (848, 882ff).
3. Τιμή vs ἀτιμία. Apollo dishonors them (227, 324, 721f). Athena sees it as a new kind of honor (795-796, 824, 833, 854-5, 890-5, 916-7, 992-3).
4. Mutterrecht vs Vaterrecht. Female vs male. (Bachofen)
5. Greek vs barbarian (Lattimore 87).

Furies are older, therefore more childish & barbarian than Apollo and Athena. Furies stand for woman's right to act. They represent the Greeks' pre-Hellenic barbarism, archaic strictness & cruelty. The blood on Orestes' hands matters; his reasons don't. Motive irrelevant. (Cf. Oedipus' "crimes") (Lattimore 87-88). They are primeval goddesses, daughters of Night, mercilessly & automatically punish. (Hammond 94).

Apollo stands for Hellenism, civilization, intellect, enlightenment. Is male and young. He's as ruthless as the furies, but despises cruelty for its own sake. Olympians are fighting their own past (Lattimore 88). Furies criticize the way Zeus took over (Eumenides p. 10 col. 1). Apollo more aesthetically pleasing. Beautiful rather than monstrous in appearance. Concerned with form.

Zeus is not omnipotent. Must rely on more than force to rule. Persuasion & legitimacy (Hammond 94).

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11A

# The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

## Ethics

The field of ethics, also called moral philosophy, involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior. Philosophers today usually divide ethical theories into three general subject areas: metaethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics. *Metaethics* investigates where our ethical principles come from, and what they mean. Are they merely social inventions? Do they involve more than expressions of our individual emotions? Metaethical answers to these questions focus on the issues of universal truths, the will of God, the role of reason in ethical judgments, and the meaning of ethical terms themselves. *Normative ethics* involves a more practical task, which is to arrive at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct. Should I borrow my roommate's car without first asking him? Should I steal food to support my starving family? Ideally, these moral questions could be immediately answered by consulting the moral guidelines provided by normative theories. Finally, *applied ethics* involves examining specific controversial issues, such as abortion, infanticide, animal rights, environmental concerns, homosexuality, capital punishment, or nuclear war. By using the conceptual tools of metaethics and normative ethics, discussions in applied ethics try to resolve these controversial issues. The lines of distinction between metaethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics are often blurry. For example, the issue of abortion is an applied ethical topic since it involves a specific type of controversial behavior. But it also depends on more general normative principles, such as the right of self-rule and the right to life, which are litmus tests for determining the morality of that procedure. The issue also rests on metaethical issues such as, "where do rights come from?" and "what kind of beings have rights?"

- Metaethics
  - Metaphysical Issues in Metaethics
  - Psychological Issues in Metaethics
  - Linguistic Issues in Metaethics
- Normative Ethics
  - Virtue Theory
  - Deontological (Duty) Theories
  - Consequentialist (Teleological) Theories
    - Types of Utilitarianism
    - Social Contract Theory
- Applied Ethics

### Metaethics

The term "meta" means *after* or *beyond*, and, consequently, the notion of metaethics involves a removed, or bird's eye view of the entire project of ethics. We may define metaethics as the study of the origin and meaning of ethical concepts. When compared to normative ethics and applied ethics, the field of metaethics is the least precisely defined area of moral philosophy. Three issues, though, are prominent: (1) *metaphysical* issues concerning whether morality exists independently of humans; (2) *psychological* issues concerning what motivates us to be moral; and (3) *linguistic* issues concerning the meaning of key ethical terms.

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### Metaphysical Issues in Metaethics

"Metaphysics" is the study of the kinds of things that exist in the universe. Some things in the universe are made of physical stuff, such as rocks, and perhaps other things are nonphysical in nature, such as thoughts, spirits, and gods. The metaphysical component of metaethics involves discovering specifically whether moral values are eternal truths that exist in a spirit-like realm, or simply human conventions. *Moral realism* is the view that moral principles have an objective foundation, and are not based on subjective human convention. There are two main types of moral realism. The first is commonly associated with Plato and is inspired by the field of mathematics. When we look at numbers and mathematical relations, such as  $1+1=2$ , they seem to be timeless concepts that never change, and apply everywhere in the universe.

Humans do not invent numbers, and humans cannot alter them. Plato explained the eternal character of mathematics by stating that they are *abstract entities* that exist in a spirit-like realm. He noted that moral values also are absolute truths and thus are also abstract, spirit-like entities. In this sense, for Plato, moral values are spiritual *objects*. Medieval philosophers commonly grouped all moral principles together under the heading of "eternal law" which were also frequently seen as spirit-like objects. 17<sup>th</sup> century British philosopher Samuel Clarke described them as spirit-like *relationships* rather than spirit-like objects. In either case, though, they exist in a spirit-like realm.

A second type of moral realism is that moral values are *divine commands* issuing from God's will. Sometimes called *voluntarism*, this view was inspired by the Judeo-Christian notion of an all-powerful God who is in control of everything. God simply wills things, and they become reality. He wills the physical world into existence, he wills human life into existence and, similarly, he wills all moral values into existence. Proponents of this view, such as medieval philosopher William of Ockham, believe that God wills moral principles, such as "murder is wrong," and these exist in God's mind as commands. God informs humans of these commands by implanting us with moral intuitions or revealing these commands in scripture.

The opposite view of moral realism is called *moral skepticism*, which denies any objective status of moral values. Technically moral skeptics do not reject moral values themselves. They simply deny that moral values exist as spirit-like objects, or as divine commands in the mind of God. Moral skepticism is closely associated with a position called *moral relativism*, which is the view that moral standards are grounded in social approval. With some moral values, social approval seems to vary from culture to culture. For example, in Mainland China, abortion is recognized as an important tool for population control. In the Republic of Ireland, though, abortions are not readily available even when the life of a mother is at risk. Other moral values are more fixed from culture to culture, such as prohibitions against stealing. Even these, though, are grounded in social approval insofar as similar social needs give rise to similar moral rules.

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## Psychological Issues in Metaethics

A second area of metaethics involves the psychological basis of our moral actions, particularly, understanding what motivates humans to be moral. Moral philosophers commonly ask the general question, "Why be moral?" A variety of answers may be given. We act morally to avoid punishment, to gain praise, to attain happiness, to be dignified, or to fit in with society. Moral psychology looks beneath the surface of these answers and attempts to identify the internal psychological factors that are ultimately responsible for moral motivation. As soon as philosophers began dissecting the human psyche and cataloging various human mental faculties, philosophers also tried linking many of these with moral motivation. Four especially noteworthy areas of moral psychology will be noted here in chronological order. First, an early theory of moral psychology was that our sense of right and wrong was a product of a rational ability called *practical wisdom*. According to ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, our faculty of practical wisdom intuitively grasps our ultimate purpose in life and tells us the best way to achieve happiness. Medieval philosopher Thomas Aquinas held that a related faculty called *synderesis* feeds us an intuition of our moral obligation. For Aquinas, when God created us as rational creatures, he gave us this faculty so we could tap into a special realm of moral truths.

A second area of moral psychology concerns the inherent selfishness of humans. 17<sup>th</sup> century British philosopher Thomas Hobbes held that many, if not all, of our actions are prompted by selfish desires. Even if an action seems selfless, such as donating to charity, there are still selfish causes for this, such as experiencing power over other people. This view is called *psychological egoism* and maintains that self-oriented interests ultimately motivate all human actions, with no exception. Closely related to psychological egoism is a view called *psychological hedonism* which is the view that *pleasure* is the driving force behind all of our actions. 18<sup>th</sup> century British philosopher Joseph Butler agreed that instinctive selfishness and pleasure prompt much of our conduct. However, Butler argued that we also have an inherent psychological capacity to show benevolence to others. This view is called *psychological altruism* and maintains that at least some of our actions are motivated by instinctive benevolence.

A third area of moral psychology involves a dispute concerning the role of reason in motivating moral actions. 18<sup>th</sup> century British philosopher David Hume championed the view that only emotions can motivate people to act morally. Purely rational considerations have no influence on actions. In Hume's words, "reason is, and ought to be, the slave of the passions." 18<sup>th</sup> century German philosopher Immanuel Kant took an opposing stance. Although emotional factors do influence our conduct, we should resist this kind of sway. Instead, true moral action is motivated only by reason when it is free from emotions and desires. A recent rationalist approach, offered by Kurt Baier, focuses more broadly on the reasoning and argumentation process that takes place when making moral choices. All of our moral choices are, or at least can be, backed by some reason or justification. If I claim that it is wrong to steal someone's lawn furniture, then I



should be able to justify my claim with some kind of argument. For example, I could argue that stealing Smith's lawn furniture is wrong since this would upset her, violate her ownership rights, or put the thief at risk of getting caught. According to Baier, then, proper moral decision making involves giving the best reasons in support of one course of action versus another.

Finally, since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the field of psychology split off from philosophy and discussion of moral psychology was affected by this change. Philosophers by and large avoided references to psycho-physiological functions. Psychologists all but abandoned exploring moral psychology. A recent exception in the field of psychology is Lawrence Kohlberg's attempt to trace the development of moral thinking in adolescents and young adults. Kohlberg (1927-1987) presented his subjects with a series of moral dilemmas, such as whether it is permissible to steal food to feed one's starving family. He then noted the reasoning his subjects used in justifying their particular decisions. Kohlberg concluded that there are five levels of moral development that young people go through. In the first stage, starting at about age ten, people avoid breaking moral rules to avoid punishment. In the second stage, people follow moral rules only when it is to their advantage. In the third stage, starting about age 17, people try to live up to what is expected of them in small social groups, such as families. In the fourth stage, people fulfill the expectations of larger social groups, such as obeying laws that keep society together. In the fifth and final stage, starting at about age 24, people are guided by both absolute and relative moral principles; they follow these for altruistic reasons, though, and not because of what they might gain individually. According to Kohlberg, few people ever reach this level.

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## Linguistic Issues in Metaethics

A large part of morality involves assessing people's conduct and pronouncing judgments, such as "Ted is a good person," "Bob did the right thing," and "We should all donate to charity." When we make these assessments, we rely on key terms such as "good," "right," "ought," and "should." In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, British and American philosophers argued that if we want to fully understand morality, we must analyze the meaning of the key moral terms we use. Dozens of books appeared which minutely analyzed the nuances of these words. Today this somewhat tedious approach has lost much of its appeal. However, these discussions brought to light several aspects of moral judgments that philosophers previously overlooked. Sometimes we use language to *describe* things, such as "the door is brown." Other times we use language to *accomplish* something, such as "get away from that hot stove!" This is also the case with moral utterances such as "We should all donate to charity" which (a) attempts to *describe* the notion of charity, and (b) also attempts to *accomplish* something, such as motivate us to donate to charity.

The descriptive component of ethical statements is called its *cognitive meaning*. For example, if I say, "We should all donate to charity," I am describing charity as a good thing. I might also be describing charity as the kind of act that makes people happy, or that increases the quantity of pleasure in the world, or that God endorses, or that conforms with universal truth. In all of these cases, I am linking the notion of charity with some moral quality. Some of these qualities are *natural* in the sense that they are part of the physical world, such as human experiences of happiness or pleasure. Other qualities are *nonnatural* in the sense that they are more spirit-like, such as being endorsed by God or conforming to universal truth. In either case, though, I am describing charity by linking it with some quality.

The accomplishment-oriented component of ethical statements is called its *noncognitive meaning*. For example, if I say, "We should all donate to charity," I am trying to accomplish at least two things. First, I am trying to get you to donate to charity and I am essentially giving the command, "Donate to charity, Mr.!" Philosophers call this the *prescriptive* element in the sense that I am prescribing some specific behavior. Secondly, I am expressing my personal feelings of approval about charitable donations and I am in essence saying "Hooray for charity!" This is the *emotive* element insofar as I am expressing my emotions about some specific behavior.

Ethical judgments, such as "We should all donate to charity," then, are mixtures of both descriptive (cognitive) and accomplishment-oriented (noncognitive) components. Philosopher R.M. Hare (b. 1919) argued that the descriptive component of ethical statements changes depending on our philosophical and religious perspective. For example, a religious believer might describe charity as something that God endorses. An atheist, though, would describe charity differently. However, Hare argues, the accomplishment-oriented component of ethical judgments is the same for *everyone*. For example, when the religious believer and atheist both say, "We should all donate to charity" they both encourage others to be charitable and express their personal approval of charity. For Hare, then, the accomplishment-oriented component is the primary meaning of moral utterances, and the descriptive component is secondary.



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## Normative Ethics

Normative ethics involves arriving at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct. In a sense, it is a search for an ideal litmus test of proper behavior. The Golden Rule is a classic example of a normative principle: We should do to others what we would want others to do to us. Since I do not want my neighbor to steal my car, then it is wrong for me to steal her car. Since I would want people to feed me if I was starving, then I should help feed starving people. Using this same reasoning, I can theoretically determine whether any possible action is right or wrong. So, based on the Golden Rule, it would also be wrong for me to lie to, harass, victimize, assault, or kill others. The Golden Rule is an example of a normative theory that establishes a *single principle* against which we judge all actions. Other normative theories focus on a *set* of foundational principles, such as moral rights to life, liberty, and happiness.

The key assumption in normative ethics is that there is only *one* ultimate criterion of moral conduct, whether it is a single rule or a set of principles. Unfortunately, philosophers do not agree about what precisely that criterion is. Over the centuries, hundreds of theories have been offered, each claiming to be the ultimate guide. Proponents of these theories also devote much time to rejecting rival theories. For example, most normative ethicists reject the Golden Rule in the above form. If I am a masochist then, according to the Golden Rule, it is morally permissible for me to inflict pain on other people. But inflicting pain on others is clearly wrong, hence the Golden Rule fails as the ultimate criterion of morality. In spite of the quantity of normative theories available for consideration, many theories involve common strategies that we can classify. Three strategies will be noted here: (1) virtue theory, (2) deontological theories, and (3) consequentialist theories.

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## Virtue Theory

Many philosophers believe that morality consists of following precisely defined rules of conduct, such as "don't kill," or "don't steal." Presumably, I must learn these rules, and then make sure each of my actions live up to the rules. Virtue theorists, however, place less emphasis on learning rules, and instead stress the importance of developing *good habits of character*, such as benevolence. Once I've acquired benevolence, for example, I will then habitually act in a benevolent manner. Historically, virtue theory is the oldest normative tradition in Western philosophy, having its roots in ancient Greek civilization. Plato emphasized four virtues in particular, which were later called *cardinal virtues*: wisdom, courage, temperance and justice. Other important virtues are fortitude, generosity, self-respect, good temper, and sincerity. In addition to advocating good habits of character, virtue theorists hold that we should avoid acquiring bad character traits, or *vices*, such as cowardice, insensibility, injustice, and vanity. Virtue theory emphasizes moral education since virtuous character traits are developed in one's youth. Adults, therefore, are responsible for instilling virtues in the young.

Aristotle gave the first systematic expression to virtue theory in his *Nichomachean Ethics*. Aristotle sees virtues as good habits that we acquire, which regulate our emotions. For example, in response to my natural feelings of fear, I should develop the virtue of courage which allows me to be firm when facing danger. Analyzing 11 specific virtues, Aristotle argues that most virtues fall at a mean between more extreme character traits. With courage, for example, if I do not have enough courage, I develop the disposition of cowardice, which is a vice. If I have too much courage I develop the disposition of rashness which is also a vice. According to Aristotle, it is not an easy task to find the perfect mean between extreme character traits. In fact, we need assistance from our reason to do this. After Aristotle, medieval theologians supplemented Greek theories of virtue with three Christian virtues, or *theological virtues*: faith, hope, and charity. Interest in virtue theory continued through the middle ages and declined in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the rise of alternative moral theories below.

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## Deontological (Duty) Theories

Many of us feel that there are clear obligations we have as human beings, such as to care for our children, and to not commit murder. Deontological theories base morality on specific, foundational principles of obligation. These theories are called *deontological* theories, from the Greek word *deon*, or duty, given the foundational nature of our duty or

obligation. They are also sometimes called *nonconsequentialist* since these principles are obligatory, irrespective of the consequences of that might follow from our actions. For example, it is wrong to abandon care for our children even if it results in some great benefit. There are four leading types of deontological theories.

The first is *duty theory* championed by Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, virtue theorists listed nearly one hundred virtuous character traits that a good person should acquire. Grotius and Pufendorf viewed these as lists of obligations to which we are all duty-bound through laws of nature. They classified these duties under three headings: duties to God, duties to oneself, and duties to others. Duties to God include honoring him, serving him, and praying to him. Duties to oneself include preserving one's life, pursuing happiness, and developing one's talents. Duties to others fall into three groups. First, there are family duties which involve honoring our parents, and caring for spouses and children. Second, there are social duties which involve not harming others, keeping promises, and benevolence. Third, there are political duties that involve obedience to the laws, and public spirit. Based on these duties it would be wrong, for example, for us to skip worship services, to commit suicide, or steal from others. The morality of all actions, then, is determined in reference to these duties. For almost 200 years, duty theory dominated normative ethical theories.

A second deontological theory is *rights theory*. According to rights theorists, these are rights that all people naturally have, and the rest of us are obligated to acknowledge. 17<sup>th</sup> century British philosopher John Locke argued that the laws of nature mandate that we should not harm anyone's life, health, liberty or possessions. For Locke, these are our natural rights, given to us by God. Following Locke's lead, US Declaration of Independence authored by Thomas Jefferson recognizes three foundational rights: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Jefferson and others maintained that we deduce other more specific rights from these, including the rights of property, movement, speech, and religious expression. There are four features traditionally associated with moral rights. First, rights are *natural* insofar as they are not invented or created by governments. Second, they are *universal* insofar as they do not change from country to country. Third, they are *equal* in the sense that rights are the same for all people, irrespective of gender, race, or handicap. Fourth, they are *inalienable* which means that I can not hand over my rights to another person, such as by selling myself into slavery.

A third deontological theory is that of the *categorical imperative* as developed by the 18<sup>th</sup>-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Influenced by Grotius and Pufendorf, Kant agreed that we have moral duties to oneself and others, such as developing one's talents, and keeping our promises to others. However, Kant argued that there is a more foundational principle of duty that encompasses our particular duties. It is a single, self-evident principle of reason that he calls the "categorical imperative." Kant gives at least four versions of the categorical imperative, but one is especially direct: Treat people as an end, and never as a means to an end. That is, we should always treat people with dignity, and never use them as mere instruments. For Kant, we treat people as an end whenever our actions toward someone reflect the inherent value of that person. Donating to charity, for example, is morally correct since this acknowledges the inherent value of the recipient. By contrast, we treat someone as a means to an end whenever we treat that person as a tool to achieve something else. It is wrong, for example, to steal my neighbor's lawn furniture since I would be treating her as a means to my own happiness. The categorical imperative also regulates the morality of actions that affect us individually. Suicide, for example, would be wrong since I would be treating my life as a means to the alleviation of my misery. Kant believes that the morality of all actions can be determined by appealing to this single principle of duty.

A fourth deontological theory is a recent revision of duty theory by British philosopher W.D. Ross, which emphasizes *prima facie* duties. Like his 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century counterparts, Ross argues that our duties are "part of the fundamental nature of the universe." However, Ross's list of duties is much shorter which he believes reflects our actual moral convictions:

- Fidelity: the duty to keep promises
- Reparation: the duty to compensate others when we harm them
- Gratitude: the duty to thank those who help us
- Justice: the duty to recognize merit
- Beneficence: the duty to improve the conditions of others
- Self-improvement: the duty to improve our virtue and intelligence
- Nonmaleficence: the duty to not injure others

Although some of these duties are the same as those of traditional duty theory, such as beneficence and self-improvement, Ross does not include duties to God, self-preservation, or political duties. This list is not complete, Ross argues, but he believes that at least some of these are self-evidently true. Ross recognizes that situations will arise when we must choose between two conflicting duties. In a classic example, suppose I borrow my neighbor's gun and promise to return it when he asks for it. One day, in a fit of rage, my neighbor pounds on my door and asks for the gun so that he can take vengeance on someone. On the one hand, the duty of fidelity obligates me to return the gun; on the other hand, the duty of nonmaleficence obligates me to avoid injuring others and thus not return the gun. According to Ross, I will intuitively

know which of these duties is my *actual* duty, and which is my apparent or *prima facie* duty. In this case, my duty of nonmaleficence emerges as my actual duty and I should not return the gun.

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## Consequentialist (Teleological) Theorie

It is common for us to determine our moral responsibility by weighing the consequences of our actions. According to consequentialist normative theories, correct moral conduct is determined *solely* by a cost-benefit analysis of an action's consequences:

- *Consequentialism*: An action is morally right if the consequences of that action are more favorable than unfavorable.

Consequentialist normative principles require that we first tally both the good and bad consequences of an action. Second, we then determine whether the total good consequences outweigh the total bad consequences. If the good consequences are greater, then the action is morally proper. If the bad consequences are greater, then the action is morally improper. Consequentialist theories are also called *teleological* theories, from the Greek word *telos*, or end, since the end result of the action is the sole determining factor of its morality.

Consequentialist theories first became popular in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by philosophers who wanted a quick way to morally assess an action by appealing to experience, rather than by appealing to gut intuitions or long lists of questionable duties. In fact, the most attractive feature of consequentialism is that it appeals to publicly observable consequences of an action. Most versions of consequentialism are more precisely formulated than the general principle above. In particular, competing consequentialist theories specify which consequences for affected groups of people are relevant. Three subdivisions of consequentialism emerge:

- *Ethical Egoism*: an action is morally right if the consequences of that action are more favorable than unfavorable *only to the agent* performing the action.
- *Ethical Altruism*: an action is morally right if the consequences of that action are more favorable than unfavorable *to everyone except the agent*.
- *Utilitarianism*: an action is morally right if the consequences of that action are more favorable than unfavorable *to everyone*.

All three of these theories focus on the consequences of actions for different groups of people. But, like all normative theories, the above three theories are rivals of each other. They also yield different conclusions. Consider the following example. A woman was traveling through a developing country when she witnessed a car in front of her run off the road and roll over several times. She asked the hired driver to pull over to assist but, to her surprise, the driver accelerated nervously past the scene. A few miles down the road the driver explained that in his country if someone assists an accident victim, then the police often hold the assisting person responsible for the accident itself. If the victim dies, then the assisting person could be held responsible for the death. The driver continued explaining that road accident victims are therefore usually left unattended and often die from exposure to the country's harsh desert conditions. On the principle of ethical egoism, the woman in this illustration would only be concerned with the consequences of her attempted assistance as *she* would be affected. Clearly, the decision to drive on would be the morally proper choice. On the principle of ethical altruism, she would be concerned only with the consequences of her action as *others* are affected, particularly the accident victim. Tallying only those consequences reveals that assisting the victim would be the morally correct choice, irrespective of the negative consequences that result for her. On the principle of utilitarianism, she must consider the consequences for both herself and the victim. The outcome here is less clear, and the woman would need to precisely calculate the overall benefit versus disbenefit of her action.

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## Types of Utilitarianism

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) presented one of the earliest fully developed systems of utilitarianism. Two features of Bentham's theory are noteworthy. First, Bentham proposed that we tally the consequences of each action we perform and

thereby determine on a case by case basis whether an action is morally right or wrong. This aspect of Bentham's theory is known as *act-utilitarianism*. Second, Bentham also proposed that we tally the pleasure and pain which results from our actions. For Bentham, pleasure and pain are the only consequences that matter in determining whether our conduct is moral. This aspect of Bentham's theory is known as *hedonistic utilitarianism*. Critics point out limitations in both of these aspects.

First, according to act-utilitarianism, it would be morally wrong to waste time on leisure activities such as watching television, since our time could be spent in ways that produced a greater social benefit, such as charity work. But prohibiting leisure activities doesn't seem reasonable. More significantly, according to act-utilitarianism, specific acts of torture or slavery would be morally permissible if the social benefit of these actions outweighed the disbenefit. A revised version of utilitarianism called *rule-utilitarianism* addresses these problems. According to rule-utilitarianism, a behavioral code or rule is morally right if the consequences of adopting that rule are more favorable than unfavorable to everyone. Unlike act utilitarianism, which weighs the consequences of each particular action, rule-utilitarianism offers a litmus test only for the morality of moral rules, such as "stealing is wrong." Adopting a rule against theft clearly has more favorable consequences than unfavorable consequences for everyone. The same is true for moral rules against lying or murdering. Rule-utilitarianism, then, offers a three-tiered method for judging conduct. A particular action, such as stealing my neighbor's lawn furniture, is judged wrong since it violates a moral rule against theft. In turn, the rule against theft is morally binding because adopting this rule produces favorable consequences for everyone. J.S. Mill's version of utilitarianism is rule-oriented.

Second, according to hedonistic utilitarianism, pleasurable consequences are the only factors that matter, morally speaking. This, though, seems too restrictive since it ignores other morally significant consequences which are not necessarily pleasing or painful. For example, acts which foster loyalty and friendship are valued, yet they are not always pleasing. In response to this problem, G.E. Moore proposed *ideal utilitarianism*, which involves tallying any consequence that we intuitively recognize as good or bad (and not simply as pleasurable or painful). Also, R.M. Hare proposed *preference utilitarianism*, which involves tallying any consequence that fulfills our preferences.

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## Social Contract Theory

In addition to ethical egoism, ethical altruism, and utilitarianism, as defined above, we also find an egoistic consequentialist strategy in social contract theory. Thomas Hobbes argued that, for purely selfish reasons, the agent is better off living in a world with moral rules than one without moral rules. For without moral rules, we are subject to the whims of other people's selfish interests. Our property, our families, and even our lives are at continual risk. Selfishness alone will therefore motivate each agent to adopt a basic set of rules which will allow for a civilized community. Not surprisingly, these rules would include prohibitions against lying, stealing and killing. However, these rules will ensure safety for each agent only if the rules are enforced. As selfish creatures, each of us would plunder our neighbors' property once their guards were down. Each agent would then be at risk from his neighbor. Therefore, for selfish reasons alone, we devise a means of enforcing these rules: we create a policing agency which punishes us if we violate these rules.

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## Applied Ethics

Applied ethics is the branch of ethics that consists of the analysis of specific, controversial moral issues such as abortion, animal rights, and euthanasia. Medical ethics focuses on a range of issues that arise in clinical health care settings. Health care workers are in an unusual position of continually dealing with life and death situations. It is not surprising, then, that medical ethics issues are more extreme and diverse than other areas of applied ethics. Prenatal issues arise about the morality of surrogate mothering, genetic manipulation of fetuses, the status of unused frozen embryos, and abortion. Other issues arise about patient rights and physician's responsibilities, such as the confidentiality of the patient's records and the physician's responsibility to tell the truth to dying patients. The AIDS crisis has raised the specific issues of the mandatory screening of all patients for AIDS, and whether physicians can refuse to treat AIDS patients. Additional issues concern medical experimentation on humans, the morality of involuntary commitment, and the rights of the mentally retarded. Finally, end of life issues arise about the morality of suicide, the justifiability of suicide intervention, physician assisted suicide, and euthanasia.

The field of business ethics examines moral controversies that commonly arise in the business world. These include the

social responsibilities of capitalist business practices, the moral status of corporate entities, deceptive advertising, insider trading, basic employee rights, job discrimination, affirmative action, whether drug testing violates privacy, and whistle blowing. Issues in environmental ethics often overlaps with business and medical issues. These include the rights of animals, the morality of animal experimentation, preserving endangered species, pollution control, management of environmental resources, whether ecosystems are entitled to direct moral consideration, and our obligation to future generations. Controversial issues of sexual morality include monogamy vs. polygamy, sexual relations without love, homosexual relations, and extramarital affairs. Finally, there are issues of social morality, which examine capital punishment, nuclear war, gun control, suicide, recreational use of drugs, welfare rights, and racism.

SEE ALSO: Applied ethics, animal rights, best reasons morality, categorical imperative, consequentialism, divine command theory, duties, environmental ethics, euthanasia, feminist ethics, moral dilemmas, moral luck, moral rationalism, moral realism, moral relativism, moral skepticism, natural law, naturalistic fallacy, nogcognitivism, original position, moral personhood, prima facie duties, rights theory, rule utilitarianism, social contract, suicide, synderesis, virtue theory

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# The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

## Divine Command Theory

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### Introduction

The divine command theory is the view that moral actions are those which conform to God's will. Charity, for example, is morally proper because God endorses it, and murder is wrong because God condemns it. There are both normative and metaethical versions of this theory. The normative version is proposes a test for determining whether any action is right or wrong: if it conforms to God's will, it is morally permissible, if it does not, then it is impermissible. As a normative theory, the divine command theory is difficult to maintain given the epistemological problems of accessing the will of God. The metaethical version simply makes the factual claim that God's will is the foundation of morality. Here, the content of God's will does not have to be explored.

As a metaethical theory, there are three ways that the divine command theory can be understood. The weakest version claims only that, within certain religious communities, the meaning of the statement, "charity is good," is that God wills us to be charitable. This version has only limited implications. Although it may represent the views of a particular religious group, it has no bearing on what those outside that group mean by the statement "charity is good." A stronger version of the divine command theory concedes that charity is morally good in and of itself, but that God's will provides us with the motivation to be charitable. On this view, only the religious believer has the motivation to be moral. Theoretically, unbelievers could also act morally, but it would only be by accident since unbelievers would lack the motivation for consistent moral behavior. The strongest version of the divine command theory states that morality is a creation of God's will. According to this view, charity is good because God has willed that charity is good. The claim here is not about what particular communities mean by the word "good" or what motivations people have to be good. Instead, the claim is that moral conduct is identical to the conduct which God commands of us. This final version of the divine command theory is the most controversial, and has been criticized from several angles.

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### General Criticisms

During the Enlightenment, the divine command theory fell under attack from two distinct camps. One group argued that moral standards, like mathematical truths, are eternal and fixed in the nature of universe. Philosophers such as Samuel Clarke argued that moral values can be intuitively perceived and, again, like mathematical truths, can be understood by any rational being. Since God is a rational being, then God, too, endorses these eternal standards of morality. However, God's mere acceptance of moral standards in no way creates them, and in that sense is no different than a human's acceptance of moral standards. A second group argued that moral standards are fundamentally human-based, and are neither fixed in the nature of the universe, nor in the will of God. For example, Thomas Hobbes argued that moral standards are necessary human conventions which keep us out of a perpetual state of war. Others, such as Hume and Mill, argued that they are based on human instinct. In either case, God's will is irrelevant to ethical standards.

A more recent times, the divine command theory has been attacked on two principle grounds. First, if morality is a dictate of God's will, then it is conceivable that God could choose to reverse the present state of morality and thus make evil actions moral. That is, God could make murder or stealing morally permissible if he chose. The theologian's reply to this

possibility is that God would not reverse the moral standards he has created since God himself is infinitely good, and God would not will anything which is contrary to his own good nature. This reply, however, leads to the second problem with the divine command theory. If moral goodness is merely a creation of God's will, then the phrase "God is good" becomes meaningless. For, by definition, "God is good" would simply mean that God's nature is in accord with what he wills. Since there are no pre-existing moral restrictions to what God can will, then even if God was malicious, he would be good. Clearly, this makes nonsense of the notion of goodness.

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## Quinn's Defense

here has recently been a revived interest in divine command theory, particularly defending it against criticisms which have accumulated over the decades. In his essay, "The primacy of God's Will in Christian Ethics," Philip Quinn goes on the offensive and presents three arguments for why the divine command theory should be accepted by traditional theistic. Quinn concedes that his arguments will not carry weight for those outside the theistic traditions. Nevertheless, his arguments show the reasons which might incline a theist to adopt the divine command theory. Quinn's first argument is derived from what has been called the "immoralities of the patriarchs." In the Hebrew Bible, several of the Hebrew patriarchs are presented as committing seemingly immoral acts at God's command. Following the lead of medieval theologians, Quinn argues that these stories illustrate that moral standards are indeed creations of God. In these cases, God is temporarily revoking previously established moral standards for special purposes.

Quinn's second argument is distinctly Christian and draws from Jesus' command that we should love everyone. For Quinn, this is not merely an endorsement of a pre-existing standard of morality, since it is contrary to human nature to love everyone. It is in fact a new standard which was created by God's pronouncement. Quinn's third argument derives from the notion of divine sovereignty. Traditional theism holds that God is sovereign and in complete control of the universe. If this is so, then it seems that God is in control of moral standards, and, thus, the creator of moral standards. A problem occurs, though, when determining how far God's control extends. Michael Loux, for example, argues that God is absolutely sovereign and that if God happened to believe unconditionally that  $2+2=3$ , then that would make  $2+2=3$ . Quinn argues that this interpretation leads to absurd conclusions, and is therefore unacceptable. Nevertheless, the theist should accept as strong a version of sovereignty as possible (barring absurdity). A more narrow and more acceptable version of sovereignty is one where God is in control over moral standards, but not over math or logic. This bypasses the absurdities of absolute sovereignty. On this more narrow view, if God unconditionally believes specific moral standards, then this makes them so. Given that there is a connection between what God believes and what God wills, then this narrow version of sovereignty entails that moral standards are creations of God's will.

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## Nielsen's Criticisms

In "God and the Basis of Morality," Kai Nielsen presents several arguments showing that morality is not at all founded on the commands of God. Nielsen begins by presenting the classic dilemma of theological morality, as appears in Plato's dialog, *The Euthyphro*. Plato argues that there are two ways to see the relation between God and morality: (1) God creates the standards of morality, or (2) God himself is subject to standards of morality which are independent of him. Traditionally, each of these options are seen to have unfavorable consequences. If God creates morality, then God could make murder or stealing morally permissible if he chose. If, on the other hand, God is subject to external standards of morality, then he loses some of his greatness. Nielsen presents six arguments which show that the second of these two options is by far the most preferable.

Nielsen's first argument is that merely commanding something does not make it moral. For example, if professor Jones commands her students to buy a book, this does not make it morally right to buy that book. Nielsen begins his second argument noting that defenders of divine command theory often say that we are to find God's moral commands in scripture. But, according to Nielsen, this requires a prior conception of morality to judge that a certain text is indeed revelation. And this prior conception of morality must be independent of God and God's revelation. Third, it does not help the divine command theory to argue that the statement "God is good" is true by definition (the same way that "wives are women" is true by definition). For, the terms "God" and "good" are not identical, and to understand that statement we need a prior understanding of moral goodness which is independent of God. The same problems occur when we stipulate that the statement "God is absolute goodness" is true by definition. Fourth, the believer's choice to worship God indicates that the believer is using an independent standard of goodness by which she deems God worthy of worship. This also applies if the believer claims through faith alone that she believes God is worthy of worship. According to Nielsen, the believer's actual behavior shows that she is in fact appealing to an independent standard of goodness.

Nielsen's fifth criticism is an attack on the argument from divine sovereignty. The believer will argue that God created

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everything which exists, and this includes moral standards. But, according to Nielsen, it is logically impossible for God to create morality. For, technically, morality does not involve what exists (or is the case) but only what ought to be the case. Suppose, for example, that the universe was completely empty of any existing thing except yourself. You could still talk conditionally about what should or should not be done if someone was starving or drowning. Finally, Nielsen argues that the burden of proof is on the divine command theorist to show that there can be no morality if God does not exist. And this the believer cannot do. The believer may argue that a world without God is lonely, full of despair, without purpose, and without hope of immortality. Nielsen counters that life would still have particular purposes, such as the joys of music, and that life after death is only a myth which should be rejected in any event.

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## Virtue Theory

Virtue theory is the view that the foundation of morality is the development of good character traits, or virtues. A person is good, then, if he has virtues and lacks vices. Typical virtues include courage, temperance, justice, prudence, fortitude, liberality, and truthfulness. Some virtue theorists mention as many as 100 virtuous character traits which contribute to making someone a good person. Virtue theory places special emphasis on moral education since virtuous character traits are developed in one's youth; adults, therefore, are responsible for instilling virtues in the young. The failure to properly develop virtuous character traits will result in the agent acquiring vices, or bad character traits instead. Vices include cowardice, insensibility, injustice, and vanity.

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### **History**

Historically, virtue theory is the oldest normative tradition in Western philosophy, having its roots in ancient Greek civilization. Greek epic poets and playwrights, such as Homer and Sophocles, paint the morality of their heroes and antiheroes in terms of their respective virtues and vices. Plato believed that an integral part of one's quest for truth was understanding the ideal nature of virtues such as justice, piety, and courage. The earliest and most influential systematic account of virtue theory appears in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the heart of which is his account of moral virtues in Book two. There he argues that moral virtues are desire-regulating character traits which are at a mean between more extreme character traits (or vices). For example, in response to the natural emotion of fear, we should develop the virtuous character trait of courage. If we develop an excessive character trait by curbing fear too much, then we are said to be rash, which is a vice. If, on the other extreme, we develop a deficient character trait by curbing fear too little, then we are said to be cowardly, which is also a vice. The virtue of courage, then, lies at the mean between the excessive extreme of rashness, and the deficient extreme of cowardice. Most moral virtues, and not just courage, are to be understood as falling at the mean between two accompanying vices. Aristotle illustrates this with the virtues of temperance, liberality, magnificence, high-mindedness, controlled anger, friendliness, modesty, and righteous indignation. He concludes that it is difficult to live the virtuous life primarily because it is often difficult to find the mean between the extremes.

During the late Greek period, Aristotle's account of virtue ethics competed with rival moral theories, particularly those offered by Epicureanism and Stoicism. However, by the late Middle Ages Aristotle's virtue theory was the definitive account of morality, especially insofar as it was endorsed by medieval philosopher Thomas Aquinas. In medieval discussions, the particular virtues described by Aristotle and the ancient Greeks became known as the cardinal virtues. Medieval ethicists added to these the theological virtues which appear in the New Testament: faith, hope, and charity. With the waning of the Middle Ages and the rise of the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, and Enlightenment thought, the influence of Aristotle's virtue ethics declined. Historians of philosophy typically say that virtue ethics was neglected or ignored in the centuries which followed. However, in "The Misfortunes of Virtue" (1990) J.B. Schneewind argues that the fate of virtue ethics was not one of neglect, but instead, one of critique, revision, and eventually abandonment in view of newer accounts of moral obligation. For Schneewind, virtue theory met its greatest challenge with the rise of natural law theory, particularly as put forward by 17th century Dutch philosopher Hugo Grotius. For Grotius, morality involves conforming one's actions to moral laws which are fixed in nature and which even God cannot change. Grotius rejects the role of virtue assigned by Aristotle, and directly criticizes Aristotle's theory on three accounts. First, Aristotle's doctrine of the mean fails to adequately explain basic moral concepts such as truthfulness and justice. Second, in the case of justice, the agent's particular motive does not matter. All that matters is following proper reason with respect to the rights of others. Third, contrary to Aristotle, the moral agent does not have special moral insight

simply because she is virtuous. Instead, morality is fixed in natural laws which can be rationally perceived by all.

By the 19th century, the "rule" emphasis of moral theories such as utilitarianism supplanted the character trait emphasis of virtue theory. Within the past few decades there has been a revived interest in virtue theory, owing to seminal writings by Elizabeth Anscombe and Alasdair MacIntyre. MacIntyre in particular argues that today we have only fragments of conflicting moral traditions, and we need to re-establish the goal or meaning of life towards which ethics is directed. This meaning is established in the context of a moral tradition, particularly one which advocates virtuous character traits.

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## Contemporary Issues

The key issue of contemporary virtue theory is whether virtue ethics can be completely independent of moral rules. One view, called eliminativism, states that rules must be eliminated from all notions of virtue. That is, morality is founded entirely on virtuous character traits such as courage, and these virtues are independent of ideal principles. The eliminativist will argue that courage is simply the character trait of facing fear, even if we are thieves who are facing the fear of a confrontation with the police. Thus, particular actions are understood as mere expressions of character traits. This stands in sharp contrast to both consequentialist and non-consequentialist theories which judge morality solely on the agent's intended action, with no regard for the agent's good or bad character traits. There are, however, problems with this view. In real life situations, do we condemn people for having bad character traits, or, instead, for committing bad actions? Critics argue that people are condemned for their bad actions. For, character traits only inform us about the types of actions an agent is likely to perform, but this does not mean that the agent will in fact perform that action. It is, then, wrong to pass moral judgment on an agent simply on the basis of her character traits. Therefore, the agent's action is the object of our judgment.

In contrast to eliminativism, the essentialist will argue that there is either a single rule or a core set of rules, which universally establish when a character trait is good or bad. However, this concession to rules may be to much of a compromise, and may not constitute a genuine alternative to rule-based approach normative ethics. First, for any virtue we choose, such as truthfulness, we can postulate a corresponding duty, such as the duty to be truthful. Similarly, virtues such as courage, temperance, justice, prudence, fortitude, and liberality would all have corresponding duties. Second, it is the obligatory nature of virtues which distinguishes them from mere character traits (such as the character trait of habitually humming a tune). It seems, then, that our obligation to develop a virtue such as truthfulness in fact presupposes that we have a prior duty to be consistently truthful.

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## Louden's Critique

In "On Some Vices of Virtue Ethics" (1984), Robert Louden presents one of the most systematic attacks on contemporary virtue theory. Louden suggests that virtue (or agent-centered) ethics differs from act-centered approaches in two ways. First, act-centered morality focuses on procedures for determining obligation, and virtue theory focuses on long-term patterns of action. Second, in act-centered morality, the motivation to be moral is found either in our duties themselves, or in our desire to be happy. By contrast, the motivation in virtue theory is the virtue itself.

Louden discusses several areas where act-centered morality has a distinct advantage over virtue ethics. First, virtue ethics fails to adequately address dilemmas which arise in applied ethics, such as abortion. For, virtue theory is not designed to offer precise guidelines of obligation. Second, virtue theory cannot correctly assess the occasional tragic actions of virtuous people (such as Oedipus accidentally sleeping with his mother). Since virtue theory focuses on the general notion of a good person, it has little to say about particular tragic acts. Third, some acts are so intolerable, such as murder, that we must devise a special list of offenses which are prohibited. Virtue theory does not provide such a list. Fourth, character traits change, and unless we stay in practice, we risk losing our proficiency in these areas. This suggests a need for a more character-free way of assessing our conduct. Finally, there is the problem of moral backsliding. Since virtue theory emphasizes long-term characteristics, this runs the risk of overlooking particular lies, or acts of selfishness, on the grounds that such acts are temporary aberrations.

Louden continues by discussing three specific problems which are unique to virtue theory. First, there is the problem of determining who is virtuous. It does not help to look for some external criterion such as visible indications in the agent's action. For, these indications are no guarantee that the person's inner being is virtuous. It also does not help to look for an inner criterion, such as the agent's self-respect or integrity. For, we do not have the ability to read ourselves internally. Second, by de-emphasizing the substance of an agent's action (such as the consequences of the action), virtue theory places on over-emphasizes on the mere style of an agent's conduct. Finally, The variety of values in our complex society encourages a legalistic approach to judging actions; it is naive (or utopian) for virtue theorists to believe they can alter this variety of values simply by re-emphasizing certain virtuous character traits.

## STOICISM

### Introduction

"Philosophy" is a term meaning the love (philos) of wisdom (sophia). Emerging in ancient Greece, it focuses on asking questions. The answers change from one system of philosophy to another, but the central questions endure, for they are the central questions of human existence.

What is the universe?

Is there a God or gods behind the universe? What is the nature of that divinity?

Who am I? What am I? (Soul, or just body? Mind, or just brain?)

Can I rely on my senses?

What makes me a good person?

What makes a good society?

What is justice?

What makes for happiness?

Stoicism, like other philosophies, asks these questions. It has its own range of answers.

What does your happiness depend on? Parents? Boy/girlfriend? Health? Wealth? Job? Car?

Epictetus 1. 1. 14. You fret over boat leaving. Like being stuck in traffic. You can't control that, but can control own attitude.

Stoicism was a practical philosophy. Oriented to active life. Very enduring. 300 B.C.-A.D. 200s as a distinct movement, survives in its effects. Upper class in Britain, Southern aristocracy read Marcus.

**Stoic summum bonum:** live in **conformity with nature** (κατὰ τὴν φύσιν), live in accord with reason, submit to your destiny willingly.

### GREAT STOICS

Greek: Zeno of Citium founder of stoicism. Met on the stoa, painted porch.  
Chrysippus

Romans: Romans already had devotion to duty & practical strain. They adopted stoicism enthusiastically.

Seneca. In exile under Claudius. Recalled to be Nero's right-hand man. As Nero lost it, Seneca lost favor. Ordered to commit suicide.

Epictetus.

Marcus Aurelius.

Jewish: Philo of Alexandria

Christian: John & Hebrews use similar vocabulary. John 1:1 esp. Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

Boethius *Consolation of Philosophy* (neo-platonist)

Monks: Used Epictetus' manual: only changed the names of the gods to God.

## OUTLINE OF STOICISM

### LOGIC

### PHYSICS

Reason (Λογος, *logos*) governs universe. A divine fire (πυρ). World periodically burns (Grube ix).

Rational soul a spark of the λογος. Akin to it, it can understand & conform to it.

This acceptance is our summum bonum--conformity of self to universal λογος. This brings happiness → health, life, wealth. etc originally were "indifferent." Neither good nor evil. Later occupied a middle position between completely indifferent things (like which quarter to use in soft drink machine) & central matter of attitude & harmony with universe.

To fight λογος is to be @ odds with universe & own nature (Grube xi).

**Panaetius** (1st cen. B.C.) rejects the universal conflagration. (Brehier, *Hist/Phil.* 130f).

**Sympathy**--idea that stars influence us (131).

**Divination**--Has become a **humanist**. Soul returns to heights @ death.

**Scaevola** sees 3 theologies

- 1). Poetic, which makes gods < great men
- 2). Philosophers, who put god above human reach.
- 3). Politicians, who preserve traditional cults.

### ETHICS

Stoic seeks to be in tune w/λογος. Nothing else matters.

∴ Means will do duty regardless of consequences. Centers ethics on duty, not consequences → unperturbed by failure. Like going to pick up package @ lost office for boss → OK if it's there or not (Grube xii-xiii).

∴ you can practice virtue in **any** circumstances → As a slave or as an emperor. The point is inner disposition (Grube xiii).

Πνευμα (pneuma) → breath of life. What we share w/ animals. As animals, we have in common w/ animals passions & perceptions. Must tend animal needs w/o allowing them to drag down the **reason** (Grube xiii).

To ηγεμονικον (hegemonikon). The ruling or directing mind. Controls the animal.

Stoics politically dangerous (Grube xiii) → Better to die than live as slaves. **Epictetus**--did I say I couldn't be beheaded?

Cicero → Humanity transforms animal instincts into civilized practices (Brehier 133).

"Human virtues are merely natural tendencies regulated by reason" (Brehier 133).

## EPICETETUS

Lived A.D. 50-120. (Oldfather, Loeb xii)

Epictetus was a slave with a passion for freedom (vii).

Phrygia his homeland. Had a vivid conception of his god, almost New Testament in its intensity. (viii)

**Epaphroditus**, freedman & administrative secretary of Nero, his owner.

**Musonius Rufus** his teacher--greatest stoic teacher of the age.

Epictetus was unhealthy & lame. May have become lame from master's abuse (ix). Stayed single until old. Married then so he could adopt a child whose parents were going to expose it (x). Simple lifestyle. Never locked door. Only furniture a pallet, a mat, & a lamp (x).

MOVED from Rome to Nicopolis when Domitian banished philosophers in A.D. 89 or 92 (x). Roughly a college professor--oversaw students from arrival to departure (xiv).

**Flavius Arrian** our source of Epictetus. Was a student. Published his class notes. Two works: *Discourses & Enchiridion* (xii).

Slave background led him to want little, pay small attention to social obligations for advancing order & civilization. Limited effort to **moral nature** (xvi). Passion for freedom. No need for immortality (xvii).

Stoic virtue based on self-respect & self-reliance. Accused of pride. "I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, & doggonit, who cares if anybody likes me?" "I am somebody."

### Epictetus' Doctrines

- 1). I'm responsible for my own good & evil. Only that which is under my power can be good or evil. Other things are neutral (fire, famine, taxes) (xx).
- 2). We make judgments. Assent & dissent is one form of moral act (xxi).
  - a. What is true
  - b. what is false
  - c. what's unknown
- 3). Desire/aversion regarding moral good & evil is another form of moral act (xxi). Each desire/aversion implies a judgment; these judgments rest on general judgments (δόγματα) regarding things of value (xxii). Nothing outside our moral purpose is good or evil. Is indifferent (ἀδιάφορα, adiafora).
- 4). Duty (τὸ καθήκον, kathekon) of man--intelligent action in social relations. Social duties esp. imp. to Epictetus. We have relations w/ & duties to parents, siblings, children, kinfolk, friends, fellow citizens, & humans in general. Don't be indignant w/ others--they're necessary to the universal plan (xxiii).

- 5). **Religion/physics/metaphysics.** Even apparent evils necessary to divine whole. Every event is part of the whole. Can be voluntary co-worker w/ god. Religion as reconciliation to the inevitable (xxiv). No consistent theology--mixes theism, pantheism, & polytheism. Search for happiness was leading to **alienation** from **science** (xxv). Despite theory of no real evil, there is always a potential for evil. Suicide one response. No life beyond this one--reabsorbed. (xxv).

**Manual (enchiridion)** adopted as Xn monastic guide (xxviii).

## MARCUS AURELIUS

A.D. 121-180. Wanted to be a scholar, got drafted into being emperor. Viewed his adoption into the line of succession as bad news. Grube's introduction my main source. "No longer free to live as a philosopher" (8.1). Diogenes & Socrates > Alexander & Caesar (8.3). A king's just a shepherd who lives off the flock--Plato, *Theatetus* 174d-e (10.23). He can best live as a philosopher in his present role of emperor (shows acceptance of lot) (11.7).

Adoptive selection of emperors.

Old Nerva	(96-98)	
Trajan	(98-117)	
Hadrian	(117-138)	
Antoninus Pius	(138-161)	(vii)

Hadrian had Antoninus adopt Marcus & Lucius Verus to avoid power vacuum.

Original name: Marcus Annaeus Verus. The old Hadrian called him **Verissimus**. Could not tell a lie (viii).

A.D. 139--18 years old. Learned he was in line of succession. Was sorry. A.D. 143 (21 years old) wrote Fronto, his rhetoric teacher, "When I am not with you, you read Cato, but I, when you are not with me, have to listen to the pleaders till 6:00 p.m." (ix).

A.D. 145. Turned from rhetoric to philosophy. Attracted to **practical** stoicism as a practical Roman. The logic & physics of stoicism had become neglected. **Ethics** were foremost.

A.D. 180. Died on military campaign in cold Sarmatia beyond the Danube (xiv).

**The Meditations** written as a journal. Not intended for publication. Circulated after he died.

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### Greek and Latin Searching Tools

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(example word: *wealth*)

This allows you to search the **English definitions** in LSJ. If you click on the example word above, you will retrieve all Greek dictionary entries that contain the word "wealth."

#### English to Latin Word Search

(example word: *love*)

This allows you to search the **English definitions** in Lewis and Short. If you click on the example word above, you will retrieve all Latin dictionary entries that contain the word "love."

#### Morphological Analysis for Greek or Latin (example word for Greek: *oisete*)

In English words can appear in different forms: e.g. "swam" is the past tense of "swim." If you wanted to look up the meaning of "swam," you would look up "swim" in the lexicon. In Greek, the morphology is much more complex than in English -- a single Greek verb can, for example, show up in hundreds of different forms in any given dialect. This tool analyses Greek (or Latin) words and tells you their possible morphological analyses and the dictionary entries from which they could be derived.

#### Greek Word Frequency

(example word: *gunê* ("woman"))

How often does a given word show up? This tool calculates the frequency of one or more dictionary entries in the Perseus Greek texts.

#### Greek Word Search

(example word: *pherô* in Aeschylus)

This search locates all instances of a Greek word in a given Perseus author.

**Note:** This search allows you to locate **dictionary words** If you search for *pherô* ("to carry"), you will retrieve inflected forms such

as *oisete* ("you (pl.) will carry") and *ênenkomen* ("we carried").

**Hint:** It is not always obvious what the proper dictionary entry is: try using the other searching tools to find out.

### Greek Words in Context

(example: *kalos* near *agathos* in Plato)

Find instances of two or more words appearing close to each other in Greek texts. Useful in searching for Greek idioms and phrases. (e.g.: periphrôn Pênelopeia in Homer).

### Latin Words in Context

(example: *tempora* near *mores* in Cicero)

Find instances of two or more words appearing close to each other in Latin texts. Useful in searching for Latin idioms and phrases.

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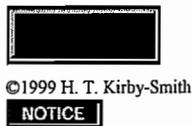
19 a

CLICK TO LINK TO EXAMPLES OF TRADITIONAL ACCENTUAL-SYLLABIC METERS. SOME COMBINATIONS MAY REMAIN PURELY HYPOTHETICAL.

IAMBIC	TROCHAIC	ANAPESTIC	DACTYLIC	OTHER
<u>monometer</u> */	<u>monometer</u> /*	<u>monometer</u> **/	<u>monometer</u> /**	<u>amphimaciac monomtr.</u> /*/
<u>dimeter</u> */ */	<u>dimeter</u> /* /*	<u>dimeter</u> **/ **/	<u>dimeter</u> /** /**	<u>amphimaciac dimeter</u> /* /* */
<u>trimeter</u> */ */ */	<u>trimeter</u> /* /* /*	<u>trimeter</u> **/ **/ **/	<u>trimeter</u> /** /** /**	<u>amphibrachic trimeter</u> ** ** ** **/
<u>tetrameter</u> */ */ */ */	<u>tetrameter</u> /* /* /* /*	<u>tetrameter</u> **/ **/ **/ **/	<u>tetrameter</u> /** /** /** /**	tetrameter
<u>pentameter</u> */ */ */ */ */	<u>pentameter</u> /* /* /* /* /*	<u>pentameter</u> **/ **/ **/ **/ **/	<u>pentameter</u> /** /** /** /** /**	<u>amphibrachic pentameter</u>
<u>hexameter</u> */ */ */ */ */ */	<u>hexameter</u> /* /* /* /* /* /*	<u>hexameter</u> (six feet)	<u>hexameter</u> (six feet)	hexameter
<u>heptameter</u> */ */ */ */ */ */ */	<u>heptameter</u> /* /* /* /* /* /* /*	<u>heptameter</u> (seven feet)	<u>heptameter</u> (seven feet)	heptameter (seven feet)
<u>octameter</u> (eight feet)	<u>octameter</u> (eight feet)	<u>octameter</u> (eight feet)	<u>octameter</u> (eight feet)	octameter (eight feet)
<u>alternating iambic tetrameter and dimeter</u>	<u>trochaic tetrameters with one dimeter per stanza</u>	<u>anapestic dimeters and trimeters</u>	<u>dactylic tetrameters and trimeters</u>	
<u>alternating iambic tetrameter and trimeter (common measure, ballad meter)</u>		<u>anapestic tetrameters and trimeters</u>	<u>dactylic tetrameters and dimeters</u>	<u>alternating amphibrachic tetrameter and trimeter (sort of)</u>
<u>iambic trimeter lines 1,2,4; tetrameter in 3 (short measure)</u>				

Please note that the templates above almost never fit an actual poem exactly. If we use this foot-based method to describe poetic meter in English, we have to allow for abundant "substitution," where any iamb (\*/) can become a trochee (/\*), a spondee (//), or a pyrrhic (\*\*). Trochaic rhythm tends to be somewhat more regular, but substitutions occur there as well. Sometimes poets introduce three-syllable feet into a line of iambs or trochees, and three-syllable (or "triple") footed meters often shift from anapests (\*\*/), to dactyls (/\*\*), amphibrachs (\*/\*), amphimacers (/ \*/), and other combinations.

Note that spondaic meters or pyrrhic meters (as opposed to individual feet) in English are impossible because of the constant alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables. Despite this obvious truth, some discussions of English metrics speak of spondaic meter and even attempt to illustrate it with lines isolated from poems written in iambic or anapestic meters.



~~anapestic~~

catalectic / catalexis lacking a syllable at the end of a line (catalectic) or lacking the last foot (catalexis)





## Literary Terms for English 150W

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### Terms you should know

(The definitions here are drawn from three sources: *An Introduction to Poetry*, by X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia; *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, by M.H. Abrams; *The Harper Handbook to Literature*, by Northrop Frye et. al.)

**Abstract diction:** words expressing ideas or concepts

**Accentual meter:** a metrical system in which the number of stresses per line, rather than their placement or frequency, is the organizing unit

**Allegory:** a (usually) narrative description in which persons, places, and things appear in a sustained system of equivalents

**Alliteration:** repetition of a consonant sound in a series of words

**Allusion:** an indirect reference to any person, place, or thing, actual or fictional

**Apostrophe:** an address to someone or something not usually spoken to

**Assonance:** repetition of a vowel sound in a series of words

**Ballad:** a narrative song or poem

**Blank verse:** unrhymed iambic pentameter

**Caesura:** a pause within a line

**Climax:** a point of high emotional intensity, the crisis or turning point in a drama or story. With a tightly constructed plot, there is often one major climax, but in works with an episodic structure there may be a series of climaxes of varying intensities.

**Conceit:** an elaborate comparison

**Concrete diction:** words that emphasize things immediately perceivable by the senses

**Connotation:** a word's associations or suggestions

**Couplet:** a pair of rhymed lines containing a complete thought

**Denotation:** a word's dictionary meaning

**Diction:** word choice

**Dramatic monologue:** a poem written as a speech made by a character

**Elegy:** a poem of mourning or remembrance

**End-stopped line:** line ending with a full pause

**Enjambed, or run-on lines:** lines ending without punctuation that are read with only a small pause or with no pause at all (enjambment is the practice of using enjambed lines)

**Epic:** a long narrative poem about a mythical or historic event (examples: *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*)

**Epigram:** a short poem ending in a witty or ingenious thought

**Eulogy:** poem of praise

**Exact rhyme:** occurs when sounds following rhyming vowels are exactly the same: red and bread, shell and fell

**Feminine rhyme:** a rhyme of two or more syllables with a stress on a syllable other than the last one: history and mystery

**Foot:** the basic metrical unit

**Genre:** a French term denoting a specific type of literature or literary form. There are varying ways of distinguishing among genre, but since Plato and Aristotle there has emerged a lasting division into three generic classes: lyric, epic (or narrative), and drama. In contemporary terms this often translates into distinctions among poetry, narrative prose fiction and nonfiction, and drama.

**Hyperbole:** overstatement

**Imagery:** a word or sequence of words referring to a sensory experience, whether visual, tactile, or auditory

**Irony:** a manner of speaking that implies a discrepancy

**Lyric poetry:** a short poem expressing the thoughts and feelings of a single speaker

**Masculine rhyme:** a rhyme of one-syllable words, or multi-syllabic words with a stressed final syllable

**Metaphor:** a statement that one thing is something else

**Meter:** a system of regularly occurring stresses in a poetic line

**Metonymy:** substituting the name of a thing for that of another closely associated with it (i.e., the White House said today)

**Onomatopoeia:** attempt to represent a thing or action by a word that imitates the sound associated with it (for example, zip, buzz, hiss)

**Paradox:** a statement that seems contradictory but that actually makes some kind of sense

**Paraphrase:** restating in one's own words the subject and ideas of another; also, restating in prose the subject and ideas of a poem

**Personification:** a figure of speech in which a thing, an animal, an abstract term, is made human

**Prosody:** the study of metrical structures in poetry

**Pun:** a play on words

**Quatrain:** a stanza of four lines

**Rhythm:** recurrence of stresses and pauses in a poem

**Rhyme:** when two or more words or phrases contain an identical or similar vowel-sound, and the consonant-sounds that follow are identical or similar

**Rhyme scheme:** the order in which rhyming words occur, indicated by letters (i.e., abba, aba, abcabc)

**Scansion:** system of indicating stresses and pauses in poetry using symbols to indicate stressed syllables, unstressed syllables, and pauses (caesuras)

**Sestina:** "song of sixes," a medieval verse form of six six-line stanzas, in which the poet repeats six end-words in a prescribed order, reintroducing the six repeated words (in any order) in a closing three line envoy.

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**Simile:** a comparison of two things indicated by a connective such as *like*, *as*, *than*, or a verb such as *resembles*

**Slant rhyme:** occurs when the final consonant sounds are the same, but the vowels are different: green and gone, that and hit

**Sonnet:** there are two kinds of sonnets, both poems of 14 lines : the English (or Shakespearean) sonnet, consisting of three quatrains and a couplet, and the Italian (or Petrarchan), consisting of an octave (two quatrains) and sestet (two tercets)

**Stanza:** a group of lines whose pattern is repeated throughout the poem

**Stress:** an accent or emphasis on a syllable

**Syllabic verse:** a rhymed or rhymeless verse form, usually stanzaic, in which the poet keeps to a pattern of a certain number of syllables to a line

**Symbol:** a visible object or action that suggests some further meaning in addition to itself

**Synecdoche:** a figure of speech in which a part is substituted for the whole (i.e., She gave us a hand.)

**Tercet:** a group of three lines

**Terza rima:** tercets linked by an interlocking rhyme scheme: aba, bcb, cdc, etc.

**Tone:** the attitude toward the person or thing addressed

**Transferred epithet:** a device of emphasis in which a characteristic (as opposed to a name or label [metonymy] or a part [synecdoche]) of one thing is attributed to another closely associated to it

**Understatement:** implying more than is said

**Verse:** any composition in lines of more or less regular rhythm, often (but not always) ending in rhymes

**Villanelle:** a medieval verse form in which the first and third lines of the opening tercet are repeatedly alternately throughout the poem as the final line in the ensuing tercets. The two lines appear together, as a couplet, at the conclusion of the poem.

Also:

You should be able to indicate, with scansion marks, the following feet:

iamb  
anapest  
trochee  
dactyl  
spondee

And you should know the commonly used names for line lengths (meter):

monometer: one foot  
dimeter: two feet  
trimeter: three feet  
tetrameter: four feet  
pentameter: five feet  
hexameter: six feet  
heptameter: seven feet  
octameter: eight feet

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## Characteristics Of Hebrew Poetry

### I. THE USE OF PARALLELISM

#### A. PARALLELISM

1. Involves arranging thoughts in relation to each other
2. This is done without a concern as to whether certain words rhyme with each other (as found in most modern poetry)

#### B. EXAMPLES OF PARALLELISM

##### 1. Synonymous parallelism

- a. The thought of the first line is repeated in the second, expressed in different words for emphasis
- b. A good example is found in Ps 24:2
  - 1) "For He has founded it upon the seas" (first line)
  - 2) "And established it upon the waters" (second line)

##### 2. Antithetic parallelism

- a. The truth presented in one line is strengthened by a contrasting statement in the other
- b. An example is Ps 1:6
  - 1) "For the LORD knows the way of the righteous" (truth)
  - 2) "But the way of the ungodly shall perish" (contrast)

##### 3. Synthetic parallelism

- a. The first and second lines bear some definite relation to each other (such as cause and effect, or proposition and conclusion)
- b. A good example is Ps 119:11
  - 1) "Your word I have hidden in my heart," (cause)
  - 2) "That I might not sin against You." (effect)

##### 4. Progressive parallelism - there are several varieties, the most common being:

###### a. Stairlike

- 1) Composed of several lines, each providing a complete element of the aggregate or composite thought
- 2) Notice Ps 1:1, "Blessed is the man..."
  - a) "Who WALKS not in the counsel of the ungodly"
  - b) "Nor STANDS in the path of the sinners"
  - c) "Nor SITS in the seat of the scornful"

###### b. Climatic

- 1) The principal idea in the first line is repeated and expanded to complete the thought
- 2) An example is found in Ps 29:1
  - a) "Give unto the LORD, O you mighty ones" (give what?)
  - b) "Give unto the LORD glory and strength"

##### 5. Chiastic parallelism

- a. The first line is closely related in thought to the fourth, and the second to the third
- b. For example, consider Ps 91:14
  - 1) "Because he has set his love upon Me," (cf. line 4)
  - 2) "therefore I will deliver him;" (cf. line 3)
  - 3) "I will set him on high," (cf. line 2)
  - 4) "because he has known My name." (cf. line 1)

### II. THE LACK OF POETIC RHYTHM

#### A. UNLIKE MOST MODERN POETRY...

1. That has standard measures of identifiable rhythms
2. As illustrated in the rhythm of "Mary Had A Little Lamb"

#### B. THE ART OF POETIC RHYTHM WAS OF SECONDARY CONSIDERATION...

1. It is not likely that the Hebrew poets had standard measures, worked out and carefully defined

~~Again, the emphasis was on "TEACHING RHYME"~~

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**III. THE USE OF FIGURATIVE EXPRESSION**

**A. THE FIGURE MUST BE ACCEPTED AND DEALT WITH AS A FIGURE OF SPEECH, AND NOT AS A LITERAL STATEMENT...**

1. For example, calling the Lord a "shepherd" - Ps 23:1
2. He is LIKE a shepherd, but not one literally

**B. THE FIGURE MUST BE INTERPRETED IN LIGHT OF MEANING OF THE FIGURE IN THE DAY AND SETTING IN WHICH IT WAS USED...**

1. For example, "the valley of the shadow of death" - Ps 23:4
2. Commonly applied at modern funerals to dying...
  - a. It refers to a treacherous place where the guiding hand of a "shepherd" would be very helpful to "sheep" to AVOID death
  - b. It is therefore applicable to times other than just when we are dying

Poetic devices commonly used in Hebrew (and other) poetry.

<b>Simile</b>	a comparison of two things that resemble one another - Psalm 1:3-4, 131:2
<b>Metaphor</b>	a comparison where one thing is declared to be another - Psalm 23:1, 84:11
<b>Implication</b>	a comparison where the name of one is used in place of the other - Psalm 22:16
<b>Hyperbole</b>	exaggeration for emphasis - Psalm 6:6, 78:27
<b>Rhetoric</b>	questions to confirm or deny a fact - Psalm 35:10, 56:8, 106:2
<b>Metonymy</b>	one noun used instead of another. "The White House says." - Psalm 18:2, 57:9, 73:9
<b>Anthropomorphism</b>	ascribing to God human characteristics. - Psalm 11:4, 18:15, 31:2
<b>Zoomorphism</b>	ascribing to God animal characteristics. - Psalm 17:8, 36:7, 91:4
<b>Personification</b>	ascribing human characteristics to lifeless objects - Psalm 77:16, 96:11-13
<b>Apostrophe</b>	addressing lifeless objects - Psalm 114:5
<b>Synecdoche</b>	representation of the whole by a part or vice versa - Psalm 91:5

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# Form

by Benedicto Carpio

Compression, extensive use of imagery, and a strong emotional-and frequently sensuous-component are characteristic of lyric poetry. The other major divisions of poetry, narrative (including epics, ballads, metrical romances, and verse tales) and dramatic (poetry as direct speech in specified circumstances), are more easily characterized. Lyric poetry, however, covers everything from hymns, lullabies, drinking songs, and folk songs to the great variety of love songs and poems; from savage political satires to rarefied philosophical poetry; from verse epistles to odes; and from 2-line epigrams or 14-line sonnets to lengthy reflective lyrics and substantial elegies. The content of lyric poetry reflects the variety of concerns of human beings in every period and in every region of the world.

**Epic**, long narrative poem, majestic both in theme and style. Epics deal with legendary or historical events of national or universal significance, involving action of broad sweep and grandeur. Most epics deal with the exploits of a single individual, thereby giving unity to the composition. Typically, an epic includes several features: the introduction of supernatural forces that shape the action; conflict in the form of battles or other physical combat; and stylistic conventions such as an invocation to the Muse, a formal statement of the theme, long lists of the protagonists involved, and set speeches couched in elevated language. Commonplace details of everyday life may appear, but they serve as background for the story and are described in the same lofty style as the rest of the poem.

The Greeks distinguished epic from lyric poetry, both by its nature and its manner of delivery; lyric poetry expressed more personal emotion than epic poetry and was sung, whereas epic poetry was recited.

Epic poems are not merely entertaining stories of legendary or historical heroes; they summarize and express the nature or ideals of an entire nation at a significant or crucial period of its history. Examples include the ancient Greek epics by the poet Homer, the Iliad and the Odyssey. The characteristics of the hero of an epic are national rather than individual, and the exercise of those traits in heroic deeds serves to gratify a sense of national pride. At other times epics may synthesize the ideals of a great religious or cultural movement. The Divine Comedy (1307-1321) by the Italian poet Dante Alighieri expresses the faith of medieval Christianity. The Faerie Queene (1590-1609) by the English poet Edmund Spenser represents the spirit of the Renaissance in England and like Paradise Lost (1667) by the English poet John Milton, represents the ideals of Christian humanism.

**Ballad**, short narrative folk song that fixes on the most dramatic part of a story, moving to its conclusion by means of dialogue and a series of incidents. The word ballad was first used in a general sense to mean a simple short poem. Such a poem could be narrative or lyric, sung or not sung, crude or polite, sentimental or satiric, religious or secular; it was vaguely associated with dance. The word is still commonly used in this loose fashion. In the field of folklore, however, ballad is applied specifically to the kind of narrative folk song described in the opening lines. These narrative songs represent a type of literature and music that developed across Europe in the late Middle Ages. Unlike the medieval romances and rhymed tales, ballads tend to have a tight dramatic structure that sometimes omits all preliminary material, all exposition and description, even all motivation, to focus on the climactic scene (as in the British "Lord Randall"). It is as though the ballad presented only the last act of a play, leaving the listener or reader to supply the antecedent material. When the ballad emerged, it was a new form of art and literature, distinct from anything that had gone before.

Ranging from detailed, fully plotted narratives to almost purely lyric songs, the ballads of different lands and eras are remarkably varied. Moreover, within the variants of any particular ballad, great differences in structure may exist. Because it is transmitted orally, each ballad is subject to continual change; for instance, England's "The Waggoner's Lad" began with a full plot, but its American derivative "On Top of Old Smoky" is a near lyric. Generally, the closer a ballad is to polite literature, the more detail it carries. Oral tradition tends to discard nonessential elements.

**Romance** (literature), literary genre popular in the Middle Ages (5th century to 15th century), dealing, in verse or prose, with legendary, supernatural, or amorous subjects and characters. The name refers to Romance languages and originally denoted any lengthy composition in one of those languages. Later the term was applied to tales specifically concerned with knights, chivalry, and courtly love. The romance and the epic are similar forms, but epics tend to be longer and less concerned with courtly love.

Romances began to appear in western Europe in the 12th century and reached their greatest popularity in the late 13th century; they remained in vogue until the Renaissance (14th century to 17th century). At first, they were related orally by troubadours and trouvères. Subsequently, they were written by court musicians, clerics, scribes, and aristocrats for the entertainment and moral edification of the nobility. Popular subjects for romances included the Macedonian king Alexander the Great, King Arthur of Britain and the knights of the Round Table, and the Frankish emperor Charlemagne. The Arthurian romances fall into three broad groups (see Arthurian Legend). Some, such as Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (anonymous, 1370?), are tales that involve the moral testing of a young knight. Others, such as Tristan und Isolde (1210) by the German poet Gottfried von Strassburg, describe the conflict between passion and duty. The third group, exemplified by the romance Percival, or the Story of the Grail (12th century) by the French poet Chrétien de Troyes, is concerned with the search for the Holy Grail.

Some romances were linked to ballads. Aucassin and Nicolette (anonymous, 13th century), one such chant-fable, or song-story, is about two young lovers. Romances also often had their basis in classical legends. Sir Orfeo (1480?) by the Italian poet Politian, for example, recounts the Orpheus and Eurydice story from Greek mythology but places it in a medieval setting. Eventually, a tradition of sophisticated contemporary romances developed, typified by the 13th-century French poem Le Roman de la Rose. This dream allegory, based on the courtly love traditions of the time, contains little history or legend.

Later prose and verse narratives, particularly those in the 19th-century romantic tradition, are also referred to as romances; set in distant or mythological places and times, like most romances they stress adventure and supernatural elements.

**Satire**, in literature, prose or verse that employs wit in the form of irony, innuendo, or outright derision to expose human wickedness and folly.

The term is derived from the Latin *satura*, meaning a "medley" or "mixture," and is related to the Latin adjective *satur*, "replete." In the Renaissance (14th century to 17th century), as a result of false etymology, the word was confused with *satyr*, and so took on the connotation of lasciviousness and crude mockery. In ancient times, however, it was agreed that satires were intended to tax weaknesses and to correct vice wherever found. Epistle (Greek *epistellein*, "to send to"), formal and instructive letter, often intended for publication. The epistolary form was familiar among the ancient Babylonians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. The Greek philosophers Aristotle and Epicurus made notable use of it. Twenty-one books of the New Testament are epistles written by the apostles to members of the early church. Since the Renaissance the epistle, in verse and prose, has held a prominent place in literature. Examples of the literary epistle are *Lettres provinciales* (1656-57), by the French philosopher Blaise Pascal; the *Drapier's Letters* (1724-25), by the English satirist Jonathan Swift; and *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (1735), in verse, by the English poet Alexander Pope.

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**Ode**, dignified and elaborately structured lyric poem praising and glorifying an individual, commemorating an event, or describing nature intellectually rather than emotionally. Odes originally were songs performed to the accompaniment of a musical instrument.

**Epigram**, in literature, a terse, pointed, frequently witty observation, often in verse. Ancient Greek epigrams were composed of *distichs*, or *couplets*, made up of alternating dactylic hexameters and dactylic pentameters. They were inscribed on tombs or statues. Latin poets, including Catullus, Juvenal, and especially Martial, developed the epigram as a short satire in verse, with a twist or thrust at the end. Among writers in English regarded as master epigrammatists are John Donne, Robert Herrick, Ben Jonson, John Dryden, Jonathan Swift, and especially Alexander Pope, who in the 18th century perfected a form of epigrammatic couplet. Samuel Taylor Coleridge used the form early in the 19th century, and Oscar Wilde was a famous epigrammatist late in the century. In French, Voltaire and Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux both wrote memorable epigrams, as did G. E. Lessing in German. A literary form similar to the epigram occurs in Chinese and Japanese literature. The term has also been loosely applied to any aphorism or short popular saying.

**Sonnet**, lyric poem of 14 lines with a formal rhyme scheme, expressing different aspects of a single thought, mood, or feeling, sometimes resolved or summed up in the last lines of the poem. Originally short poems accompanied by mandolin or lute music, sonnets are generally composed in the standard meter of the language in which they were written—for example, iambic pentameter in English, and the Alexandrine in French (see Versification).

The two main forms of the sonnet are the Petrarchan, or Italian, and the English, or Shakespearean. The former probably developed from the stanza form of the canzone or from Italian folk song.

**Lyric**, short poem that conveys intense feeling or profound thought. In ancient Greece, lyrics were sung or recited to the accompaniment of the lyre. Elegies and odes were popular forms of the lyric in classical times. The lyric poets of ancient Greece included Sappho, Alcaeus, and Pindar; the major Roman lyric poets included Horace, Ovid, and Catullus. Lyrical poetry was also written in ancient India and China; and the Japanese verse called haiku is a lyric.

**Elegy**, originally, in classical Greek and Roman literature, a poem composed of *distichs*, or *couplets*, made up of alternating dactylic hexameters and dactylic pentameters. They were like the epigram but longer. Classical elegies addressed various subjects, including love, lamentation, and politics, and were characterized by their metric form. Ancient poets who used the elegiac form include the Alexandrian Callimachus and the Roman Catullus. In modern poetry (since the 16th century) elegies have been characterized not by their form but by their content, which is invariably melancholy and centers on death. The best-known elegy in English is *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751), by the English poet Thomas Gray, which treats not just a single death but the human condition as well.

A distinct category of elegy, the pastoral elegy, has its roots in Greek and Sicilian poetry of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. Using formal conventions, which developed gradually over centuries, pastoral elegists mourn a subject by representing the mourner and the subject as shepherds in a pastoral setting. The most famous example of the pastoral elegy is *Lycidas* (1638), by the English poet John Milton.

In music the term elegy is frequently applied to a mournful composition.

A clear distinction exists between poetry as pure art form and most so-called didactic poetry, which at its extreme is merely material that has been versified as an aid to memory (such as, "Thirty days hath September") or to make the learning process more pleasant. Where the emphasis is on communication of knowledge for its own sake or on practical instruction, the designation poetry is rather a misnomer. In such works, the rules of ordinary discourse apply, rather than those of poetic art. Clarity, logical arrangement, and completeness of presentation are valued over the poetic projection of human experience, although didactic materials, like any others, can also serve this poetic end if handled properly. This distinction between poetry as art and poetry as versified discourse is part of the larger question of the boundaries of imaginative literature, a problem treated with particular incisiveness by American philosopher Susanne K. Langer. Her book *Feeling and Form* (1953) discusses the difference between the use of language for ordinary communication, as in expository writing, and its use as an artistic medium.

Among lyric poets, Japanese writers of verse are unequalled in the extreme compression of their poetry. Two important forms are the **tanka**, which has existed since the 7th century AD, and the **haiku**, which dates from the 16th century and had a marked effect on Western poets at the beginning of the 20th century. Both forms are unrhymed and in syllabic meter: The tanka is five lines of five, seven, five, seven, and seven syllables, and the haiku is three lines of five, seven, and five syllables. (Longer poems also use these five- and seven-syllable lines, and shorter poems are frequently linked into sequences or are carefully arranged in anthologies to provide a cumulative effect.)

Haiku, Japanese verse form, notable for its compression and suggestiveness. It consists of three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables.

Traditionally and ideally, a haiku presents a pair of contrasting images, one suggestive of time and place, the other a vivid but fleeting observation. Working together, they evoke mood and emotion. The poet does not comment on the connection but leaves the synthesis of the two images for the reader to perceive. A haiku by the poet Bashō, considered to have written the most perfect examples of the form, illustrates this duality:

Now the swinging bridge  
Is quieted with creepers ...

Like our tendrilled life.

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The haiku evolved from the earlier linked-verse form known as the renga and was used extensively by Zen Buddhist monks in the 15th and 16th centuries. In the next 200 years, the verse form achieved its greatest popularity and success. In addition to Bashō, important haiku poets include Yosa Buson, Kobayashi Issa, and Masuoka Shiki.

The precise and concise nature of haiku influenced the early 20th-century Anglo-American poetic movement known as imagism. The writing of haiku is still practiced by thousands of Japanese who annually publish outstanding examples in the many magazines devoted to the art.

**Imagism**, poetic movement that flourished in the U.S. and England between 1909 and 1917. The movement was led by the American poets Ezra Pound and, later, Amy Lowell. Other imagist poets were the English writers D. H. Lawrence and Richard Aldington and the American poets John Gould Fletcher and Hilda Doolittle. These poets issued manifestos and wrote poems and essays embodying their theories. They placed primary reliance on the use of precise, sharp images as a means of poetic expression and stressed precision in the choice of words, freedom in the choice of subject matter and form, and the use of colloquial language. Most of the imagist poets wrote in free verse, using such devices as assonance and alliteration rather than formal metrical schemes to give structure to their poetry. Notable collections of imagist poetry are *Des Imagistes: An Anthology* (1914), compiled by Pound, and the three anthologies compiled by Amy Lowell, all under the title *Some Imagist Poets* (1915, 1916, 1917).

Some of the short poems by 20th-century American poet Ezra Pound capture much of the haiku quality. His poem "Fan-Piece, for Her Imperial Lord" (1926), for instance, although based on a 1st-century BC Chinese poem (much longer in the original but still terse by Western standards), is quite Japanese in its prosody and effect:

Two simple yet emotionally and sensuously powerful images—one evoking a courtly, gracious style of living, the other suggesting both the end of summer and the frosting over of vibrant life (which applies to the woman's sense of her own situation)—are associated in this work. They join with the lightly sketched motion of laying the fan aside—as the woman "also" has been laid aside by her "Imperial Lord." The three short lines exquisitely suggest, without any direct comment, the poignant end of a relationship and of a whole way of life. The original Chinese poem also allows the images, for the most part, to speak for themselves, with little direct comment, and it was this aspect that especially appealed to European poets. Also, the rhymeless Japanese tradition that Pound followed in his translation-adaptation gave an added impetus to the development of free verse in English. Pound's "Fan-Piece" may therefore be considered either as a syllabic (five, seven, seven) poem, or as one alluding specifically to the haiku tradition in its content and number of words (five, seven, five), or as an outstanding example of free verse of the imagist school.

Reference: "Poetry," Microsoft® Encarta® 98 Encyclopedia. © 1993-1997 Microsoft

# POETRY ANALYSIS

## *A Quick Reference Guide*

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When analyzing a poem, it is often best to structure your answer into two key categories:

- **Theme and meaning**, including symbolism and imagery; and
- **Poetic genre and Technical structure**, including rhyme, rhythm and meter.

Usually the meaning is more important, and needs much elaboration, so many people find that it helps (especially when writing an examination) to discuss the technical aspects first, to "get them out of the way" so the rest of the allotted time period may be taken up with an interpretation of the meaning.

When stating your views on anything in analysis, you must be very careful to make sure to explain yourself. This is usually done by quoting (or, if this is impossible, making reference to) a passage in the piece which illuminates your viewpoint. Then elaborate upon this passage and how it proves your stance. For example, it is not enough to define irony and then quote a line. You must show how this line is indeed ironic.

## Meaning and Theme

There are often two types of meaning: **literal** and **figurative**. The literal meaning of a poem is what actually happens in the poem, on a purely superficial level. What is the story or observation found in the poem? Is it simply telling you a story about the death of a king? Is it just describing a Grecian urn with the figures painted upon it?

The figurative meaning is generally associated with the theme, and is usually more *abstract* (i.e., a concept, rather than a concrete physical description). It is the meaning behind the action. Almost every piece of literature, whether poem or story or song, has a theme. This is the main idea, or main meaning, behind the piece. You can usually discover this by asking yourself the question, "What did the author expect me to learn from this piece?" For example, is the poem a lament on the short duration of beauty ("pluck ye rosebuds while ye may"), or might it be a celebration of a past that shall never be again ("The Passing of Arthur")?

A common term that surfaces again and again in the discussion of theme is the *human condition*. Simply put, this is a general statement on what it means to be human. Are we basically good or evil, saved or damned, honorific or cowardly, godlike beings of limitless possibility or simply small beasts stirring in our cages? A great number of poems make some sort of comment on the human condition, so it helps if you are aware of this term and use it sparingly.

## Symbolism

One chief way of conveying theme is through the use of **symbolism**, the concrete representation of an abstract concept. These objects or persons are so universal that they have a meaning in themselves, and so when they are used within a poem or piece of prose, they bring that meaning to the piece. For example, one commonly used symbol for peace is the dove, and so when one flies over a battlefield we may take this as a symbol of a ceasefire, that peace is on its way. If the dove is shot down, we may take this as a symbol of the shattering of hope for peace.

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Sometimes it is more difficult to find the meaning behind certain symbols. The mention of a unicorn, an Irish freedom fighter or a mythological figure might take a little more specialized knowledge or research to discover the full significance of the poem.

## Imagery and Figurative Language

**Imagery** is the use of language to represent objects, actions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, states of mind and any sensory or extra-sensory experience. An image may be *visual* (sight), *olfactory* (smell), *tactile* (touch), *auditory* (hearing), *gustatory* (taste), *abstract* (appealing to the intellect) and *kinaesthetic* (related to movement or bodily effort). Imagery is often tightly linked to the symbolic.

Many images are conveyed by *figurative language*, such as simile, metaphor and personification.

A **simile** is a comparison of one unlike thing to another, whereby the comparison is explicit (i.e., directly stated) using a comparative such as "like" or "as". Examples: "The clouds drifted past as lazily as swans on a summer night," "The evening smothered us like the heavy down quilt on my grandmother's bed."

A **metaphor** is a comparison of one unlike thing to another, whereby the comparison is implicit (i.e., not directly stated), and there is no use of a comparative. Examples: "The clouds drifted past, lazy as swans on a summer night," "The suffocating quilt of the evening descended upon us, stealing our breath and weighing us down."

**Personification** is the attribution of *anthropomorphic* (human) qualities to something which is not human. An example might be, "The wind climbed into the tree, curling up on a hidden branch and crying out a long and mournful lament of loneliness." Note that the attribution of animal qualities ("The river slid serpentine down its accustomed path") is usually not considered personification, but metaphor or simile.

**Onomatopoeia** is the formation and use of words to imitate sounds. The sound of the word reflects the sense, as in *crack*, *whiz*, *whoosh* and *sputter*.

**Assonance** is the repetition of vowel sounds, often close together, to produce euphony (a pleasing sound). Note the drowsy sonority in Tennyson's "Lotus-Eaters":

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:  
 The Lotos blows by every winding creek:  
 All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone  
 Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone,  
 Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust is blown.

**Alliteration** is the repetition of consonants, especially at the beginnings of words or stressed syllables. This may be to produce a particular effect concerning its subject (e.g., "the slippery snake slithered" forming the hiss of a snake), a sort of unity within the line or verse, or simply a melodic or lyrical rhythm.

## Characterization

Although **characterization** often takes a much less important role in poetry than in prose, it may nevertheless be an integral component in the analysis of a poem dealing with a story (a ballad, for example) or a particular person whose needs and motivations should be understood in order to gain a full appreciation of the poem.

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## Title

One of the most important parts of any piece of literature is the title. It often forms a cohesive "banner" under which the main idea of the piece is conveyed. Is the title indicative of a struggle, or of the human condition, or is it symbolic of something else? Is it sarcastic or satiric or humorous, or is it fully serious? Is it simply a descriptive title (one that simply states the object or person described in the poem)? Why did the author choose this particular title?

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## Poetic Genres and Forms

Although "genre" in prose usually refers to a vague subject area such as science fiction or comedy, in poetry it often refers to the technical form of the poem, such as sonnet, free verse or ballad. There have been literally hundreds, if not thousands, of forms defined by literary critics, but most poems fall into the following general categories.

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### Ballad

A **ballad** is fundamentally a song that tells a story. The *folk ballad* is traditionally an anonymous poem that has been passed on through oral tradition (spoken aloud or sung) from generation to generation or by travelling entertainers like bards or minstrels. A *literary ballad* is one that is not anonymous, but is written down by a poet as he composes it, and is not necessarily meant to be sung. Most ballads tend to follow these elements:

1. the beginning is often abrupt;
2. the language is usually simple;
3. the story is told through dialogue and action; and
4. there is often a refrain, or chorus.

Although there are exceptions, most ballads have four-line stanzas (not counting musical refrains) and follow an ABAB or ABCB rhyme scheme. A ballad with six lines per stanza is not uncommon.

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### Epic

An **epic** poem is usually a very long poem of several thousand lines relating the story of a hero and his struggle against impossible odds. This is one of the oldest forms of poetry, and was usually recited orally by professional storytellers or singers over several nights, often at a court or feasting table. In fact, the oldest poem in any modern European language is the Old English (Anglo-Saxon) epic Beowulf.

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### Lyric

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A **lyric** is traditionally fairly short, between four and sixty lines, and usually expresses the feelings and thoughts of a single speaker in a personal and subjective fashion. The range and variety of lyric verse is immense, and lyric poetry composes the bulk of all poetry. If the poem is not narrative or dramatic (which usually follow the other genres given here), it is probably a lyric poem. Most poems fall into the general categories of *love*, *lamentation* (sadness) and the *pastoral* (dealing with the natural world).

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## Sonnet

A **sonnet** is a poem of fourteen lines in *iambic pentameter* (see *Meter*). For high school purposes, they are usually divided into two main types:

- **Petrarchan, or Italian Sonnet**

This sonnet consists of an *octave* (eight lines) rhyming ABBAABBA and a *sestet* (six lines) rhyming CDECDE or CDCDCD. This octave develops a thought, and the *sestet* is a comment on it, a completion of it, or a *volta* ('turn') on the idea. This is the most common type of sonnet.

- **Shakespearean, or Elizabethan Sonnet**

This type of sonnet derives its name from the many sonnets composed by William Shakespeare in this form. It is composed of three *quatrains* (four lines each) rhyming ABAB CDCD EFEF, each one with a different idea building upon the one before it, and of a *couplet* (two lines) rhyming GG, with the conclusion.

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## Blank Verse

**Blank verse** consists of unrhymed five-stress lines, properly *iambic pentameter* (see *Meter*). Much of the poetry of Milton, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Romantics were composed in blank verse. For example:

For you I'll hazard all: why, what care I?  
For you I'll live, and in your love I'll die.

---

## Free Verse

**Free verse** has no regular meter, line length or rhyme, and often depends on natural speech rhythms. Although a poem can be both a lyric and free verse, this latter term is usually more apt for longer pieces, especially when elements of the narrative or the dramatic are present.

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## Technical Structure

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**Technical structure**, or simply just *form*, is conveyed through an analysis of several things, including rhyme, rhythm, meter and poetic genre (sometimes -- confusingly -- also referred to as form). Although the technical structure of most poems is usually less important than the discussion of theme, it is nonetheless an integral part of analysis, as well as often being more difficult, due to the confusion of terms and endless jargon of literary critics. Don't be surprised if different books label a poem to be different forms, or to see one critic use a term with a completely different meaning than that of another critic. However, play it safe... the terms and examples that follow are well-defined even within the circle of critics. Not every poem has every element; this would be improbable, if not impossible. If you cannot reasonably find an element, don't go chasing ghosts: it probably isn't there.

Remember that:

- *verse* has many meanings, and is often best reserved as meaning "poetry in general";
- use *line* to mean a particular line of the poem, as in "we see in line 43 that...";
- use *stanza* to mean a collection of lines separated by a blank line, as in "the third stanza discusses the representation of the Holy Grail as the modern ideal." It is often much the same as a paragraph in prose, and usually concentrates on one main idea.

## Rhyme

Although most people are familiar with **rhyme**, it may be formally defined as the use of words in which there are similarities in an accentuated vowel and the consonants that accompany it. It is said to have two chief functions:

- it echoes sounds and is thus a source of artistic satisfaction. There is pleasure in the sound itself and in the coincidence of sounds, and this is associated with music, rhythm and beat;
- it assists in the actual structure of verse, organizing it and opening and concluding the sense. It is thus used to 'bind' the verse together.

Although rhyme is often thought of as being at the end of a line, it may be anywhere, such as in the middle of a line, e.g., "For this very jest among all of the rest." In this case, this is called an *internal rhyme*.

When analyzing rhyme, mention the **rhyme scheme** by labelling the end of each line with a letter, using a new one every time that you come across a new rhyming sound. For example:

As Robin Hood in the forest stood, .....A  
 All under the greenwood tree, .....B  
 There he was ware of a brave young man, .....C  
 As fine as fine might be. ....B

The youngster was clothed in scarlet red, .....D  
 In scarlet fine and gay, .....E  
 And he did frisk it over the plain .....F  
 And chanted a roundelay. ....E

If you were pressed for time, and did not have the opportunity to either label the poem on the page, or write out the lines, you could say that this poem follows an ABCB rhyme scheme which varies in every stanza.

Keep in mind that not everybody who speaks (or spoke) English uses the same pronunciation. In Scottish poetry for example, as in medieval poetry, vowels are often pronounced quite differently, and if we were to read the poem aloud, we would not actually rhyme the words (e.g., "Little John" and "my son", "is taken" and "is slain"). Whenever you analyze a poem not from our time and area, look carefully for evidence that words rhyme, such as the fact that most of lines do contain a particular pattern of rhyme.

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## Rhythm

**Rhythm** is defined as the movement or sense of movement communicated by the arrangement of stressed syllables and by the duration of the syllables. It usually depends on the metrical pattern (see the following section). This is rather a broad definition, and it is often very difficult to analyze rhythm in a poem. You can sometimes think of it in terms of music, and how the words fall in 'beats'.

## Meter

**Meter** is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables to communicate rhythm. The best way of analyzing a regular meter is to write out at least two lines, writing "/" (a sharp accent) above stressed syllables (those that carry more emphasis) and "U" (a short accent) above unstressed syllables. For example, read the following line aloud and notice what syllables you pronounce more forcefully:

U            /        U        /        U        /        U        /        U        /  
The world is too much with us late and soon

A line following the above pattern is common in English literature, especially in sonnets (see poetic genres), and is called **iambic pentameter**. "Iambic" means it follows an "unstressed-stressed" pattern, and "pentameter" means that it has five sets of two syllables each, amounting to ten syllables. Be sure to note that not all stressed/unstressed syllables fall in an alternating pattern like the above.



*This page last updated on April 2, 1995, by:*



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179p

chiasmus (ky-AZ-mus) *n.*  
a reversal in the order of words  
in two otherwise parallel phrases.  
chiastic *adj*

# Welcome to chiasmus.com

## Inaugural Message (June 1, 1999)

NEVER LET  
A FOOL KISS YOU  
OR  
A KISS FOOL YOU

by

Dr. Mardy Grothe

Welcome to **chiasmus.com**, the web site devoted to the literary and rhetorical device known as chiasmus (pronounced ky-AZ-mus). If you aren't sure what chiasmus means, you have a lot of company. Most people--even the most sophisticated and literate people--aren't. Chiasmus occurs when the order of words is reversed in parallel expressions. While you may not be familiar with the word, you're well acquainted with the phenomenon, for it shows up in thousands of famous quotations, like:

A Selection of the Quality  
Paperback Book Club



Click on book  
to learn more.

**"One should eat to live,  
not live to eat."**  
-- Cicero

**"I'd rather be looked over  
than overlooked."**  
-- Mae West

**"Quitters never win  
and winners never quit."**  
-- Popular Saying

**"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled,  
and whoever humbles himself will be  
exalted."**  
-- Matthew 23: 11-12

"For people who get high on words,  
this book is better than two double  
bourbons!"

-- X. J. Kennedy

And, of course, chiasmus shows up in perhaps the most stirring words uttered in the 20th century, delivered on a cold January morning in 1961 by the youngest man ever elected president of the United States:



**"And so, my fellow Americans,  
ask not what your country can do for you;  
ask what you can do for your country."**

Listen to John F. Kennedy's **chiastic quotation.**  
(You need RealPlayer G2 installed in order to hear this sound clip.)

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- [Chiasmus in the Boston Globe](#)

As I launch this web site on June 1, 1999, *chiasmus* can only be regarded as an obscure word. You can discover this for yourself. Go to ten of your smartest friends and ask them, "Do you know what *chiasmus* means?" I predict you won't find *a single person* who'll know. After nearly a decade of research, I estimate that only one or two people in a thousand can correctly answer such a question. My goal is to change that. The purpose of this site--and of my book on the subject--is to bring *chiasmus* out of the closet of obscurity and move it into the world of popular parlance.

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The situation is not without precedent. Take *oxymoron*. Fifty years ago, it was an obscure word, known by only a small and select group of people. Gradually, it moved from academic to literary circles, and then on to the world of sophisticates and hipsters. Today, virtually all literate people know that it means a contradiction in terms, like "jumbo shrimp" "thundering silence," and, according to some, "military intelligence." It took a half-century for *oxymoron* to make the transition from obscurity to popular usage. My goal is more ambitious. A few years from now, I believe that most literate people will know what *chiasmus* means. And if it they do, I'll take a certain amount of pride in knowing that it happened primarily because of my efforts.

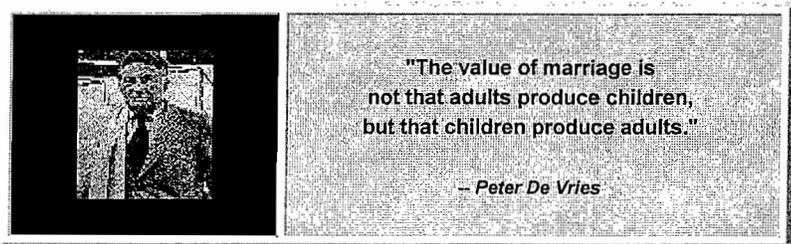
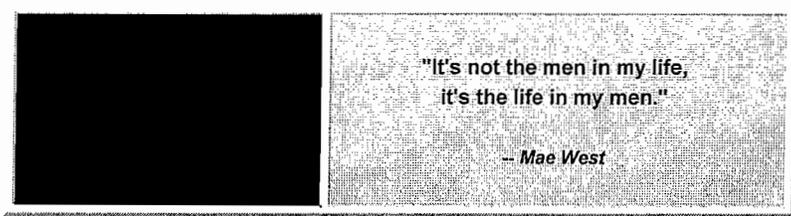
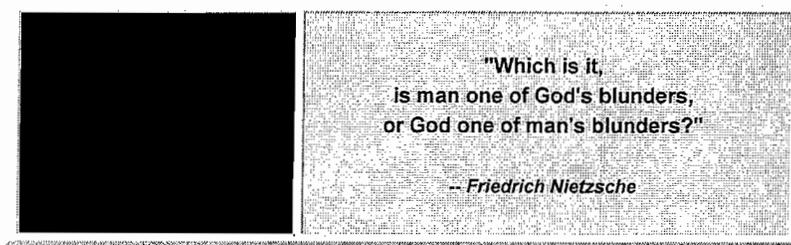
FEEDBACK:

[Send us](#) your favorite chiastic quote.

[Tell us](#) what you think of this site.

Questions about chiasmus? [Write us](#).

Nearly a decade ago, while looking up the definition of "circumlocution" in the dictionary, I accidentally stumbled on *chiasmus*. I'd never seen the word before. My first reaction wasn't all that special, but I'm an avid reader and a word lover, so I often stop to take a closer look at new and unfamiliar words. During the next few weeks, something interesting began to happen. Even though I was unfamiliar with the term, I began to realize that some of my all-time favorite quotations were examples of *chiasmus*:



Then something fateful happened. I was browsing through the aisles of a used book store when I came across a book with a title so faded I could barely make it out--Herbert Prochnow's 1942 book, *The Public Speaker's Treasure Chest*. I slid the book off the shelf, intending to flip through the pages to see if I could find anything interesting. I began with the very last page, but didn't get any further. A quotation near the top of the page leaped out at me. It was from one of my intellectual heroes, the English lexicographer and man of letters, Dr. Samuel Johnson:

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"The two most engaging powers of an author, are,  
to make new things familiar,  
and familiar things new."

The quotation gripped me. Yes, it was another example of chiasmus. But what got my attention was how Johnson's observation captured what had been happening to me over the past few weeks. Something *new*--chiasmus--was becoming *familiar*. And I was beginning to look at something *familiar*--favorite quotations from my past--in a totally *new* way. I was hooked.

Ever since, my life has been consumed by chiasmus and the search for *chiastic* (that's the adjective) quotations. I've read thousands of books--including many of the classic works of the world's great thinkers--in search of them. I personally own more than 250 books of quotations--and have scoured hundreds more--in search of them. Whenever I read a book, magazine, or newspaper, I'm on the lookout. Whenever I go to a movie, I'm listening for a chiastic quote, or an example of chiastic dialogue. I now have nearly 10,000 chiastic quotes in my personal collection. I guess you could say I have a serious case of "chiastic fever." It's a new ailment that hasn't yet made it into the medical and psychiatric textbooks. In plain English, it's what happens when people don't just get into chiasmus, but chiasmus also gets into them. Be careful; it's contagious.

In July 1999, Viking Penguin published the first popular book ever written on the subject of chiasmus: *Never Let a Fool Kiss You or a Kiss Fool You*. The book is my attempt to introduce chiasmus to a broad audience. I have high hopes. The Quality Paperback Book Club has chosen it as a monthly selection, which is an encouraging early sign. And, after seeing a bound galley of the book in May, *The Washington Post* sponsored a chiastic quotes contest. Scores of readers submitted some very clever entries. Craig McGowan of Liverpool, New York was declared the winner with this entry:

"Bill Clinton, before:  
I don't know how I can make this any clearer. . .  
Bill Clinton, after:  
I don't know how I can clear this with my maker. . ."

Nice work, Craig! At some point, I hope you'll enter our own "Chiastic Quotes Competition," which I'll be describing shortly.

#### About chiasmus.com

Let me tell you a little bit about the site. The Navigation Menu to the left lists the various pages of the site. The best place to start is probably [What is Chiasmus?](#) There I provide a formal definition, offer a few thoughts on pronunciation and usage, discuss the fascinating etymology of the word, where you will learn why chiastic quotes are said to be "marked with an X," and describe the ABBA method scholars use when studying chiasmus. You'll discover that chiasmus doesn't just involve a reversal of single words, but also complete phrases, sounds of words, and even numbers. You'll also learn about chiastic come-backs and see why chiasmus is called a figure of speech and a rhetorical device. You'll also discover that chiasmus is a vehicle for expressing some of life's most profound truths, where the opposite of a true statement is also true.

Every month in [Masters of Chiasmus](#) we'll look at how the world's greatest writers, orators, and thinkers have employed chiasmus in their writings and speeches. So

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far we've featured three chiastic masters, Winston Churchill, John F. Kennedy, and Oscar Wilde. In future months, we'll feature William Shakespeare, Confucius, Ben Franklin, George Bernard Shaw, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and others.

If you're a fan of *Jeopardy*, you'll love [The Chiastic Quiz Show](#), an "answers and questions" show inspired by the popular game show, *Jeopardy*. I'll provide a new edition of the show every month. In [An Open Letter to Alex Trebek](#), I talk about how I came up with the idea for the show and challenge one of my favorite television personalities to participate.

If you enjoy reading *The New Yorker* magazine, you may want to check out [Chiasmus in the New Yorker](#). There I provide examples of chiasmus I've found while reading my favorite magazine. I do the same thing with my hometown newspaper in [Chiasmus in the Boston Globe](#).

On September 1, 1999 we launched our [Chiastic Quotes Competition](#), which will give creative types an opportunity to flex their chiastic muscles and maybe even win some cool prizes in the process.

In [Types of Chiasmus](#), you'll learn about many fascinating variations on the chiastic theme--including a rare and special form of "double chiasmus" and one of the most interesting forms of chiasmus, something I call "implied chiasmus."

In [About Dr. Mardy Grothe](#), you get a chance to find out a little bit about me and I get a chance to do a bit of shameless self-promotion. In [About "Never Let a Fool Kiss You"](#), I'll tell you about my new book, share some of the kind things people have already said about it, and provide you with ordering information if you'd like to buy a copy for yourself or as a gift for a friend.

Welcome to the world of chiasmus and chiastic quotations.

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simple, glorious triumph, however, and its meaning is unclear. Humbaba poses no apparent threat to Uruk and its people, and he curses them before he dies. Enlil, the god of wind and storm, is enraged by the slaying of his creature, curses the heroes, and gives to others the seven splendors that had been Humbaba's.

Their second adventure is not of their choosing and also leads to another ambiguous success. Gilgamesh's just but harsh rejection of Ishtar's advances provokes her to send the Bull of Heaven against the people of Uruk. The terrible destruction the Bull causes obliges Gilgamesh and Enkidu to destroy it, but that victory brings about the slow and painful death of Enkidu.

The death of his companion reveals to Gilgamesh the hollowness of mortal fame and leads him to undertake a solitary journey in search of immortality. This journey sets *Gilgamesh* apart from more straightforward heroic narratives and gives it a special appeal to modern readers. Gilgamesh's specific goal is to discover the secret of immortality from the one man, Utnapishtim, who has survived the Flood. His journey begins with a conventional challenge, the fierce lions who guard the mountain passes. But the challenges he faces subsequently—the dark tunnel that brings him to a prototypical garden of paradise, the puzzling and perilous voyage to Dilmun—have a different and more magical character. He is discouraged at every step, but Gilgamesh perseveres. Although he at last finds Utnapishtim and hears his story, his goal eludes him. He fails a simple test of his potential for immortality when he cannot remain awake for six days and seven nights. Moreover, he fails a second test as well when he first finds the plant that ensures eternal rejuvenation and then, in a moment of carelessness, loses it to the serpent. Discouraged and defeated, Gilgamesh returns at last to Uruk empty-handed. His consolation is the assurance that his worldly accomplishments will endure beyond his own lifetime.

In long, belated retrospect we can see that *Gilgamesh* explores many of the mysteries of the human condition for the first time in our literature—the complex and perilous relations between gods and mortals and between nature and civilization, the depths of friendship, and the immortality of art. It is both humbling and thrilling to hear so familiar a voice from so vast a distance.

The introduction to the present translation by N. K. Sandars in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (1972) is readily available and contains a wealth of useful information. A. Leo Oppenheim gives a comprehensive interpretation of Mesopotamian civilization in *Ancient Mesopotamia* (1977), and Alexander Heidel addresses the importance of *Gilgamesh* for biblical studies in *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (1963).

## Gilgamesh<sup>1</sup>

### PROLOGUE

#### *Gilgamesh King in Uruk*

I will proclaim to the world the deeds of Gilgamesh. This was the man to whom all things were known; this was the king who knew the countries of the world. He was wise, he saw mysteries and knew secret things, he brought us a tale of the days before the flood. He went on a long journey, was weary, worn-out with labour, returning he rested, he engraved on a stone the whole story.

When the gods created Gilgamesh they gave him a perfect body. Shamash<sup>2</sup> the glorious sun endowed him with beauty, Adad the god of the storm

1. Translated by N. K. Sandars. 2. Also judge, and lawgiver, with some fertility attributes; he is the husband and brother of Ishtar, goddess of love, fertility, and war and queen of heaven.

endowed him with courage, the great gods made his beauty perfect, surpassing all others, terrifying like a great wild bull. Two thirds they made him god and one third man.

In Uruk<sup>3</sup> he built walls, a great rampart, and the temple of blessed Eanna for the god of the firmament Anu,<sup>4</sup> and for Ishtar the goddess of love. Look at it still today: the outer wall where the cornice runs, it shines with the brilliance of copper; and the inner wall, it has no equal. Touch the threshold, it is ancient. Approach Eanna the dwelling of Ishtar, our lady of love and war, the like of which no latter-day king, no man alive can equal. Climb upon the wall of Uruk; walk along it, I say; regard the foundation terrace and examine the masonry: is it not burnt brick and good? The seven sages<sup>5</sup> laid the foundations.

### 1

#### *The Coming of Enkidu*

Gilgamesh went abroad in the world, but he met with none who could withstand his arms till he came to Uruk. But the men of Uruk muttered in their houses, "Gilgamesh sounds the tocsin for his amusement, his arrogance has no bounds by day or night. No son is left with his father, for Gilgamesh takes them all, even the children; yet the king should be a shepherd to his people. His lust leaves no virgin to her lover, neither the warrior's daughter nor the wife of the noble; yet this is the shepherd of the city, wise, comely, and resolute."

The gods heard their lament, the gods of heaven cried to the Lord of Uruk, to Anu the god of Uruk: "A goddess made him, strong as a savage bull, none can withstand his arms. No son is left with his father, for Gilgamesh takes them all; and is this the king, the shepherd of his people? His lust leaves no virgin to her lover, neither the warrior's daughter nor the wife of the noble." When Anu had heard their lamentation the gods cried to Aruru, the goddess of creation, "You made him, O Aruru, now create his equal; let it be as like him as his own reflection, his second self, stormy heart for stormy heart. Let them contend together and leave Uruk in quiet."

So the goddess conceived an image in her mind, and it was of the stuff of Anu of the firmament. She dipped her hands in water and pinched off clay, she let it fall in the wilderness, and noble Enkidu was created. There was virtue in him of the god of war, of Ninurta himself. His body was rough, he had long hair like a woman's; it waved like the hair of Nisaba, the goddess of corn. His body was covered with matted hair like Samuqan's, the god of cattle. He was innocent of mankind; he knew nothing of the cultivated land.

Enkidu ate grass in the hills with the gazelle and lurked with wild beasts at the water-holes; he had joy of the water with the herds of wild game. But there was a trapper who met him one day face to face at the drinking-hole, for the wild game had entered his territory. On three days he met him face to face, and the trapper was frozen with fear. He went back to his house with

3. City in southern Babylonia between Fara and Ur. Shown by excavation to have been an important city from very early times, with great temples to the gods Anu and Ishtar. After the Flood it was the seat of a dynasty of kings, among whom Gilgamesh was the fifth and most famous.

4. Also father of the gods; he had an important temple in Uruk. Eanna was the temple precinct in Uruk, sacred to Anu and Ishtar.

5. Wise men who brought civilization to the seven oldest cities of Mesopotamia.

the game he had caught, and he was dumb, benumbed with terror. His face was altered like that of one who has made a long journey. With awe in his heart he spoke to his father: "Father, there is a man, unlike any other, who comes down from the hills. He is the strongest in the world, he is like an immortal from heaven. He ranges over the hills with wild beasts and eats grass; he ranges through your land and comes down to the wells. I am afraid and dare not go near him. He fills in the pits which I dig and tears up my traps set for the game; he helps the beasts to escape and now they slip through my fingers."

His father opened his mouth and said to the trapper, "My son, in Uruk lives Gilgamesh; no one has ever prevailed against him, he is strong as a star from heaven. Go to Uruk, find Gilgamesh, extol the strength of this wild man. Ask him to give you a harlot, a wanton from the temple of love; return with her, and let her woman's power overpower this man. When next he comes down to drink at the wells she will be there, stripped naked; and when he sees her beckoning he will embrace her, and then/the wild beasts will reject him."

So the trapper set out on his journey to Uruk and addressed himself to Gilgamesh saying, "A man unlike any other is roaming now in the pastures; he is as strong as a star from heaven and I am afraid to approach him. He helps the wild game to escape; he fills in my pits and pulls up my traps." Gilgamesh said, "Trapper, go back, take with you a harlot, a child of pleasure. At the drinking-hole she will strip, and when he sees her beckoning he will embrace her and the game of the wilderness will surely reject him."

Now the trapper returned, taking the harlot with him. After a three days' journey they came to the drinking-hole, and there they sat down; the harlot and the trapper sat facing one another and waited for the game to come. For the first day and for the second day the two sat waiting, but on the third day the herds came; they came down to drink and Enkidu was with them. The small wild creatures of the plains were glad of the water, and Enkidu with them, who ate grass with the gazelle and was born in the hills; and she saw him, the savage man, come from far-off in the hills. The trapper spoke to her: "There he is. Now, woman, make your breasts bare, have no shame, do not delay but welcome his love. Let him see you naked, let him possess your body. When he comes near uncover yourself and lie with him; teach him, the savage man, your woman's art, for when he murmurs love to you the wild beasts that shared his life in the hills will reject him."

She was not ashamed to take him, she made herself naked and welcomed his eagerness; as he lay on her murmuring love she taught him the woman's art. For six days and seven nights they lay together, for Enkidu had forgotten his home in the hills; but when he was satisfied he went back to the wild beasts. Then, when the gazelle saw him, they bolted away; when the wild creatures saw him they fled. Enkidu would have followed, but his body was bound as though with a cord, his knees gave way when he started to run, his swiftness was gone. And now the wild creatures had all fled away; Enkidu was grown weak, for wisdom was in him, and the thoughts of a man were in his heart. So he returned and sat down at the woman's feet, and listened intently to what she said. "You are wise, Enkidu, and now you have become like a god. Why do you want to run wild with the beasts in the hills? Come with me. I will take you to strong-walled Uruk, to the blessed temple of Ishtar

and of Anu, of love and of heaven: there Gilgamesh lives, who is very strong, and like a wild bull he lords it over men."

When she had spoken Enkidu was pleased; he longed for a comrade, for one who would understand his heart. "Come, woman, and take me to that holy temple, to the house of Anu and of Ishtar, and to the place where Gilgamesh lords it over the people. I will challenge him boldly, I will cry out aloud in Uruk, 'I am the strongest here, I have come to change the old order, I am he who was born in the hills, I am he who is strongest of all.'"

She said, "Let us go, and let him see your face. I know very well where Gilgamesh is in great Uruk. O Enkidu, there all the people are dressed in their gorgeous robes, every day is holiday, the young men and the girls are wonderful to see. How sweet they smell! All the great ones are roused from their beds. O Enkidu, you who love life, I will show you Gilgamesh, a man of many moods; you shall look at him well in his radiant manhood. His body is perfect in strength and maturity; he never rests by night or day. He is stronger than you, so leave your boasting. Shamash the glorious sun has given favours to Gilgamesh, and Anu of the heavens, and Enlil, and Ea the wise has given him deep understanding. I tell you, even before you have left the wilderness, Gilgamesh will know in his dreams that you are coming."

Now Gilgamesh got up to tell his dream to his mother, Ninsun, one of the wise gods. "Mother, last night I had a dream. I was full of joy, the young heroes were round me and I walked through the night under the stars of the firmament, and one, a meteor of the stuff of Anu, fell down from heaven. I tried to lift it but it proved too heavy. All the people of Uruk came round to see it, the common people jostled and the nobles thronged to kiss its feet; and to me its attraction was like the love of woman. They helped me, I braced my forehead and I raised it with thongs and brought it to you, and you yourself pronounced it my brother."

Then Ninsun, who is well-beloved and wise, said to Gilgamesh, "This star of heaven which descended like a meteor from the sky; which you tried to lift, but found too heavy, when you tried to move it it would not budge, and so you brought it to my feet; I made it for you, a goad and spur, and you were drawn as though to a woman. This is the strong comrade, the one who brings help to his friend in his need. He is the strongest of wild creatures, the stuff of Anu; born in the grass-lands and the wild hills reared him; when you see him you will be glad; you will love him as a woman and he will never forsake you. This is the meaning of the dream."

Gilgamesh said, "Mother, I dreamed a second dream. In the streets of strong-walled Uruk there lay an axe; the shape of it was strange and the people thronged round. I saw it and was glad. I bent down, deeply drawn towards it; I loved it like a woman and wore it at my side." Ninsun answered, "That axe, which you saw, which drew you so powerfully like love of a woman, that is the comrade whom I give you, and he will come in his strength like one of the host of heaven. He is the brave companion who rescues his friend in necessity." Gilgamesh said to his mother, "A friend, a counsellor has come to me from Enlil, and now I shall befriend and counsel him." So Gilgamesh told his dreams; and the harlot retold them to Enkidu.

And now she said to Enkidu, "When I look at you you have become like a god. Why do you yearn to run wild again with the beasts in the hills? Get up from the ground, the bed of a shepherd." He listened to her words with care.

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It was good advice that she gave. She divided her clothing in two and with the one half she clothed him and with the other herself; and holding his hand she led him like a child to the sheepfolds, into the shepherds' tents. There all the shepherds crowded round to see him; they put down bread in front of him, but Enkidu could only suck the milk of wild animals. He fumbled and gaped, at a loss what to do or how he should eat the bread and drink the strong wine. Then the woman said, "Enkidu, eat bread, it is the staff of life; drink the wine, it is the custom of the land." So he ate till he was full and drank strong wine, seven goblets. He became merry, his heart exulted and his face shone. He rubbed down the matted hair of his body and anointed himself with oil. Enkidu had become a man; but when he had put on man's clothing he appeared like a bridegroom. He took arms to hunt the lion so that the shepherds could rest at night. He caught wolves and lions and the herdsmen lay down in peace; for Enkidu was their watchman, that strong man who had no rival.

He was merry living with the shepherds, till one day lifting his eyes he saw a man approaching. He said to the harlot, "Woman, fetch that man here. Why has he come? I wish to know his name." She went and called the man saying, "Sir, where are you going on this weary journey?" The man answered, saying to Enkidu, "Gilgamesh has gone into the marriage-house and shut out the people. He does strange things in Uruk, the city of great streets. At the roll of the drum work begins for the men, and work for the women. Gilgamesh the king is about to celebrate marriage with the Queen of Love, and he still demands to be first with the bride, the king to be first and the husband to follow, for that was ordained by the gods from his birth, from the time the umbilical cord was cut. But now the drums roll for the choice of the bride and the city groans." At these words Enkidu turned white in the face. "I will go to the place where Gilgamesh lords it over the people, I will challenge him boldly, and I will cry aloud in Uruk, 'I have come to change the old order, for I am the strongest here.'"

Now Enkidu strode in front and the woman followed behind. He entered Uruk, that great market, and all the folk thronged round him where he stood in the street in strong-walled Uruk. The people jostled; speaking of him they said, "He is the spit of Gilgamesh." "He is shorter." "He is bigger of bone." "This is the one who was reared on the milk of wild beasts. His is the greatest strength." The men rejoiced: "Now Gilgamesh has met his match. This great one, this hero whose beauty is like a god, he is a match even for Gilgamesh."

In Uruk the bridal bed was made, fit for the goddess of love. The bride waited for the bridegroom, but in the night Gilgamesh got up and came to the house. Then Enkidu stepped out, he stood in the street and blocked the way. Mighty Gilgamesh came on and Enkidu met him at the gate. He put out his foot and prevented Gilgamesh from entering the house, so they grappled, holding each other like bulls. They broke the doorposts and the walls shook, they snorted like bulls locked together. They shattered the doorposts and the walls shook. Gilgamesh bent his knee with his foot planted on the ground and with a turn Enkidu was thrown. Then immediately his fury died. When Enkidu was thrown he said to Gilgamesh, "There is not another like you in the world. Ninsun, who is as strong as a wild ox in the byre, she was the mother who bore you, and now you are raised above all men, and Enlil

has given you the kingship, for your strength surpasses the strength of men." So Enkidu and Gilgamesh embraced and their friendship was sealed.

## 2

*The Forest Journey*

Enlil of the mountain, the father of the gods,<sup>6</sup> had decreed the destiny of Gilgamesh. So Gilgamesh dreamed and Enkidu said, "The meaning of the dream is this. The father of the gods has given you kingship, such is your destiny, everlasting life is not your destiny. Because of this do not be sad at heart, do not be grieved or oppressed. He has given you power to bind and to loose, to be the darkness and the light of mankind. He has given you unexampled supremacy over the people, victory in battle from which no fugitive returns, in forays and assaults from which there is no going back. But do not abuse this power, deal justly with your servants in the palace, deal justly before Shamash."

The eyes of Enkidu were full of tears and his heart was sick. He sighed bitterly and Gilgamesh met his eye and said, "My friend, why do you sigh so bitterly?" But Enkidu opened his mouth and said, "I am weak, my arms have lost their strength, the cry of sorrow sticks in my throat, I am oppressed by idleness." It was then that the lord Gilgamesh turned his thoughts to the Country of the Living; on the Land of Cedars the lord Gilgamesh reflected. He said to his servant Enkidu, "I have not established my name stamped on bricks as my destiny decreed; therefore I will go to the country where the cedar is felled. I will set up my name in the place where the names of famous men are written, and where no man's name is written yet I will raise a monument to the gods. Because of the evil that is in the land, we will go to the forest and destroy the evil; for in the forest lives Humbaba whose name is 'Hugeness', a ferocious giant." But Enkidu sighed bitterly and said, "When I went with the wild beasts ranging through the wilderness I discovered the forest; its length is ten thousand leagues in every direction. Enlil has appointed Humbaba to guard it and armed him in sevenfold terrors, terrible to all flesh is Humbaba. When he roars it is like the torrent of the storm, his breath is like fire, and his jaws are death itself. He guards the cedars so well that when the wild heifer stirs in the forest, though she is sixty leagues distant, he hears her. What man would willingly walk into that country and explore its depths? I tell you, weakness overpowers whoever goes near it: it is not an equal struggle when one fights with Humbaba; he is a great warrior, a battering-ram. Gilgamesh, the watchman of the forest never sleeps."

Gilgamesh replied: "Where is the man who can clamber to heaven? Only the gods live for ever with glorious Shamash, but as for us men, our days are numbered, our occupations are a breath of wind. How is this, already you are afraid! I will go first although I am your lord, and you may safely call out, 'Forward, there is nothing to fear!' Then if I fall I leave behind me a name that endures; men will say of me, 'Gilgamesh has fallen in fight with ferocious Humbaba.' Long after the child has been born in my house, they will say it, and remember." Enkidu spoke again to Gilgamesh, "O my lord, if you will

6. The breath and "word" of Anu; he is also god of earth, wind, and spirit.

enter that country, go first to the hero Shamash, tell the Sun God, for the land is his. The country where the cedar is cut belongs to Shamash."

Gilgamesh took up a kid, white without spot, and a brown one with it; he held them against his breast, and he carried them into the presence of the sun. He took in his hand his silver sceptre and he said to glorious Shamash, "I am going to that country, O Shamash, I am going; my hands supplicate, so let it be well with my soul and bring me back to the quay of Uruk. Grant, I beseech, your protection, and let the omen be good." Glorious Shamash answered, "Gilgamesh, you are strong, but what is the Country of the Living to you?"

"O Shamash, hear me, hear me, Shamash, let my voice be heard. Here in the city man dies oppressed at heart, man perishes with despair in his heart. I have looked over the wall and I see the bodies floating on the river, and that will be my lot also. Indeed I know it is so, for whoever is tallest among men cannot reach the heavens, and the greatest cannot encompass the earth. Therefore I would enter that country: because I have not established my name stamped on brick as my destiny decreed, I will go to the country where the cedar is cut. I will set up my name where the names of famous men are written; and where no man's name is written I will raise a monument to the gods." The tears ran down his face and he said, "Alas, it is a long journey that I must take to the Land of Humbaba. If this enterprise is not to be accomplished, why did you move me, Shamash, with the restless desire to perform it? How can I succeed if you will not succour me? If I die in that country I will die without rancour, but if I return I will make a glorious offering of gifts and of praise to Shamash."

So Shamash accepted the sacrifice of his tears; like the compassionate man he showed him mercy. He appointed strong allies for Gilgamesh, sons of one mother, and stationed them in the mountain caves. The great wind he appointed: the north wind, the whirlwind, the storm and the icy wind, the tempest and the scorching wind. Like vipers, like dragons, like a scorching fire, like a serpent that freezes the heart, a destroying flood and the lightning's fork, such were they and Gilgamesh rejoiced.

He went to the forge and said, "I will give orders to the armourers; they shall cast us our weapons while we watch them." So they gave orders to the armourers and the craftsmen sat down in conference. They went into the groves of the plain and cut willow and box-wood; they cast for them axes of nine score pounds, and great swords they cast with blades of six score pounds each one, with pommels and hilts of thirty pounds. They cast for Gilgamesh the axe "Might of Heroes" and the bow of Anshan,<sup>7</sup> and Gilgamesh was armed and Enkidu; and the weight of the arms they carried was thirty score pounds.

The people collected and the counsellors in the streets and in the market-place of Uruk; they came through the gate of seven bolts and Gilgamesh spoke to them in the market-place: "I, Gilgamesh, go to see that creature of whom such things are spoken, the rumour of whose name fills the world. I will conquer him in his cedar wood and show the strength of the sons of Uruk, all the world shall know of it. I am committed to this enterprise: to climb the mountain, to cut down the cedar, and leave behind me an enduring

7. A district of Elam in southwest Persia; probably the source of wood for making bows.

name." The counsellors of Uruk, the great market, answered him, "Gilgamesh, you are young, your courage carries you too far, you cannot know what this enterprise means which you plan. We have heard that Humbaba is not like men who die, his weapons are such that none can stand against them; the forest stretches for ten thousand leagues in every direction; who would willingly go down to explore its depths? As for Humbaba, when he roars it is like the torrent of the storm, his breath is like fire and his jaws are death itself. Why do you crave to do this thing, Gilgamesh? It is no equal struggle when one fights with Humbaba, that battering-ram."

When he heard these words of the counsellors Gilgamesh looked at his friend and laughed, "How shall I answer them; shall I say I am afraid of Humbaba, I will sit at home all the rest of my days?" Then Gilgamesh opened his mouth again and said to Enkidu, "My friend, let us go to the Great Palace, to Egalmah,<sup>8</sup> and stand before Ninsun the queen. Ninsun is wise with deep knowledge, she will give us counsel for the road we must go." They took each other by the hand as they went to Egalmah, and they went to Ninsun the great queen. Gilgamesh approached, he entered the palace and spoke to Ninsun. "Ninsun, will you listen to me; I have a long journey to go, to the Land of Humbaba, I must travel an unknown road and fight a strange battle. From the day I go until I return, till I reach the cedar forest and destroy the evil which Shamash abhors, pray for me to Shamash."

Ninsun went into her room, she put on a dress becoming to her body, she put on jewels to make her breast beautiful, she placed a tiara on her head and her skirts swept the ground. Then she went up to the altar of the Sun, standing upon the roof of the palace; she burnt incense and lifted her arms to Shamash as the smoke ascended: "O Shamash, why did you give this restless heart to Gilgamesh, my son; why did you give it? You have moved him and now he sets out on a long journey to the Land of Humbaba to travel an unknown road and fight a strange battle. Therefore from the day that he goes till the day he returns, until he reaches the cedar forest, until he kills Humbaba and destroys the evil thing which you, Shamash, abhor, do not forget him; but let the dawn, Aya, your dear bride, remind you always, and when day is done give him to the watchman of the night to keep him from harm." Then Ninsun the mother of Gilgamesh extinguished the incense, and she called to Enkidu with this exhortation: "Strong Enkidu, you are not the child of my body, but I will receive you as my adopted son; you are my other child like the foundlings they bring to the temple. Serve Gilgamesh as a foundling serves the temple and the priestess who reared him. In the presence of my women, my votaries and hierophants,<sup>9</sup> I declare it." Then she placed the amulet for a pledge round his neck, and she said to him, "I entrust my son to you; bring him back to me safely."

And now they brought to them the weapons, they put in their hands the great swords in their golden scabbards, and the bow and the quiver. Gilgamesh took the axe, he slung the quiver from his shoulder, and the bow of Anshan, and buckled the sword to his belt; and so they were armed and ready for the journey. Now all the people came and pressed on them and said, "When will you return to the city?" The counsellors blessed Gilgamesh and warned him, "Do not trust too much in your own strength, be watchful,

8. Home of the goddess Ninsun. 9. Priests.

restrain your blows at first. The one who goes in front protects his companion; the good guide who knows the way guards his friend. Let Enkidu lead the way, he knows the road to the forest, he has seen Humbaba and is experienced in battles; let him press first into the passes, let him be watchful and look to himself. Let Enkidu protect his friend, and guard his companion, and bring him safe through the pitfalls of the road. We, the counsellors of Uruk, entrust our king to you, O Enkidu; bring him back safely to us." Again to Gilgamesh they said, "May Shamash give you your heart's desire, may he let you see with your eyes the thing accomplished which your lips have spoken; may he open a path for you where it is blocked, and a road for your feet to tread. May he open the mountains for your crossing, and may the nighttime bring you the blessings of night, and Lugulbanda, your guardian god, stand beside you for victory. May you have victory in the battle as though you fought with a child. Wash your feet in the river of Humbaba to which you are journeying; in the evening dig a well, and let there always be pure water in your water-skin. Offer cold water to Shamash and do not forget Lugulbanda."

Then Enkidu opened his mouth and said, "Forward, there is nothing to fear. Follow me, for I know the place where Humbaba lives and the paths where he walks. Let the counsellors go back. Here is no cause for fear." When the counsellors heard this they sped the hero on his way. "Go, Gilgamesh, may your guardian god protect you on the road and bring you safely back to the quay of Uruk."

After twenty leagues they broke their fast; after another thirty leagues they stopped for the night. Fifty leagues they walked in one day; in three days they had walked as much as a journey of a month and two weeks. They crossed seven mountains before they came to the gate of the forest. Then Enkidu called out to Gilgamesh, "Do not go down into the forest; when I opened the gate my hand lost its strength." Gilgamesh answered him, "Dear friend, do not speak like a coward. Have we got the better of so many dangers and travelled so far, to turn back at last? You, who are tried in wars and battles, hold close to me now and you will feel no fear of death; keep beside me and your weakness will pass, the trembling will leave your hand. Would my friend rather stay behind? No, we will go down together into the heart of the forest. Let your courage be roused by the battle to come; forget death and follow me, a man resolute in action, but one who is not foolhardy. When two go together each will protect himself and shield his companion, and if they fall they leave an enduring name."

Together they went down into the forest and they came to the green mountain. There they stood still, they were struck dumb; they stood still and gazed at the forest. They saw the height of the cedar, they saw the way into the forest and the track where Humbaba was used to walk. The way was broad and the going was good. They gazed at the mountain of cedars, the dwelling-place of the gods and the throne of Ishtar. The hugeness of the cedar rose in front of the mountain, its shade was beautiful, full of comfort; mountain and glade were green with brushwood.

There Gilgamesh dug a well before the setting sun. He went up the mountain and poured out fine meal on the ground and said, "O mountain, dwelling of the gods, bring me a favourable dream." Then they took each other by the hand and lay down to sleep; and sleep that flows from the night lapped over

them. Gilgamesh dreamed, and at midnight sleep left him, and he told his dream to his friend. "Enkidu, what was it that woke me if you did not? My friend, I have dreamed a dream. Get up, look at the mountain precipice. The sleep that the gods sent me is broken. Ah, my friend, what a dream I have had! Terror and confusion; I seized hold of a wild bull in the wilderness. It bellowed and beat up the dust till the whole sky was dark, my arm was seized and my tongue bitten. I fell back on my knee; then someone refreshed me with water from his water-skin."

Enkidu said, "Dear friend, the god to whom we are travelling is no wild bull, though his form is mysterious. That wild bull which you saw is Shamash the Protector; in our moment of peril he will take our hands. The one who gave water from his water-skin, that is your own god who cares for your good name, your Lugulbanda.<sup>1</sup> United with him, together we will accomplish a work the fame of which will never die."

Gilgamesh said, "I dreamed again. We stood in a deep gorge of the mountain, and beside it we two were like the smallest of swamp flies; and suddenly the mountain fell, it struck me and caught my feet from under me. Then came an intolerable light blazing out, and in it was one whose grace and whose beauty were greater than the beauty of this world. He pulled me out from under the mountain, he gave me water to drink and my heart was comforted, and he set my feet on the ground."

Then Enkidu the child of the plains said, "Let us go down from the mountain and talk this thing over together." He said to Gilgamesh the young god, "Your dream is good, your dream is excellent, the mountain which you saw is Humbaba. Now, surely, we will seize and kill him, and throw his body down as the mountain fell on the plain."

The next day after twenty leagues they broke their fast, and after another thirty they stopped for the night. They dug a well before the sun had set and Gilgamesh ascended the mountain. He poured out fine meal on the ground and said, "O mountain, dwelling of the gods, send a dream for Enkidu, make him a favourable dream." The mountain fashioned a dream for Enkidu; it came, an ominous dream; a cold shower passed over him, it caused him to cower like the mountain barley under a storm of rain. But Gilgamesh sat with his chin on his knees till the sleep which flows over all mankind lapped over him. Then, at midnight, sleep left him; he got up and said to his friend, "Did you call me, or why did I wake? Did you touch me, or why am I terrified? Did not some god pass by, for my limbs are numb with fear? My friend, I saw a third dream and this dream was altogether frightful. The heavens roared and the earth roared again, daylight failed and darkness fell, lightning flashed, fire blazed out, the clouds lowered, they rained down death. Then the brightness departed, the fire went out, and all was turned to ashes fallen about us. Let us go down from the mountain and talk this over, and consider what we should do."

When they had come down from the mountain Gilgamesh seized the axe in his hand; he felled the cedar. When Humbaba heard the noise far off he was enraged; he cried out, "Who is this that has violated my woods and cut down my cedar?" But glorious Shamash called to them out of heaven, "Go forward, do not be afraid." But now Gilgamesh was overcome by weakness,

1. Hero of a cycle of Sumerian poems; protector of Gilgamesh.

for sleep had seized him suddenly, a profound sleep held him; he lay on the ground, stretched out speechless, as though in a dream. When Enkidu touched him he did not rise, when he spoke to him he did not reply. "O Gilgamesh, Lord of the plain of Kullab,<sup>2</sup> the world grows dark, the shadows have spread over it, now is the glimmer of dusk. Shamash has departed, his bright head is quenched in the bosom of his mother Ningal. O Gilgamesh, how long will you lie like this, asleep? Never let the mother who gave you birth be forced in mourning into the city square."

At length Gilgamesh heard him; he put on his breastplate, "The Voice of Heroes," of thirty shekels' weight; he put it on as though it had been a light garment that he carried, and it covered him altogether. He straddled the earth like a bull that snuffs the ground and his teeth were clenched. "By the life of my mother Ninsun who gave me birth, and by the life of my father, divine Lugulbanda, let me live to be the wonder of my mother, as when she nursed me on her lap." A second time he said to him, "By the life of Ninsun my mother who gave me birth, and by the life of my father, divine Lugulbanda, until we have fought this man, if man he is, this god, if god he is, the way that I took to the Country of the Living will not turn back to the city."

Then Enkidu, the faithful companion, pleaded, answering him, "O my lord, you do not know this monster and that is the reason you are not afraid. I who know him, I am terrified. His teeth are dragon's fangs, his countenance is like a lion, his charge is the rushing of the flood, with his look he crushes alike the trees of the forest and reeds in the swamp. O my Lord, you may go on if you choose into this land, but I will go back to the city. I will tell the lady your mother all your glorious deeds till she shouts for joy: and then I will tell the death that followed till she weeps for bitterness." But Gilgamesh said, "Immolation and sacrifice are not yet for me, the boat of the dead shall not go down, nor the three-ply cloth be cut for my shrouding. Not yet will my people be desolate, nor the pyre be lit in my house and my dwelling burnt on the fire. Today, give me your aid and you shall have mine: what then can go amiss with us two? All living creatures born of the flesh shall sit at last in the boat of the West, and when it sinks, when the boat of Magilum<sup>3</sup> sinks, they are gone; but we shall go forward and fix our eyes on this monster. If your heart is fearful throw away fear; if there is terror in it throw away terror. Take your axe in your hand and attack. He who leaves the fight unfinished is not at peace."

Humbaba came out from his strong house of cedar. Then Enkidu called out, "O Gilgamesh, remember now your boasts in Uruk. Forward, attack, son of Uruk, there is nothing to fear." When he heard these words his courage rallied; he answered, "Make haste, close in, if the watchman is there do not let him escape to the woods where he will vanish. He has put on the first of his seven splendours<sup>4</sup> but not yet the other six, let us trap him before he is armed." Like a raging wild bull he snuffed the ground; the watchman of the woods turned full of threatenings, he cried out. Humbaba came from his strong house of cedar. He nodded his head and shook it, menacing Gilgamesh; and on him he fastened his eye, the eye of death. Then Gilgamesh called to Shamash and his tears were flowing, "O glorious Shamash, I have followed the road you commanded but now if you send no succour how shall

2. In Uruk. 3. Unclear; perhaps the boat of the dead. 4. Unclear; perhaps warlike attributes.

I escape?" Glorious Shamash heard his prayer and he summoned the great wind, the north wind, the whirlwind, the storm and the icy wind, the tempest and the scorching wind; they came like dragons, like a scorching fire, like a serpent that freezes the heart, a destroying flood and the lightning's fork. The eight winds rose up against Humbaba, they beat against his eyes; he was gripped, unable to go forward or back. Gilgamesh shouted, "By the life of Ninsun my mother and divine Lugulbanda my father, in the Country of the Living, in this Land I have discovered your dwelling; my weak arms and my small weapons I have brought to this Land against you, and now I will enter your house."

So he felled the first cedar and they cut the branches and laid them at the foot of the mountain. At the first stroke Humbaba blazed out, but still they advanced. They felled seven cedars and cut and bound the branches and laid them at the foot of the mountain, and seven times Humbaba loosed his glory on them. As the seventh blaze died out they reached his lair. He slapped his thigh in scorn. He approached like a noble wild bull roped on the mountain, a warrior whose elbows are bound together. The tears started to his eyes and he was pale, "Gilgamesh, let me speak. I have never known a mother, nor a father who reared me. I was born of the mountain, he reared me, and Enlil made me the keeper of this forest. Let me go free, Gilgamesh, and I will be your servant, you shall be my lord; all the trees of the forest that I tended on the mountain shall be yours. I will cut them down and build you a palace." He took him by the hand and led him to his house, so that the heart of Gilgamesh was moved with compassion. He swore by the heavenly life, by the earthly life, by the underworld itself: "O Enkidu, should not the snared bird return to its nest and the captive man return to his mother's arms?" Enkidu answered, "The strongest of men will fall to fate if he has no judgement. Namtar, the evil fate that knows no distinction between men, will devour him. If the snared bird returns to its nest, if the captive man returns to his mother's arms, then you my friend will never return to the city where the mother is waiting who gave you birth. He will bar the mountain road against you, and make the pathways impassable."

Humbaba said, "Enkidu, what you have spoken is evil: you, a hireling, dependent for your bread! In envy and for fear of a rival you have spoken evil words." Enkidu said, "Do not listen, Gilgamesh: this Humbaba must die. Kill Humbaba first and his servants after." But Gilgamesh said, "If we touch him the blaze and the glory of light will be put out in confusion, the glory and glamour will vanish, its rays will be quenched." Enkidu said to Gilgamesh, "Not so, my friend. First entrap the bird, and where shall the chicks run then? Afterwards we can search out the glory and the glamour, when the chicks run distracted through the grass."

Gilgamesh listened to the word of his companion, he took the axe in his hand, he drew the sword from his belt, and he struck Humbaba with a thrust of the sword to the neck, and Enkidu his comrade struck the second blow. At the third blow Humbaba fell. Then there followed confusion for this was the guardian of the forest whom they had felled to the ground. For as far as two leagues the cedars shivered when Enkidu felled the watcher of the forest, he at whose voice Hermon and Lebanon<sup>5</sup> used to tremble. Now the moun-

5. Mountains in Lebanon.

tains were moved and all the hills, for the guardian of the forest was killed. They attacked the cedars, the seven splendours of Humbaba were extinguished. So they pressed on into the forest bearing the sword of eight talents. They uncovered the sacred dwellings of the Anunnaki<sup>6</sup> and while Gilgamesh felled the first of the trees of the forest Enkidu cleared their roots as far as the banks of Euphrates. They set Humbaba before the gods, before Enlil; they kissed the ground and dropped the shroud and set the head before him. When he saw the head of Humbaba, Enlil raged at them. "Why did you do this thing? From henceforth may the fire be on your faces, may it eat the bread that you eat, may it drink where you drink." Then Enlil took again the blaze and the seven splendours that had been Humbaba's: he gave the first to the river, and he gave to the lion, to the stone of excretion, to the mountain and to the dreaded daughter of the Queen of Hell.

O Gilgamesh, king and conqueror of the dreadful blaze; wild bull who plunders the mountain, who crosses the sea, glory to him, and from the brave the greater glory is Enki's!<sup>7</sup>

## 3

*Ishtar and Gilgamesh, and the Death of Enkidu*

Gilgamesh washed out his long locks and cleaned his weapons; he flung back his hair from his shoulders; he threw off his stained clothes and changed them for new. He put on his royal robes and made them fast. When Gilgamesh had put on the crown, glorious Ishtar lifted her eyes, seeing the beauty of Gilgamesh. She said, "Come to me Gilgamesh, and be my bride-groom; grant me seed of your body, let me be your bride and you shall be my husband. I will harness for you a chariot of lapis lazuli and of gold, with wheels of gold and horns of copper; and you shall have mighty demons of the storm for draft-mules. When you enter our house in the fragrance of cedar-wood, threshold and throne will kiss your feet. Kings, rulers, and princes will bow down before you; they shall bring you tribute from the mountains and the plain. Your ewes shall drop twins and your goats triplets; your pack-ass shall outrun mules; your oxen shall have no rivals, and your chariot horses shall be famous far-off for their swiftness."

Gilgamesh opened his mouth and answered glorious Ishtar, "If I take you in marriage, what gifts can I give in return? What ointments and clothing for your body? I would gladly give you bread and all sorts of food fit for a god. I would give you wine to drink fit for a queen. I would pour out barley to stuff your granary; but as for making you my wife—that I will not. How would it go with me? Your lovers have found you like a brazier which smoulders in the cold, a backdoor which keeps out neither squall of wind nor storm, a castle which crushes the garrison, pitch that blackens the bearer, a water-skin that chafes the carrier, a stone which falls from the parapet, a battering-ram turned back from the enemy, a sandal that trips the wearer. Which of your lovers did you ever love for ever? What shepherd of yours has pleased you for all time? Listen to me while I tell the tale of your lovers. There was Tammu<sup>8</sup>, the lover of your youth, for him you decreed wailing, year after

6. Gods of the underworld, judges of the dead, and offspring of Anu. 7. Or Ea, god of the sweet waters and wisdom, a patron of arts, and one of the creators of humankind, toward whom he is usually well disposed. 8. The dying god of vegetation.

year. You loved the many-coloured roller, but still you struck and broke his wing; now in the grove he sifs and cries, "Kappi, kappi, my wing, my wing." You have loved the lion tremendous in strength; seven pits you dug for him, and seven. You have loved the stallion magnificent in battle, and for him you decreed whip and spur and a thong, to gallop seven leagues by force and to muddy the water before he drinks; and for his mother Silli<sup>9</sup> lamentations. You have loved the shepherd of the flock; he made meal-cake for you day after day, he killed kids for your sake. You struck and turned him into a wolf; now his own herd-boys chase him away, his own hounds worry his flanks. And did you not love Ishullanu, the gardener of your father's palm-grove? He brought you baskets filled with dates without end; every day he loaded your table. Then you turned your eyes on him and said, 'Dearest Ishullanu, come here to me, let us enjoy your manhood, come forward and take me, I am yours.' Ishullanu answered, 'What are you asking from me? My mother has baked and I have eaten; why should I come to such as you for food that is tainted and rotten? For when was a screen of rushes sufficient protection from frosts? But when you had heard his answer you struck him. He was changed to a blind mole deep in the earth, one whose desire is always beyond his reach. And if you and I should be lovers, should not I be served in the same fashion as all these others whom you loved once?'

When Ishtar heard this she fell into a bitter rage, she went up to high heaven. Her tears poured down in front of her father Anu, and Antum her mother. She said, "My father, Gilgamesh has heaped insults on me, he has told over all my abominable behaviour, my foul and hideous acts." Anu opened his mouth and said, "Are you a father of gods? Did not you quarrel with Gilgamesh the king, so now he has related your abominable behaviour, your foul and hideous acts?"

Ishtar opened her mouth and said again, "My father, give me the Bull of Heaven to destroy Gilgamesh. Fill Gilgamesh, I say, with arrogance to his destruction; but if you refuse to give me the Bull of Heaven I will break in the doors of hell and smash the bolts; there will be confusion of people, those above with those from the lower depths. I shall bring up the dead to eat food like the living; and the hosts of dead will outnumber the living." Anu said to great Ishtar, "If I do what you desire there will be seven years of drought throughout Uruk when corn will be seedless husks. Have you saved grain enough for the people and grass for the cattle?" Ishtar replied, "I have saved grain for the people, grass for the cattle; for seven years of seedless husks there is grain and there is grass enough."

When Anu heard what Ishtar had said he gave her the Bull of Heaven to lead by the halter down to Uruk. When they reached the gates of Uruk the Bull went to the river; with his first snort cracks opened in the earth and a hundred young men fell down to death. With his second snort cracks opened and two hundred fell down to death. With his third snort cracks opened, Enkidu doubled over but instantly recovered, he dodged aside and leapt on the Bull and seized it by the horns. The Bull of Heaven foamed in his face, it brushed him with the thick of its tail. Enkidu cried to Gilgamesh, "My friend, we boasted that we would leave enduring names behind us. Now thrust in your sword between the nape and the horns." So Gilgamesh fol-

9. Perhaps a divine horse.

lowed the Bull, he seized the thick of its tail, he thrust the sword between the nape and the horns and slew the Bull. When they had killed the Bull of Heaven they cut out its heart and gave it to Shamash, and the brothers rested.

But Ishtar rose up and mounted the great wall of Uruk; she sprang on to the tower and uttered a curse: "Woe to Gilgamesh, for he has scorned me in killing the Bull of Heaven." When Enkidu heard these words he tore out the Bull's right thigh and tossed it in her face saying, "If I could lay my hands on you, it is this I should do to you, and lash the entrails to your side." Then Ishtar called together her people, the dancing and singing girls, the prostitutes of the temple, the courtesans. Over the thigh of the Bull of Heaven she set up lamentation.

But Gilgamesh called the smiths and the armourers, all of them together. They admired the immensity of the horns. They were plated with lapis lazuli two fingers thick. They were thirty pounds each in weight, and their capacity in oil was six measures, which he gave to his guardian god, Lugulbanda. But he carried the horns into the palace and hung them on the wall. Then they washed their hands in Euphrates, they embraced each other and went away. They drove through the streets of Uruk where the heroes were gathered to see them, and Gilgamesh called to the singing girls, "Who is most glorious of the heroes, who is most eminent among men?" "Gilgamesh is the most glorious of heroes, Gilgamesh is most eminent among men." And now there was feasting, and celebrations and joy in the palace, till the heroes lay down saying, "Now we will rest for the night."

When the daylight came Enkidu got up and cried to Gilgamesh, "O my brother, such a dream I had last night. Anu, Enlil, Ea and heavenly Shamash took counsel together, and Anu said to Enlil, 'Because they have killed the Bull of Heaven, and because they have killed Humbaba who guarded the Cedar Mountain one of the two must die.' Then glorious Shamash answered the hero Enlil, 'It was by your command they killed the Bull of Heaven, and killed Humbaba, and must Enkidu die although innocent?' Enlil flung round in rage at glorious Shamash, 'You dare to say this, you who went about with them every day like one of themselves!'"

So Enkidu lay stretched out before Gilgamesh; his tears ran down in streams and he said to Gilgamesh, "O my brother, so dear as you are to me, brother, yet they will take me from you." Again he said, "I must sit down on the threshold of the dead and never again will I see my dear brother with my eyes."

While Enkidu lay alone in his sickness he cursed the gate as though it was living flesh, "You there, wood of the gate, dull and insensible, witless, I searched for you over twenty leagues until I saw the towering cedar. There is no wood like you in our land. Seventy-two cubits high and twenty-four wide, the pivot and the ferrule and the jambs are perfect. A master craftsman from Nippur has made you; but O, if I had known the conclusion! If I had known that this was all the good that would come of it, I would have raised the axe and split you into little pieces and set up here a gate of wattle instead. Ah, if only some future king had brought you here, or some god had fashioned you. Let him obliterate my name and write his own, and the curse fall on him instead of on Enkidu."

With the first brightening of dawn Enkidu raised his head and wept before

the Sun God, in the brilliance of the sunlight his tears streamed down. "Sun God, I beseech you, about that vile Trapper, that Trapper of nothing because of whom I was to catch less than my comrade; let him catch least, make his game scarce, make him feeble, taking the smaller of every share, let his quarry escape from his nets."

When he had cursed the Trapper to his heart's content he turned on the harlot. He was roused to curse her also. "As for you, woman, with a great curse I curse you! I will promise you a destiny to all eternity. My curse shall come on you soon and sudden. You shall be without a roof for your commerce, for you shall not keep house with other girls in the tavern, but do your business in places fouled by the vomit of the drunkard. Your hire will be potter's earth, your thievings will be flung into the hovel, you will sit at the cross-roads in the dust of the potter's quarter, you will make your bed on the dunghill at night, and by day take your stand in the wall's shadow. Brambles and thorns will tear your feet, the drunk and the dry will strike your cheek and your mouth will ache. Let you be stripped of your purple dyes, for I too once in the wilderness with my wife had all the treasure I wished."

When Shamash heard the words of Enkidu he called to him from heaven: "Enkidu, why are you cursing the woman, the mistress who taught you to eat bread fit for gods and drink wine of kings? She who put upon you a magnificent garment, did she not give you glorious Gilgamesh for your companion, and has not Gilgamesh, your own brother, made you rest on a royal bed and recline on a couch at his left hand? He has made the princes of the earth kiss your feet, and now all the people of Uruk lament and wail over you. When you are dead he will let his hair grow long for your sake, he will wear a lion's pelt and wander through the desert."

When Enkidu heard glorious Shamash his angry heart grew quiet, he called back the curse and said, "Woman, I promise you another destiny. The mouth which cursed you shall bless you! Kings, princes and nobles shall adore you. On your account a man though twelve miles off will clap his hand to his thigh and his hair will twitch. For you he will undo his belt and open his treasure and you shall have your desire; lapis lazuli, gold and carnelian from the heap in the treasury. A ring for your hand and a robe shall be yours. The priest will lead you into the presence of the gods. On your account a wife, a mother of seven, was forsaken."

As Enkidu slept alone in his sickness, in bitterness of spirit he poured out his heart to his friend. "It was I who cut down the cedar, I who levelled the forest, I who slew Humbaba and now see what has become of me. Listen, my friend, this is the dream I dreamed last night. The heavens roared, and earth rumbled back an answer; between them stood I before an awful being, the sombre-faced man-bird; he had directed on me his purpose. His was a vampire face, his foot was a lion's foot, his hand was an eagle's talon. He fell on me and his claws were in my hair, he held me fast and I smothered; then he transformed me so that my arms became wings covered with feathers. He turned his stare towards me, and he led me away to the palace of Irkalla, the Queen of Darkness,<sup>1</sup> to the house from which none who enters ever returns, down the road from which there is no coming back.

1. Also Ershkigal, queen of the underworld.

"There is the house whose people sit in darkness; dust is their food and they eat their meat. They are clothed like birds with wings for covering, they see no light, they sit in darkness. I entered the house of dust and I saw the kings of the earth, their crowns put away for ever; rulers and princes, all those who once wore kingly crowns and ruled the world in the days of old. They who had stood in the place of the gods like Anu and Enlil, stood now like servants to fetch baked meats in the house of dust, to carry cooked meat and cold water from the water-skin. In the house of dust which I entered were high priests and acolytes, priests of the incantation and of ecstasy; there were servers of the temple, and there was Etana, that king of Kish whom the eagle carried to heaven in the days of old. I saw also Samuqan, god of cattle, and there was Ereshkigal the Queen of the Underworld; and Belit-Sheri squatted in front of her, she who is recorder of the gods and keeps the book of death. She held a tablet from which she read. She raised her head, she saw me and spoke: 'Who has brought this one here?' Then I awoke like a man drained of blood who wanders alone in a waste of rushes; like one whom the bailiff has seized and his heart pounds with terror."

Gilgamesh had peeled off his clothes, he listened to his words and wept quick tears, Gilgamesh listened and his tears flowed. He opened his mouth and spoke to Enkidu: "Who is there in strong-walled Uruk who has wisdom like this? Strange things have been spoken, why does your heart speak strangely? The dream was marvellous but the terror was great; we must treasure the dream whatever the terror; for the dream has shown that misery comes at last to the healthy man, the end of life is sorrow." And Gilgamesh lamented, "Now I will pray to the great gods, for my friend had an ominous dream."

This day on which Enkidu dreamed came to an end and he lay stricken with sickness. One whole day he lay on his bed and his suffering increased. He said to Gilgamesh, the friend on whose account he had left the wilderness, "Once I ran for you, for the water of life, and I now have nothing." A second day he lay on his bed and Gilgamesh watched over him but the sickness increased. A third day he lay on his bed, he called out to Gilgamesh, rousing him up. Now he was weak and his eyes were blind with weeping. Ten days he lay and his suffering increased, eleven and twelve days he lay on his bed of pain. Then he called to Gilgamesh, "My friend, the great goddess cursed me and I must die in shame. I shall not die like a man fallen in battle; I feared to fall, but happy is the man who falls in the battle, for I must die in shame." And Gilgamesh wept over Enkidu. With the first light of dawn he raised his voice and said to the counsellors of Uruk:

Hear me, great ones of Uruk,  
I weep for Enkidu, my friend,  
Bitterly moaning like a woman mourning  
I weep for my brother.  
O Enkidu, my brother,  
You were the axe at my side,  
My hand's strength, the sword in my belt,  
The shield before me,  
A glorious robe, my fairest ornament;  
An evil Fate has robbed me.  
The wild ass and the gazelle

That were father and mother,  
All long-tailed creatures that nourished you  
Weep for you,  
All the wild things of the plain and pastures;  
The paths that you loved in the forest of cedars  
Night and day murmur.  
Let the great ones of strong-walled Uruk  
Weep for you;  
Let the finger of blessing  
Be stretched out in mourning;  
Enkidu, young brother. Hark,  
There is an echo through all the country  
Like a mother mourning.

Weep all the paths where we walked together;  
And the beasts we hunted, the bear and hyena,  
Tiger and panther, leopard and lion,  
The stag and the ibex, the bull and the doe.  
The river along whose banks we used to walk,  
Weeps for you,  
Ula of Elam and dear Euphrates  
Where once we drew water for the water-skins.  
The mountain we climbed where we slew the Watchman,  
Weeps for you.

The warriors of strong-walled Uruk  
Where the Bull of Heaven was killed,  
Weep for you.

All the people of Eridu  
Weep for you Enkidu.

Those who brought grain for your eating  
Mourn for you now;

Who rubbed oil on your back  
Mourn for you now;

Who poured beer for your drinking  
Mourn for you now.

The harlot who anointed you with fragrant ointment  
Laments for you now;

The women of the palace, who brought you a wife,  
A chosen ring of good advice,  
Lament for you now.

And the young men your brothers  
As though they were women  
Go long-haired in mourning.

What is this sleep which holds you now?  
You are lost in the dark and cannot hear me.

He touched his heart but it did not beat, nor did he lift his eyes again. When Gilgamesh touched his heart it did not beat. So Gilgamesh laid a veil, as one veils the bride, over his friend. He began to rage like a lion, like a lioness robbed of her whelps. This way and that he paced round the bed, he tore out his hair and strewed it around. He dragged off his splendid robes and flung them down as though they were abominations.

In the first light of dawn Gilgamesh cried out, "I made you rest on a royal

bed, you reclined on a couch at my left hand, the princes of the earth kissed your feet. I will cause all the people of Uruk to weep over you and raise the dirge of the dead. The joyful people will stoop with sorrow; and when you have gone to the earth I will let my hair grow long for your sake, I will wander through the wilderness in the skin of a lion." The next day also, in the first light, Gilgamesh lamented; seven days and seven nights he wept for Enkidu, until the worm fastened on him. Only then he gave him up to the earth, for the Anunnaki, the judges, had seized him.

Then Gilgamesh issued a proclamation through the land, he summoned them all, the coppersmiths, the goldsmiths, the stone-workers, and commanded them, "Make a statue of my friend." The statue was fashioned with a great weight of lapis lazuli for the breast and of gold for the body. A table of hard-wood was set out, and on it a bowl of carnelian filled with honey, and a bowl of lapis lazuli filled with butter. These he exposed and offered to the Sun; and weeping he went away.

## 4

*The Search for Everlasting Life*

Bitterly Gilgamesh wept for his friend Enkidu; he wandered over the wilderness as a hunter, he roamed over the plains; in his bitterness he cried, "How can I rest, how can I be at peace? Despair is in my heart. What my brother is now, that shall I be when I am dead. Because I am afraid of death I will go as best I can to find Utnapishtim<sup>2</sup> whom they call the Faraway, for he has entered the assembly of the gods." So Gilgamesh travelled over the wilderness, he wandered over the grasslands, a long journey, in search of Utnapishtim, whom the gods took after the deluge; and they set him to live in the land of Dilmun, in the garden of the sun; and to him alone of men they gave everlasting life.

At night when he came to the mountain passes Gilgamesh prayed: "In these mountain passes long ago I saw lions, I was afraid and I lifted my eyes to the moon; I prayed and my prayers went up to the gods, so now, O moon god Sin, protect me." When he had prayed he lay down to sleep, until he was woken from out of a dream. He saw the lions round him glorying in life; then he took his axe in his hand, he drew his sword from his belt, and he fell upon them like an arrow from the string, and struck and destroyed and scattered them.

So at length Gilgamesh came to Mashu, the great mountains about which he had heard many things, which guard the rising and the setting sun. Its twin peaks are as high as the wall of heaven and its paps reach down to the underworld. At its gate the Scorpions stand guard, half man and half dragon; their glory is terrifying, their stare strikes death into men, their shimmering halo sweeps the mountains that guard the rising sun. When Gilgamesh saw them he shielded his eyes for the length of a moment only; then he took courage and approached. When they saw him so undismayed the Man-Scorpion called to his mate, "This one who comes to us now is flesh of the

† f n eck

2. A wise king and priest who, like the biblical Noah, survived the Flood along with his family and with the seed of all living creatures." Afterward he was taken by the gods to live forever in Dilmun, the Sumerian paradise.

gods." The mate of the Man-Scorpion answered, "Two thirds is god but one third is man."

Then he called to the man Gilgamesh, he called to the child of the gods: "Why have you come so great a journey, for what have you travelled so far, crossing the dangerous waters; tell me the reason for your coming?" Gilgamesh answered, "For Enkidu; I loved him dearly, together we endured all kinds of hardships; on his account I have come, for the common lot of man has taken him. I have wept for him day and night, I would not give up his body for burial, I thought my friend would come back because of my weeping. Since he went, my life is nothing; that is why I have travelled here in search of Utnapishtim my father; for men say he has entered the assembly of the gods, and has found everlasting life. I have a desire to question him concerning the living and the dead." The Man-Scorpion opened his mouth and said, speaking to Gilgamesh, "No man born of woman has done what you have asked, no mortal man has gone into the mountain; the length of it is twelve leagues of darkness; in it there is no light, but the heart is oppressed with darkness. From the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun there is no light." Gilgamesh said, "Although I should go in sorrow and in pain, with sighing and with weeping, still I must go. Open the gate of the mountain." And the Man-Scorpion said, "Go, Gilgamesh, I permit you to pass through the mountain of Mashu and through the high ranges; may your feet carry you safely home. The gate of the mountain is open."

When Gilgamesh heard this he did as the Man-Scorpion had said, he followed the sun's road to his rising, through the mountain. When he had gone one league the darkness became thick around him, for there was no light, he could see nothing ahead and nothing behind him. After two leagues the darkness was thick and there was no light, he could see nothing ahead and nothing behind him. After three leagues the darkness was thick, and there was no light, he could see nothing ahead and nothing behind him. After four leagues the darkness was thick and there was no light, he could see nothing ahead and nothing behind him. At the end of five leagues the darkness was thick and there was no light, he could see nothing ahead and nothing behind him. At the end of six leagues the darkness was thick and there was no light, he could see nothing ahead and nothing behind him. When he had gone seven leagues the darkness was thick and there was no light, he could see nothing ahead and nothing behind him. After ten leagues the end was near. After eleven leagues the dawn light appeared. At the end of twelve leagues the sun streamed out.

There was the garden of the gods; all round him stood bushes bearing gems. Seeing it he went down at once, for there was fruit of carnelian with the vine hanging from it, beautiful to look at; lapis lazuli leaves hung thick with fruit, sweet to see. For thorns and thistles there were haematite and rare stones, agate, and pearls from out of the sea. While Gilgamesh walked in the garden by the edge of the sea Shamash saw him, and he saw that he was dressed in the skins of animals and ate their flesh. He was distressed, and he spoke and said, "No mortal man has gone this way before, nor will,

as long as the winds drive over the sea." And to Gilgamesh he said, "You will never find the life for which you are searching." Gilgamesh said to glorious Shamash, "Now that I have toiled and strayed so far over the wilderness, am I to sleep, and let the earth cover my head for ever? Let my eyes see the sun until they are dazzled with looking. Although I am no better than a dead man, still let me see the light of the sun."

Beside the sea she lives, the woman of the vine, the maker of wine; Siduri sits in the garden at the edge of the sea, with the golden bowl and the golden vats that the gods gave her. She is covered with a veil; and where she sits she sees Gilgamesh coming towards her, wearing skins, the flesh of the gods in his body, but despair in his heart, and his face like the face of one who has made a long journey. She looked, and as she scanned the distance she said in her own heart, "Surely this is some felon; where is he going now?" And she barred her gate against him with the cross-bar and shot home the bolt. But Gilgamesh, hearing the sound of the bolt, threw up his head and lodged his foot in the gate; he called to her, "Young woman, maker of wine, why do you bolt your door; what did you see that made you bar your gate? I will break in your door and burst in your gate, for I am Gilgamesh who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven, I killed the watchman of the cedar forest, I overthrew Humbaba who lived in the forest, and I killed the lions in the passes of the mountain."

Then Siduri said to him, "If you are that Gilgamesh who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven, who killed the watchman of the cedar forest, who overthrew Humbaba that lived in the forest, and killed the lions in the passes of the mountain, why are your cheeks so starved and why is your face so drawn? Why is despair in your heart and your face like the face of one who has made a long journey? Yes, why is your face burned from heat and cold, and why do you come here wandering over the pastures in search of the wind?"

Gilgamesh answered her, "And why should not my cheeks be starved and my face drawn? Despair is in my heart and my face is the face of one who has made a long journey, it was burned with heat and with cold. Why should I not wander over the pastures in search of the wind? My friend, my younger brother, he who hunted the wild ass of the wilderness and the panther of the plains, my friend, my younger brother who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven and overthrew Humbaba in the cedar forest, my friend who was very dear to me and who endured dangers beside me, Enkidu my brother, whom I loved, the end of mortality has overtaken him. I wept for him seven days and nights till the worm fastened on him. Because of my brother I am afraid of death, because of my brother I stray through the wilderness and cannot rest. But now, young woman, maker of wine, since I have seen your face do not let me see the face of death which I dread so much."

She answered, "Gilgamesh, where are you hurrying to? You will never find that life for which you are looking. When the gods created man they allotted to him death, but life they retained in their own keeping. As for you, Gilgamesh, fill your belly with good things; day and night, night and day, dance and be merry, feast and rejoice. Let your clothes be fresh, bathe yourself in water, cherish the little child that holds your hand, and make your wife happy in your embrace; for this too is the lot of man."

But Gilgamesh said to Siduri, the young woman, "How can I be silent, how can I rest, when Enkidu whom I love is dust, and I too shall die and be

laid in the earth. You live by the sea-shore and look into the heart of it; young woman, tell me now, which is the way to Utnapishtim, the son of Ubara-Tutu? What directions are there for the passage; give me, oh, give me directions. I will cross the Ocean if it is possible; if it is not I will wander still farther in the wilderness." The wine-maker said to him, "Gilgamesh, there is no crossing the Ocean; whoever has come, since the days of old, has not been able to pass that sea. The Sun in his glory crosses the Ocean, but who beside Shamash has ever crossed it? The place and the passage are difficult, and the waters of death are deep which flow between. Gilgamesh, how will you cross the Ocean? When you come to the waters of death what will you do? But Gilgamesh, down in the woods you will find Urshanabi, the ferryman of Utnapishtim; with him are the holy things, the things of stone. He is fashioning the serpent prow of the boat. Look at him well, and if it is possible, perhaps you will cross the waters with him; but if it is not possible, then you must go back."

When Gilgamesh heard this he was seized with anger. He took his axe in his hand, and his dagger from his belt. He crept forward and he fell on them like a javelin. Then he went into the forest and sat down. Urshanabi saw the dagger flash and heard the axe, and he beat his head, for Gilgamesh had shattered the tackle of the boat in his rage. Urshanabi said to him, "Tell me, what is your name? I am Urshanabi, the ferryman of Utnapishtim the Far-away." He replied to him, "Gilgamesh is my name, I am from Uruk, from the house of Anu." Then Urshanabi said to him, "Why are your cheeks so starved and your face drawn? Why is despair in your heart and your face like the face of one who has made a long journey; yes, why is your face burned with heat and with cold, and why do you come here wandering over the pastures in search of the wind?"

Gilgamesh said to him, "Why should not my cheeks be starved and my face drawn? Despair is in my heart, and my face is the face of one who has made a long journey. I was burned with heat and with cold. Why should I not wander over the pastures? My friend, my younger brother who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven, and overthrew Humbaba in the cedar forest, my friend who was very dear to me, and who endured dangers beside me, Enkidu my brother whom I loved, the end of mortality has overtaken him. I wept for him seven days and nights till the worm fastened on him. Because of my brother I am afraid of death, because of my brother I stray through the wilderness. His fate lies heavy upon me. How can I be silent, how can I rest? He is dust and I too shall die and be laid in the earth for ever. I am afraid of death, therefore, Urshanabi, tell me which is the road to Utnapishtim? If it is possible I will cross the waters of death; if not I will wander still farther through the wilderness."

Urshanabi said to him, "Gilgamesh, your own hands have prevented you from crossing the Ocean; when you destroyed the tackle of the boat you destroyed its safety." Then the two of them talked it over and Gilgamesh said, "Why are you so angry with me, Urshanabi, for you yourself cross the sea by day and night, at all seasons you cross it." "Gilgamesh, those things you destroyed, their property is to carry me over the water, to prevent the waters of death from touching me. It was for this reason that I preserved them, but you have destroyed them, and the *urru* snakes with them. But now, go into the forest, Gilgamesh; with your axe cut poles, one hundred

and twenty, cut them sixty cubits long, paint them with bitumen, set on them ferrules and bring them back."

When Gilgamesh heard this he went into the forest, he cut poles one hundred and twenty; he cut them sixty cubits long, he painted them with bitumen, he set on them ferrules, and he brought them to Urshanabi. Then they boarded the boat, Gilgamesh and Urshanabi together, launching it out on the waves of Ocean. For three days they ran on as it were a journey of a month and fifteen days, and at last Urshanabi brought the boat to the waters of death. Then Urshanabi said to Gilgamesh, "Press on, take a pole and thrust it in, but do not let your hands touch the waters. Gilgamesh, take a second pole, take a third, take a fourth pole. Now, Gilgamesh, take a fifth, take a sixth and seventh pole. Gilgamesh, take an eighth, and ninth, a tenth pole. Gilgamesh, take an eleventh, take a twelfth pole." After one hundred and twenty thrusts Gilgamesh had used the last pole. Then he stripped himself, he held up his arms for a mast and his covering for a sail. So Urshanabi the ferryman brought Gilgamesh to Utnapishtim, whom they call the Faraway, who lives in Dilmun at the place of the sun's transit, eastward of the mountain. To him alone of men the gods had given everlasting life.

Now Utnapishtim, where he lay at ease, looked into the distance and he said in his heart, musing to himself, "Why does the boat sail here without tackle and mast; why are the sacred stones destroyed, and why does the master not sail the boat? That man who comes is none of mine; where I look I see a man whose body is covered with skins of beasts. Who is this who walks up the shore behind Urshanabi, for surely he is no man of mine?" So Utnapishtim looked at him and said, "What is your name, you who come here wearing the skins of beasts, with your cheeks starved and your face drawn? Where are you hurrying to now? For what reason have you made this great journey, crossing the seas whose passage is difficult? Tell me the reason for your coming."

He replied, "Gilgamesh is my name. I am from Uruk, from the house of Anu." Then Utnapishtim said to him, "If you are Gilgamesh, why are your cheeks so starved and your face drawn? Why is despair in your heart and your face like the face of one who has made a long journey? Yes, why is your face burned with heat and cold; and why do you come here, wandering over the wilderness in search of the wind?"

Gilgamesh said to him, "Why should not my cheeks be starved and my face drawn? Despair is in my heart and my face is the face of one who has made a long journey. It was burned with heat and with cold. Why should I not wander over the pastures? My friend, my younger brother who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven and overthrew Humbaba in the cedar forest, my friend who was very dear to me and endured dangers beside me, Enkidu, my brother whom I loved, the end of mortality has overtaken him. I wept for him seven days and nights till the worm fastened on him. Because of my brother I am afraid of death; because of my brother I stray through the wilderness. His fate lies heavy upon me. How can I be silent, how can I rest? He is dust and I shall die also and be laid in the earth for ever." Again Gilgamesh said, speaking to Utnapishtim, "It is to see Utnapishtim whom we call the Faraway that I have come this journey. For this I have wandered over the world, I have crossed many difficult ranges, I have crossed the seas, I have wearied myself with travelling; my joints are aching, and I have lost

acquaintance with sleep which is sweet. My clothes were worn out before I came to the house of Siduri. I have killed the bear and hyena, the lion and panther, the tiger, the stag and the ibex, all sorts of wild game and the small creatures of the pastures. I ate their flesh and I wore their skins; and that was how I came to the gate of the young woman, the maker of wine, who barred her gate of pitch and bitumen against me. But from her I had news of the journey; so then I came to Urshanabi the ferryman, and with him I crossed over the waters of death. O, father Utnapishtim, you who have entered the assembly of the gods, I wish to question you concerning the living and the dead, how shall I find the life for which I am searching?"

Utnapishtim said, "There is no permanence. Do we build a house to stand for ever, do we seal a contract to hold for all time? Do brothers divide an inheritance to keep for ever, does the flood-time of rivers endure? It is only the nymph of the dragon-fly who sheds her larva and sees the sun in his glory. From the days of old there is no permanence. The sleeping and the dead, how alike they are, they are like a painted death. What is there between the master and the servant when both have fulfilled their doom? When the Anunnaki, the judges, come together, and Mammetun the mother of destinies, together they decree the fates of men. Life and death they allot but the day of death they do not disclose."

Then Gilgamesh said to Utnapishtim the Faraway, "I look at you now, Utnapishtim, and your appearance is no different from mine; there is nothing strange in your features. I thought I should find you like a hero prepared for battle, but you lie here taking your ease on your back. Tell me truly, how was it that you came to enter the company of the gods, and to possess everlasting life?" Utnapishtim said to Gilgamesh, "I will reveal to you a mystery, I will tell you a secret of the gods."

## 5

*The Story of the Flood*

"You know the city Shurupak, it stands on the banks of Euphrates? That city grew old and the gods that were in it were old. There was Anu, lord of the firmament, their father, and warrior Enlil their counsellor, Ninurta the helper, and Ennugi watcher over canals; and with them also was Ea. In those days the world teemed, the people multiplied, the world bellowed like a wild bull, and the great god was aroused by the clamour. Enlil heard the clamour and he said to the gods in council, 'The uproar of mankind is intolerable and sleep is no longer possible by reason of the babel.' So the gods agreed to exterminate mankind. Enlil did this, but Ea because of his oath warned me in a dream. He whispered their words to my house of reeds, 'Reed-house, reed-house! Wall, O wall, hearken reed-house, wall reflect; O man of Shurupak, son of Ubara-Tutu; tear down your house and build a boat, abandon possessions and look for life, despise worldly goods and save your soul alive. Tear down your house, I say, and build a boat. These are the measurements of the barque as you shall build her: let her beam equal her length, let her deck be roofed like the vault that covers the abyss; then take up into the boat the seed of all living creatures.'

"When I had understood I said to my lord, 'Behold what you have commanded I will honour and perform, but how shall I answer the people, the

city, the elders?' Then Ea opened his mouth and said to me, his servant, 'Tell them this: I have learnt that Enlil is wrathful against me, I dare no longer walk in his land nor live in his city; I will go down to the Gulf to dwell with Ea my lord. But on you he will rain down abundance, rare fish and shy wild-fowl, a rich harvest-tide. In the evening the rider of the storm will bring you wheat in torrents.'

"In the first light of dawn all my household gathered round me, the children brought pitch and the men whatever was necessary. On the fifth day I laid the keel and the ribs, then I made fast the planking. The ground-space was one acre, each side of the deck measured one hundred and twenty cubits, making a square. I built six decks below, seven in all, I divided them into nine sections with bulkheads between. I drove in wedges where needed, I saw to the punt-poles, and laid in supplies. The carriers brought oil in baskets, I poured pitch into the furnace and asphalt and oil; more oil was consumed in caulking, and more again the master of the boat took into his stores. I slaughtered bullocks for the people and every day I killed sheep. I gave the shipwrights wine to drink as though it were river water, raw wine and red wine and oil and white wine. There was feasting then as there is at the time of the New Year's festival; I myself anointed my head. On the eleventh day the boat was complete.

"Then was the launching full of difficulty; there was shifting of ballast above and below till two thirds was submerged. I loaded into her all that I had of gold and of living things, my family, my kin, the beast of the field both wild and tame, and all the craftsmen. I sent them on board, for the time that Shamash had ordained was already fulfilled when he said, 'In the evening, when the rider of the storm sends down the destroying rain, enter the boat and batten her down.' The time was fulfilled, the evening came, the rider of the storm sent down the rain. I looked out at the weather and it was terrible, so I too boarded the boat and battered her down. All was now complete, the battering and the caulking; so I handed the tiller to Puzur-Amurri the steersman, with the navigation and the care of the whole boat.

"With the first light of dawn a black cloud came from the horizon; it thundered within where Adad, lord of the storm, was riding. In front over hill and plain Shullat and Hanish, heralds of the storm, led on. Then the gods of the abyss rose up; Nergal pulled out the dams of the nether waters, Ninurta the war-lord threw down the dykes, and the seven judges of hell, the Annunaki, raised their torches, lighting the land with their livid flame. A stupor of despair went up to heaven when the god of the storm turned daylight to darkness, when he smashed the land like a cup. One whole day the tempest raged, gathering fury as it went, it poured over the people like the tides of battle; a man could not see his brother nor the people be seen from heaven. Even the gods were terrified at the flood, they fled to the highest heaven, the firmament of Anu; they crouched against the walls, cowering like curs. Then Ishtar the sweet-voiced Queen of Heaven cried out like a woman in travail: 'Alas the days of old are turned to dust because I commanded evil; why did I command this evil in the council of all the gods? I commanded wars to destroy the people, but are they not my people, for I brought them forth? Now like the spawn of fish they float in the ocean.' The great gods of heaven and of hell wept, they covered their mouths.

"For six days and six nights the winds blew, torrent and tempest and flood

overwhelmed the world, tempest and flood raged together like warring hosts. When the seventh day dawned the storm from the south subsided, the sea grew calm, the flood was stilled; I looked at the face of the world and there was silence, all mankind was turned to clay. The surface of the sea stretched as flat as a roof-top; I opened a hatch and the light fell on my face. Then I bowed low, I sat down and I wept, the tears streamed down my face, for on every side was the waste of water. I looked for land in vain, for fourteen leagues distant there appeared a mountain, and there the boat grounded; on the mountain of Nisir the boat held fast, she held fast and did not budge. One day she held, and a second day on the mountain of Nisir she held fast and did not budge. A third day, and a fourth day she held fast on the mountain and did not budge; a fifth day and a sixth day she held fast on the mountain. When the seventh day dawned I loosed a dove and let her go. She flew away, but finding no resting-place she returned. Then I loosed a swallow, and she flew away but finding no resting-place she returned. I loosed a raven, she saw that the waters had retreated, she ate, she flew around, she cawed, and she did not come back. Then I threw everything open to the four winds, I made a sacrifice and poured out a libation on the mountain top. Seven and again seven cauldrons I set up on their stands, I heaped up wood and cane and cedar and myrtle. When the gods smelled the sweet savour, they gathered like flies over the sacrifice. Then, at last, Ishtar also came, she lifted her necklace with the jewels of heaven that once Anu had made to please her. 'O you gods here present, by the lapis lazuli round my neck I shall remember these days as I remember the jewels of my throat; these last days I shall not forget. Let all the gods gather round the sacrifice, except Enlil. He shall not approach this offering, for without reflection he brought the flood; he consigned my people to destruction.'

"When Enlil had come, when he saw the boat, he was wrath and swelled with anger at the gods, the host of heaven, 'Has any of these mortals escaped? Not one was to have survived the destruction.' Then the god of the wells and canals Ninurta opened his mouth and said to the warrior Enlil, 'Who is there of the gods that can devise without Ea? It is Ea, alone who knows all things.' Then Ea opened his mouth and spoke to warrior Enlil, 'Wisest of gods, hero Enlil, how could you so senselessly bring down the flood?'

Lay upon the sinner his sin,

Lay upon the transgressor his transgression,

Punish him a little when he breaks loose,

Do not drive him too hard or he perishes;

Would that a lion had ravaged mankind

Rather than the flood,

Would that a wolf had ravaged mankind

Rather than the flood,

Would that famine had wasted the world

Rather than the flood,

Would that pestilence had wasted mankind

Rather than the flood.

It was not I that revealed the secret of the gods; the wise man learned it in a dream. Now take your counsel what shall be done with him.'

"Then Enlil went up into the boat, he took me by the hand and my wife

and made us enter the boat and kneel down on either side, he standing between us. He touched our foreheads to bless us saying, 'In time past Utnapishtim was a mortal man; henceforth he and his wife shall live in the distance at the mouth of the rivers.' Thus it was that the gods took me and placed me here to live in the distance, at the mouth of the rivers."

## 6

*The Return*

Utnapishtim said, "As for you, Gilgamesh, who will assemble the gods for your sake, so that you may find that life for which you are searching? But if you wish, come and put it to the test: only prevail against sleep for six days and seven nights." But while Gilgamesh sat there resting on his haunches, a mist of sleep like soft wool teased from the fleece drifted over him, and Utnapishtim said to his wife, "Look at him now, the strong man who would have everlasting life, even now the mists of sleep are drifting over him." His wife replied, "Touch the man to wake him, so that he may return to his own land in peace, going back through the gate by which he came." Utnapishtim said to his wife, "All men are deceivers, even you he will attempt to deceive; therefore bake loaves of bread, each day one loaf, and put it beside his head; and make a mark on the wall to number the days he has slept."

So she baked loaves of bread, each day one loaf, and put it beside his head, and she marked on the walls the days that he slept; and there came a day when the first loaf was hard, the second loaf was like leather, the third was soggy, the crust of the fourth had mould, the fifth was mildewed, the sixth was fresh, and the seventh was still on the embers. Then Utnapishtim touched him and he woke. Gilgamesh said to Utnapishtim the Faraway, "I hardly slept when you touched and roused me." But Utnapishtim said, "Count these loaves and learn how many days you slept, for your first is hard, your second like leather, your third is soggy, the crust of your fourth has mould, your fifth is mildewed, your sixth is fresh and your seventh was still over the glowing embers when I touched and woke you." Gilgamesh said, "What shall I do, O Utnapishtim, where shall I go? Already the thief in the night has hold of my limbs, death inhabits my room; wherever my foot rests, there I find death."

Then Utnapishtim spoke to Urshanabi the ferryman: "Woe to you Urshanabi, now and for ever more you have become hateful to this harbourage; it is not for you, nor for you are the crossings of this sea. Go now, banished from the shore. But this man before whom you walked, bringing him here, whose body is covered with foulness and the grace of whose limbs has been spoiled by wild skins, take him to the washing-place. There he shall wash his long hair clean as snow in the water, he shall throw off his skins and let the sea carry them away, and the beauty of his body shall be shown, the fillet on his forehead shall be renewed, and he shall be given clothes to cover his nakedness. Till he reaches his own city and his journey is accomplished, these clothes will show no sign of age, they will wear like a new garment." So Urshanabi took Gilgamesh and led him to the washing-place, he washed his long hair as clean as snow in the water, he threw off his skins, which the sea carried away, and showed the beauty of his body. He renewed the fillet on his forehead, and to cover his nakedness gave him clothes which would

show no sign of age, but would wear like a new garment till he reached his own city, and his journey was accomplished.

Then Gilgamesh and Urshanabi launched the boat on to the water and boarded it, and they made ready to sail away; but the wife of Utnapishtim the Faraway said to him, "Gilgamesh came here wearied out, he is worn out; what will you give him to carry him back to his own country?" So Utnapishtim spoke, and Gilgamesh took a pole and brought the boat in to the bank. "Gilgamesh, you came here a man wearied out, you have worn yourself out; what shall I give you to carry you back to your own country? Gilgamesh, I shall reveal a secret thing, it is a mystery of the gods that I am telling you. There is a plant that grows under the water, it has a prickle like a thorn, like a rose; it will wound your hands, but if you succeed in taking it, then your hands will hold that which restores his lost youth to a man."

When Gilgamesh heard this he opened the sluices so that a sweet-water current might carry him out to the deepest channel; he tied heavy stones to his feet and they dragged him down to the water-bed. There he saw the plant growing; although it pricked him he took it in his hands; then he cut the heavy stones from his feet, and the sea carried him and threw him on to the shore. Gilgamesh said to Urshanabi the ferryman, "Come here, and see this marvellous plant. By its virtue a man may win back all his former strength. I will take it to Uruk of the strong walls; there I will give it to the old men to eat. Its name shall be 'The Old Men Are Young Again'; and at last I shall eat it myself and have back all my lost youth." So Gilgamesh returned by the gate through which he had come, Gilgamesh and Urshanabi went together. They travelled their twenty leagues and then they broke their fast; after thirty leagues they stopped for the night.

Gilgamesh saw a well of cool water and he went down and bathed; but deep in the pool there was lying a serpent, and the serpent sensed the sweetness of the flower. It rose out of the water and snatched it away, and immediately it sloughed its skin and returned to the well. Then Gilgamesh sat down and wept, the tears ran down his face, and he took the hand of Urshanabi; "O Urshanabi, was it for this that I toiled with my hands, is it for this I have wrung out my heart's blood? For myself I have gained nothing; not I, but the beast of the earth has joy of it now. Already the stream has carried it twenty leagues back to the channels where I found it. I found a sign and now I have lost it. Let us leave the boat on the bank and go."

After twenty leagues they broke their fast, after thirty leagues they stopped for the night; in three days they had walked as much as a journey of a month and fifteen days. When the journey was accomplished they arrived at Uruk, the strong-walled city. Gilgamesh spoke to him, to Urshanabi the ferryman, "Urshanabi, climb up on to the wall of Uruk, inspect its foundation terrace, and examine well the brickwork; see if it is not of burnt bricks; and did not the seven wise men lay these foundations? One third of the whole is city, one third is garden, and one third is field, with the precinct of the goddess Ishtar. These parts and the precinct are all Uruk."

This too was the work of Gilgamesh, the king, who knew the countries of the world. He was wise, he saw mysteries and knew secret things, he brought us a tale of the days before the flood. He went a long journey, he was weary, worn out with labour, and returning engraved on a stone the whole story.

### The Death of Gilgamesh

The destiny was fulfilled which the father of the gods, Enlil of the mountain, had decreed for Gilgamesh: "In nether-earth the darkness will show him a light: of mankind, all that are known, none will leave a monument for generations to come to compare with his. The heroes, the wise men, like the new moon have their waxing and waning. Men will say, 'Who has ever ruled with might and with power like him?' As in the dark month, the month of shadows, so without him there is no light. O Gilgamesh, this was the meaning of your dream. You were given the kingship, such was your destiny, everlasting life was not your destiny. Because of this do not be sad at heart, do not be grieved or oppressed; he has given you power to bind and to loose, to be the darkness and the light of mankind. He has given unexampled supremacy over the people, victory in battle from which no fugitive returns, in forays and assaults from which there is no going back. But do not abuse this power, deal justly with your servants in the palace, deal justly before the face of the Sun."

The king has laid himself down and will not rise again,

The Lord of Kullab will not rise again;

He overcame evil, he will not come again;

Though he was strong of arm he will not rise again;

He had wisdom and a comely face, he will not come again;

He is gone into the mountain, he will not come again;

On the bed of fate he lies, he will not rise again,

From the couch of many colours he will not come again.

The people of the city, great and small, are not silent; they lift up the lament, all men of flesh and blood lift up the lament. Fate has spoken; like a hooked fish he lies stretched on the bed, like a gazelle that is caught in a noose. Inhuman Namtar is heavy upon him, Namtar that has neither hand nor foot, that drinks no water and eats no meat.

For Gilgamesh, son of Ninsun, they weighed out their offerings; his dear wife, his son, his concubine, his musicians, his jester, and all his household; his servants, his stewards, all who lived in the palace weighed out their offerings for Gilgamesh the son of Ninsun, the heart of Uruk. They weighed out their offerings to Ereshkigal, the Queen of Death, and to all the gods of the dead. To Namtar, who is fate, they weighed out the offering. Bread for Neti the Keeper of the Gate, bread for Ningizzida the god of the serpent, the lord of the Tree of Life; for Dumuzi also, the young shepherd, for Enki and Ninkî, for Endukuga and Nindukuga, for Enmul and Nimmul, all the ancestral gods, forbears of Enlil. A feast for Shulpae the god of feasting. For Samuqan, god of the herds, for the mother Ninhursag, and the gods of creation in the place of creation, for the host of heaven, priest and priestess weighed out the offering of the dead.

Gilgamesh, the son of Ninsun, lies in the tomb. At the place of offerings he weighed the bread-offering, at the place of libation he poured out the wine. In those days the lord Gilgamesh departed, the son of Ninsun, the

king, peerless, without an equal among men, who did not neglect Enlil his master. O Gilgamesh, lord of Kullab, great is thy praise.

## THE BIBLE: THE OLD TESTAMENT

ca. 1000—300 B.C.

### THE CREATION—THE FALL

The religious attitudes of the Hebrews appear in the story that they told of the creation of the world and of humankind. This creation is the work of one God, who is omnipotent and omniscient and who creates a perfect and harmonious order. The disorder that we see all around us, physical and moral, is not God's creation but Adam and Eve's; it is the consequence of humankind's disobedience. The story not only reconciles the undeniable existence of evil and disorder in the world with the conception of God's infinite justice but also attributes to humanity itself an independence of God, free will, which in this case had been used for evil. The Hebrew God is not limited in His power by other deities, who oppose His will (as in the Greek stories of Zeus and his undisciplined family); His power over inanimate nature is infinite. In all the range of His creation there is only one being able to resist Him—humankind. Because God is all-powerful, even this resistance on Adam and Eve's part is in some mysterious way a manifestation of God's will. How this can be is not explained by the story, and we are left with the mystery that still eludes us, the coexistence of God's prescient power and humanity's unrestricted free will.

The story of the Fall ends with a situation in which Adam and Eve have earned for themselves and their descendants a short life of sorrow relieved only by death. It was the achievement of later Hebrew teachers to carry the story on and develop the concept of a God who is as merciful as He is just, who watches tenderly over the destinies of the creatures who have rebelled against Him, and who brings about the possibility of atonement and full reconciliation.

Adam and Eve's son Cain is the first person to shed human blood, but though God drives him out to be a wanderer on the face of the earth, He does not kill him. The brand on Cain's forehead, while it marks him as a murderer, also protects his life—no one is to touch him. Later when the descendants of Adam and Eve grow so wicked that God is sorry He has created the human race, He decides to destroy it by sending a universal flood. But He spares Noah and his family to beget a new human race, on which God pins His hopes. His rainbow in the sky reminds humankind of His promise that He will never again let loose the waters. But people do not learn their lesson: they start to build a tower high enough to reach to Heaven, and God is afraid that if they succeed they will then recognize no limit to their ambitions. Yet He does not destroy them; He merely frustrates their purpose by depriving them of their common language.

Intertwined with these lessons about humankind's proper relations to God is a generational process that eventually concentrates on the origins and development of the Hebrews as God's chosen people. This part of the story begins with Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. It continues through the rivalry in which Isaac's son Jacob supplants his brother Esau, and it culminates in the trials and ultimate prosperity of Jacob's son Joseph.

### JOSEPH

Joseph, his father's favorite son, has a sense of his own great destiny, confirmed by his dreams, which represent him as the first of all his race. He is indeed to be the

## **Bel and the Dragon (Daniel Apocrapha) Daniel 14**

[Bel 1:1] And king Astyages was gathered to his fathers, and Cyrus of Persia received his kingdom.

[Bel 1:2] And Daniel conversed with the king, and was honoured above all his friends.

[Bel 1:3] Now the Babylons had an idol, called Bel, and there were spent upon him every day twelve great measures of fine flour, and forty sheep, and six vessels of wine.

[Bel 1:4] And the king worshipped it and went daily to adore it: but Daniel worshipped his own God. And the king said unto him, Why dost not thou worship Bel?

[Bel 1:5] Who answered and said, Because I may not worship idols made with hands, but the living God, who hath created the heaven and the earth, and hath sovereignty over all flesh.

[Bel 1:6] Then said the king unto him, Thinkest thou not that Bel is a living God? seest thou not how much he eateth and drinketh every day?

[Bel 1:7] Then Daniel smiled, and said, O king, be not deceived: for this is but clay within, and brass without, and did never eat or drink any thing.

[Bel 1:8] So the king was wroth, and called for his priests, and said unto them, If ye tell me not who this is that devoureth these expences, ye shall die.

[Bel 1:9] But if ye can certify me that Bel devoureth them, then Daniel shall die: for he hath spoken blasphemy against Bel. And Daniel said unto the king, Let it be according to thy word.

[Bel 1:10] Now the priests of Bel were threescore and ten, beside their wives and children. And the king went with Daniel into the temple of Bel.

[Bel 1:11] So Bel's priests said, Lo, we go out: but thou, O king, set on the meat, and make ready the wine, and shut the door fast and seal it with thine own signet;

[Bel 1:12] And to morrow when thou comest in, if thou findest not that Bel hath eaten up all, we will suffer death: or else Daniel, that speaketh falsely against us.

[Bel 1:13] And they little regarded it: for under the table they had made a privy entrance, whereby they entered in continually, and consumed those things.

[Bel 1:14] So when they were gone forth, the king set meats before Bel. Now Daniel had commanded his servants to bring ashes, and those they strewed throughout all the temple in the presence of the king alone: then went they out, and shut the door, and sealed it with the king's signet, and so departed.

[Bel 1:15] Now in the night came the priests with their wives and children, as they were wont to do, and did eat and drinck up all.

[Bel 1:16] In the morning betime the king arose, and Daniel with him.

[Bel 1:17] And the king said, Daniel, are the seals whole? And he said, Yea, O king, they be whole.

[Bel 1:18] And as soon as he had opened the dour, the king looked upon the table, and cried with a loud voice, Great art thou, O Bel, and with thee is no deceit at all.

[Bel 1:19] Then laughed Daniel, and held the king that he should not go in, and said, Behold now the pavement, and mark well whose footsteps are these.

[Bel 1:20] And the king said, I see the footsteps of men, women, and children. And then the king was angry,

[Bel 1:21] And took the priests with their wives and children, who shewed him the privy doors, where they came in, and consumed such things as were upon the table.

[Bel 1:22] Therefore the king slew them, and delivered Bel into Daniel's power, who destroyed him and his temple.

[Bel 1:23] And in that same place there was a great dragon, which they of Babylon worshipped.

[Bel 1:24] And the king said unto Daniel, Wilt thou also say that this is of brass? lo, he liveth, he eateth and drinketh; thou canst not say that he is no living god: therefore worship him.

[Bel 1:25] Then said Daniel unto the king, I will worship the Lord my God: for he is the living God.

[Bel 1:26] But give me leave, O king, and I shall slay this dragon without sword or staff. The king said, I give thee leave.

[Bel 1:27] Then Daniel took pitch, and fat, and hair, and did seethe them together, and made lumps thereof: this he put in the dragon's mouth, and so the dragon burst in sunder : and Daniel said, Lo, these are the gods ye worship.

[Bel 1:28] When they of Babylon heard that, they took great indignation, and conspired against the king, saying, The king is become a Jew, and he hath destroyed Bel, he hath slain the dragon, and put the priests to death.

[Bel 1:29] So they came to the king, and said, Deliver us Daniel, or else we will destroy thee and thine house.

[Bel 1:30] Now when the king saw that they pressed him sore, being constrained, he delivered Daniel unto them:

[Bel 1:31] Who cast him into the lions' den: where he was six days.

[Bel 1:32] And in the den there were seven lions, and they had given them every day two carcasses, and two sheep: which then were not given to them, to the intent they might devour Daniel.

[Bel 1:33] Now there was in Jewry a prophet, called Habbacuc, who had made pottage, and had broken bread in a bowl, and was going into the field, for to bring it to the reapers.

[Bel 1:34] But the angel of the Lord said unto Habbacuc, Go, carry the dinner that thou hast into Babylon unto Daniel, who is in the lions' den.

[Bel 1:35] And Habbacuc said, Lord, I never saw Babylon; neither do I know where the den is.

[Bel 1:36] Then the angel of the Lord took him by the crown, and bare him by the hair of his head, and through the vehemency of his spirit set him in Babylon over the den.

[Bel 1:37] And Habbacuc cried, saying, O Daniel, Daniel, take the dinner which God hath sent thee.

[Bel 1:38] And Daniel said, Thou hast remembered me, O God: neither hast thou forsaken them that seek thee and love thee.

[Bel 1:39] So Daniel arose, and did eat: and the angel of the Lord set Habbacuc in his own place again immediately.

[Bel 1:40] Upon the seventh day the king went to bewail Daniel: and when he came to the den, he looked in, and behold, Daniel was sitting.

[Bel 1:41] Then cried the king with a loud voice, saying, Great art Lord God of Daniel, and there is none other beside thee.

[Bel 1:42] And he drew him out, and cast those that were the cause of his destruction into the den: and they were devoured in a moment before his face.

## Susanna (Daniel Apocrapha) Daniel 13

[Sus 1:1] There dwelt a man in Babylon, called Joacim:

[Sus 1:2] And he took a wife, whose name was Susanna, the daughter of Chelcias, a very fair woman, and one that feared the Lord.

[Sus 1:3] Her parents also were righteous, and taught their daughter according to the law of Moses.

[Sus 1:4] Now Joacim was a great rich man, and had a fair garden joining unto his house: and to him resorted the Jews; because he was more honourable than all others.

[Sus 1:5] The same year were appointed two of the ancients of the people to be judges, such as the Lord spake of, that wickedness came from Babylon from ancient judges, who seemed to govern the people.

[Sus 1:6] These kept much at Joacim's house: and all that had any suits in law came unto them.

[Sus 1:7] Now when the people departed away at noon, Susanna went into her husband's garden to walk.

[Sus 1:8] And the two elders saw her going in every day, and walking; so that their lust was inflamed toward her.

[Sus 1:9] And they perverted their own mind, and turned away their eyes, that they might not look unto heaven, nor remember just judgments.

[Sus 1:10] And albeit they both were wounded with her love, yet durst not one shew another his grief.

[Sus 1:11] For they were ashamed to declare their lust, that they desired to have to do with her.

[Sus 1:12] Yet they watched diligently from day to day to see her.

[Sus 1:13] And the one said to the other, Let us now go home: for it is dinner time.

[Sus 1:14] So when they were gone out, they parted the one from the other, and turning back again they came to the same place; and after that they had asked one another the cause, they acknowledged their lust: then appointed they a time both together, when they might find her alone.

[Sus 1:15] And it fell out, as they watched a fit time, she went in as before with two maids only, and she was desirous to wash herself in the garden: for it was hot.

[Sus 1:16] And there was no body there save the two elders, that had hid themselves, and watched her.

[Sus 1:17] Then she said to her maids, Bring me oil and washing balls, and shut the garden doors, that I may wash me.

[Sus 1:18] And they did as she bade them, and shut the garden doors, and went out themselves at privy doors to fetch the things that she had commanded them: but they saw not the elders, because they were hid.

[Sus 1:19] Now when the maids were gone forth, the two elders rose up, and ran unto her, saying,

[Sus 1:20] Behold, the garden doors are shut, that no man can see us, and we are in love with thee; therefore consent unto us, and lie with us.

[Sus 1:21] If thou wilt not, we will bear witness against thee, that a young man was with thee: and therefore thou didst send away thy maids from thee.

[Sus 1:22] Then Susanna sighed, and said, I am straitened on every side: for if I do this thing, it is death unto me: and if I do it not I cannot escape your hands.

[Sus 1:23] It is better for me to fall into your hands, and not do it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord.

[Sus 1:24] With that Susanna cried with a loud voice: and the two elders cried out against her.

[Sus 1:25] Then ran the one, and opened the garden door.

[Sus 1:26] So when the servants of the house heard the cry in the garden, they rushed in at the privy door, to see what was done unto her.

[Sus 1:27] But when the elders had declared their matter, the servants were greatly ashamed: for there was never such a report made of Susanna.

[Sus 1:28] And it came to pass the next day, when the people were assembled to her husband Joacim, the two elders came also full of mischievous imagination against Susanna to put her to death;

[Sus 1:29] And said before the people, Send for Susanna, the daughter of Chelcias, Joacim's wife. And so they sent.

[Sus 1:30] So she came with her father and mother, her children, and all her kindred.

[Sus 1:31] Now Susanna was a very delicate woman, and beauteous to behold.

[Sus 1:32] And these wicked men commanded to uncover her face, (for she was covered) that they might be filled with her beauty.

[Sus 1:33] Therefore her friends and all that saw her wept.

[Sus 1:34] Then the two elders stood up in the midst of the people, and laid their hands upon her head.

[Sus 1:35] And she weeping looked up toward heaven: for her heart trusted in the Lord.

[Sus 1:36] And the elders said, As we walked in the garden alone, this woman came in with two maids, and shut the garden doors, and sent the maids away.

[Sus 1:37] Then a young man, who there was hid, came unto her, and lay with her.

[Sus 1:38] Then we that stood in a corner of the garden, seeing this wickedness, ran unto them.

[Sus 1:39] And when we saw them together, the man we could not hold: for he was stronger than we, and opened the door, and leaped out.

[Sus 1:40] But having taken this woman, we asked who the young man was, but she would not tell us: these things do we testify.

[Sus 1:41] Then the assembly believed them as those that were the elders and judges of the people: so they condemned her to death.

[Sus 1:42] Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and said, O everlasting God, that knowest the secrets, and knowest all things before they be:

[Sus 1:43] Thou knowest that they have borne false witness against me, and, behold, I must die; whereas I never did such things as these men have maliciously invented against me.

[Sus 1:44] And the Lord heard her voice.

[Sus 1:45] Therefore when she was led to be put to death, the Lord raised up the holy spirit of a young youth whose name was Daniel:

[Sus 1:46] Who cried with a loud voice, I am clear from the blood of this woman.

[Sus 1:47] Then all the people turned them toward him, and said, What mean these words that thou hast spoken?

[Sus 1:48] So he standing in the midst of them said, Are ye such fools, ye sons of Israel, that without examination or knowledge of the truth ye have condemned a daughter of Israel?

[Sus 1:49] Return again to the place of judgment: for they have borne false witness against her.

[Sus 1:50] Wherefore all the people turned again in haste, and the elders said unto him, Come, sit down among us, and shew it us, seeing God hath given thee the honour of an elder.

[Sus 1:51] Then said Daniel unto them, Put these two aside one far from another, and I will examine them.

[Sus 1:52] So when they were put asunder one from another, he called one of them, and said unto him, O thou that art waxen old in wickedness, now thy sins which thou hast committed aforetime are come to light.

[Sus 1:53] For thou hast pronounced false judgment and hast condemned the innocent and hast let the guilty go free; albeit the Lord saith, The innocent and righteous shalt thou not slay.

[Sus 1:54] Now then, if thou hast seen her, tell me, Under what tree sawest thou them companying together? Who answered, Under a mastick tree.

[Sus 1:55] And Daniel said, Very well; thou hast lied against thine own head; for even now the angel of God hath received the sentence of God to cut thee in two.

[Sus 1:56] So he put him aside, and commanded to bring the other, and said unto him, O thou seed of Chanaan, and not of Juda, beauty hath deceived thee, and lust hath perverted thine heart.

[Sus 1:57] Thus have ye dealt with the daughters of Israel, and they for fear companied with you: but the daughter of Juda would not abide your wickedness.

[Sus 1:58] Now therefore tell me, Under what tree didst thou take them companying together? Who answered, Under an holm tree.

[Sus 1:59] Then said Daniel unto him, Well; thou hast also lied against thine own head: for the angel of

God waiteth with the sword to cut thee in two, that he may destroy you.

[Sus 1:60] With that all the assembly cried out with a loud voice, and praised God, who saveth them that trust in him.

[Sus 1:61] And they arose against the two elders, for Daniel had convicted them of false witness by their own mouth:

[Sus 1:62] And according to the law of Moses they did unto them in such sort as they maliciously intended to do to their neighbour: and they put them to death. Thus the innocent blood was saved the same day.

[Sus 1:63] Therefore Chelcias and his wife praised God for their daughter Susanna, with Joacim her husband, and all the kindred, because there was no dishonesty found in her.

[Sus 1:64] From that day forth was Daniel had in great reputation in the sight of the people.

## AGAMEMNON

450 BC

by Aeschylus  
translated by E.D.A. Morshead

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

A WATCHMAN

CHORUS OF ARGIVE ELDERS

CLYTEMNESTRA, wife of AGAMEMNON

A HERALD

AGAMEMNON, King of Argos

CASSANDRA, daughter of Priam, and slave of AGAMEMNON

AEGISTHUS, son of Thyestes, cousin of AGAMEMNON

SERVANTS, ATTENDANTS, SOLDIERS

## ΑΓΑΜΕΜΝΩΝ

(SCENE:-Before the palace of AGAMEMNON in Argos. In front of the palace there are statues of the gods, and altars prepared for sacrifice. It is night. On the roof of the palace can be discerned a WATCHMAN.)

WATCHMAN

I pray the gods to quit me of my toils,  
To close the watch I keep, this livelong year;  
For as a watch-dog lying, not at rest,  
Propped on one arm, upon the palace-roof  
Of Atreus' race, too long, too well I know  
The starry conclave of the midnight sky,  
Too well, the splendours of the firmament,  
The lords of light, whose kingly aspect shows-  
What time they set or climb the sky in turn-  
The year's divisions, bringing frost or fire.

And now, as ever, am I set to mark  
When shall stream up the glow of signal-flame,  
The bale-fire bright, and tell its Trojan tale-  
Troy town is ta'en: such issue holds in hope  
She in whose woman's breast beats heart of man.

Thus upon mine unrestful couch I lie,  
Bathed with the dews of night, unvisited  
By dreams-ah me!-for in the place of sleep  
Stands Fear as my familiar, and repels  
The soft repose that would mine eyelids seal.

And if at whiles, for the lost balm of sleep,

I medicine my soul with melody  
Of trill or song-anon to tears I turn,  
Wailing the woe that broods upon this home,  
Not now by honour guided as of old-

But now at last fair fall the welcome hour  
That sets me free, whene'er the thick night glow  
With beacon-fire of hope deferred no more.  
All hail!

(*A beacon-light is seen reddening the distant sky.*)  
Fire of the night, that brings my spirit day,  
Shedding on Argos light, and dance, and song,  
Greetings to fortune, hail!

Let my loud summons ring within the ears  
Of Agamemnon's queen, that she anon  
Start from her couch and with a shrill voice cry  
A joyous welcome to the beacon-blaze,  
For Ilion's fall; such fiery message gleams  
From yon high flame; and I, before the rest,  
Will foot the lightsome measure of our joy;  
For I can say, My master's dice fell fair-  
Behold! the triple sice, the lucky flame!  
Now be my lot to clasp, in loyal love,  
The hand of him restored, who rules our home:  
Home-but I say no more: upon my tongue  
Treads hard the ox o' the adage.

Had it voice,  
The home itself might soothliest tell its tale;  
I, of set will, speak words the wise may learn,

To others, nought remember nor discern.

*(He withdraws. The CHORUS OF ARGIVE ELDERS enters, each leaning on a staff. During their song CLYTEMNESTRA appears in the background, kindling the altars.)*

**CHORUS** (singing)

Ten livelong years have rolled away,  
 Since the twin lords of sceptred sway,  
 By Zeus endowed with pride of place,  
 The doughty chiefs of Atreus' race,  
     Went forth of yore,  
 To plead with Priam, face to face,  
     Before the judgment-seat of War!

A thousand ships from Argive land  
 Put forth to bear the martial band,  
 That with a spirit stern and strong  
 Went out to right the kingdom's wrong-  
 Pealed, as they went, the battle-song,  
     Wild as the vultures' cry;  
 When o'er the eyrie, soaring high,  
 In wild bereaved agony,  
 Around, around, in airy rings,  
 They wheel with oarage of their wings,  
 But not the eyes-brood behold,  
 That called them to the nest of old;  
 But let Apollo from the sky,  
 Or Pan, or Zeus, but hear the cry,  
 The exile cry, the wail forlorn,  
 Of birds from whom their home is torn-  
 On those who wrought the rapine fell,

Heaven sends the vengeful fiends of hell.  
 Even so doth Zeus, the jealous lord  
 And guardian of the hearth and board,  
 Speed Atreus' sons, in vengeful ire,  
 'Gainst Paris-sends them forth on fire,  
 Her to buy back, in war and blood,  
 Whom one did wed but many woo'd!  
 And many, many, by his will,  
 The last embrace of foes shall feel,  
 And many a knee in dust be bowed,  
 And splintered spears on shields ring loud,  
 Of Trojan and of Greek, before  
 That iron bridal-feast be o'er!  
 But as he willed 'tis ordered all,  
 And woes, by heaven ordained, must fall-  
 Unsoothed by tears or spilt of wine  
 Poured forth too late, the wrath divine  
 Glares vengeance on the flameless shrine.

And we in grey dishonoured eld,

Feeble of frame, unfit were held  
 To join the warrior array  
 That then went forth unto the fray:  
 And here at home we tarry, fain  
 Our feeble footsteps to sustain,  
 Each on his staff-so strength doth wane,  
 And turns to childishness again.  
 For while the sap of youth is green,  
 And, yet unripened, leaps within,  
 The young are weakly as the old,  
 And each alike unmeet to hold  
 The vantage post of war!  
 And ah! when flower and fruit are o'er,  
     And on life's tree the leaves are sere,  
     Age wendeth propped its journey drear,  
 As forceless as a child, as light  
 And fleeting as a dream of night  
 Lost in the garish day!  
 But thou, O child of Tyndareus,  
     Queen Clytemnestra, speak! and say  
     What messenger of joy to-day  
 Hath won thine ear? what welcome news,  
 That thus in sacrificial wise  
 E'en to the city's boundaries  
 Thou biddest altar-fires arise?  
 Each god who doth our city guard,  
 And keeps o'er Argos watch and ward  
     From heaven above, from earth below-  
 The mighty lords who rule the skies,  
 The market's lesser deities,  
     To each and all the altars glow,  
 Piled for the sacrifice!  
 And here and there, anear, afar,  
 Streams skyward many a beacon-star,  
 Conjur'd and charm'd and kindled well  
 By pure oil's soft and guileless spell,  
 Hid now no more  
 Within the palace' secret store.

O queen, we pray thee, whatsoe'er,  
     Known unto thee, were well revealed,  
 That thou wilt trust it to our ear,  
     And bid our anxious heart be healed!  
 That waneth now unto despair-  
 Now, waxing to a presage fair,  
 Dawns, from the altar, to scare  
 From our rent hearts the vulture Care.

#### STROPHE 1

List! for the power is mine, to chant on high  
 The chiefs' emprise, the strength that omens gave!  
 List! on my soul breathes yet a harmony,  
 From realms of ageless powers, and strong to save!

How brother kings, twin lords of one command,  
 Led forth the youth of Hellas in their flower,  
 Urged on their way, with vengeful spear and Brand, by  
 warrior-birds, that watched the parting hour.

Go forth to Troy, the eagles seemed to cry-  
 And the sea-kings obeyed the sky-kings' word,  
 When on the right they soared across the sky,  
 And one was black, one bore a white tail barred.

High o'er the palace were they seen to soar,  
 Then lit in sight of all, and rent and tare,  
 Far from the fields that she should range no more, Big  
 with her unborn brood, a mother-hare.

(Ah woe and well-a-day! but be the issue fair!

**ANTISTROPHE 1**

And one beheld, the soldier-prophet true,  
 And the two chiefs, unlike of soul and will,  
 In the twy-coloured eagles straight he knew,  
 And spake the omen forth, for good and in.

Go forth, he cried, and Priam's town shall fall.  
 Yet long the time shall be; and flock and herd,  
 The people's wealth, that roam before the wall,  
 Shall force hew down, when Fate shall give the word,

But O beware! lest wrath in Heaven abide,  
 To dim the glowing battle-forge once more,  
 And mar the mighty curb of Trojan pride,  
 The steel of vengeance, welded as for war!

For virgin Artemis bears jealous hate  
 Against the royal house, the eagle-pair,  
 Who rend the unborn brood, insatiate-  
 Yea, loathes their banquet on the quivering hare.

(Ah woe and well-a-day! but be the issue fair!)

**EPODE**

For well she loves-the goddess kind and mild-  
 The tender new-born cubs of lions bold,  
 Too weak to range-and well the sucking child  
 Of every beast that roams by wood and wold.

So to the Lord of Heaven she prayeth still,  
 "Nay, if it must be, be the omen true!  
 Yet do the visioned eagles presage ill;  
 The end be well, but crossed with evil too!"

Healer Apollo! be her wrath controll'd  
 Nor weave the long delay of thwarting gales,

To war against the Danaans and withhold  
 From the free ocean-waves their eager sails!

She craves, alas! to see a second life  
 Shed forth, a curst unhallowed sacrifice-  
 'Twixt wedded souls, artificer of strife,  
 And hate that knows not fear, and fell device.

At home there tarries like a lurking snake,  
 Biding its time, a wrath unreconciled,  
 A wily watcher, passionate to slake,  
 In blood, resentment for a murdered child.

Such was the mighty warning, pealed of yore-  
 Amid good tidings, such the word of fear,  
 What time the fateful eagles hovered o'er  
 The kings, and Calchas read the omen clear.

(In strains like his, once more,  
 Sing woe and well-a-day! but be the issue fair!)

**STROPHE 2**

Zeus-if to The Unknown  
 That name of many names seem good-  
 Zeus, upon Thee I call.  
 Thro' the mind's every road  
 I passed, but vain are all,  
 Save that which names thee Zeus, the Highest One,  
 were it but mine to cast away the load,  
 The weary load, that weighs my spirit down.

**ANTISTROPHE 2**

He that was Lord of old,  
 In full-blown pride of place and valour bold,  
 Hath fallen and is gone, even as an old tale told:  
 And he that next held sway,  
 By stronger grasp o'erthrown  
 Hath pass'd away!  
 And whoso now shall bid the triumph-chant  
 Arise to Zeus, and Zeus alone,  
 He shall be found the truly wise.

**STROPHE 3**

'Tis Zeus alone who shows the perfect way  
 Of knowledge: He hath ruled,  
 Men shall learn wisdom, by affliction schooled.

In visions of the night, like dropping rain,  
 Descend the many memories of pain  
 Before the spirit's sight: through tears and dole  
 Comes wisdom o'er the unwilling soul-  
 A boon, I wot, of all Divinity,  
 That holds its sacred throne in strength, above the sky!

## ANTISTROPHE 3

And then the elder chief, at whose command  
The fleet of Greece was manned,  
Cast on the seer no word of hate,  
But veered before the sudden breath of Fate-

Ah, weary while! for, ere they put forth sail,  
Did every store, each minish'd vessel, fail,  
While all the Achaean host  
At Aulis anchored lay,  
Looking across to Chalcis and the coast  
Where reflux waters welter, rock, and sway;

## STROPHE 4

And rife with ill delay  
From northern Strymon blew the thwarting blast--  
Mother of famine fell,  
That holds men wand'ring still  
Far from the haven where they fain would be!--  
And pitiless did waste  
Each ship and cable, rotting on the sea,  
And, doubling with delay each weary hour,  
Withered with hope deferred th' Achaeans' warlike  
flower.

But when, for bitter storm, a deadlier relief,  
And heavier with ill to either chief,  
Pleading the ire of Artemis, the seer avowed,  
The two Atreidae smote their sceptres on the plain,  
And, striving hard, could not their tears restrain!

## ANTISTROPHE 4

And then the elder monarch spake aloud--  
Ill lot were mine, to disobey! And ill,  
To smite my child, my household's love and pride! To  
stain with virgin blood a father's hands, and slay my  
daughter, by the altar's side!  
'Twixt woe and woe I dwell--  
I dare not like a recreant fly,  
And leave the league of ships, and fail each true ally;  
For rightfully they crave, with eager fiery mind,  
The virgin's blood, shed forth to lull the adverse  
wind--God send the deed be well!

## STROPHE 5

Thus on his neck he took  
Fate's hard compelling yoke;  
Then, in the counter-gale of will abhorr'd, accursed,  
To recklessness his shifting spirit veered--  
Alas! that Frenzy, first of ills and worst,  
With evil craft men's souls to sin hath ever stirred!

And so he steeled his heart--ah, well-a-day--  
Aiding a war for one false woman's sake,

His child to slay,  
And with her spilt blood make  
An offering, to speed the ships upon their way!

## ANTISTROPHE 5

Lusting for war, the bloody arbiters  
Closed heart and ears, and would nor hear nor Heed the  
girl-voice plead,  
Pity me, Father! nor her prayers,  
Nor tender, virgin years.  
So, when the chant of sacrifice was done,  
Her father bade the youthful priestly train  
Raise her, like some poor kid, above the altar-stone,  
From where amid her robes she lay  
Sunk all in swoon away--  
Bade them, as with the bit that mutely tames the  
steed, her fair lips' speech refrain,  
Lest she should speak a curse on Atreus' home and  
seed,

## STROPHE 6

So, trailing on the earth her robe of saffron Dye, with  
one last piteous dart from her beseeching eye.  
Those that should smite she smote  
Fair, silent, as a pictur'd form, but fain  
To plead, Is all forgot? How oft those halls of old,  
Wherein my sire high feast did hold,  
Rang to the virginal soft strain,  
When I, a stainless child,  
Sang from pure lips and undefiled,  
Sang of my sire, and all  
His honoured life, and how on him should fall  
Heaven's highest gift and gain!

## ANTISTROPHE 6

And then--but I beheld not, nor can tell,  
What further fate befell:  
But this is sure, that Calchas' boding strain  
Can ne'er be void or vain.  
This wage from justice' hand do sufferers earn,  
The future to discern:  
And yet--farewell, O secret of To-morrow!  
Fore-knowledge is fore-sorrow.  
Clear with the clear beams of the morrow's sun,  
The future presseth on.  
Now, let the house's tale, how dark soe'er,  
Find yet an issue fair!--  
So prays the loyal, solitary band  
That guards the Apian land.

*(They turn to CLYTEMNESTRA, who leaves the altars  
and comes forward.)*

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

O queen, I come in reverence of thy sway-  
 For, while the ruler's kingly seat is void,  
 The loyal heart before his consort bends.  
 Now-be it sure and certain news of good,  
 Or the fair tidings of a flatt'ring hope,  
 That bids thee spread the light from shrine to shrine,  
 I, fain to hear, yet grudge not if thou hide.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

As saith the adage, From the womb of Night  
 Spring forth, with promise fair, the young child Light.  
 Ay-fairer even than all hope my news-  
 By Grecian hands is Priam's city ta'en!

**LEADER**

What say'st thou? doubtful heart makes treach'rous ear.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Hear then again, and plainly-Troy is ours!

**LEADER**

Thrills thro' heart such joy as wakens tears.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Ay, thro' those tears thine eye looks loyalty.

**LEADER**

But hast thou proof, to make assurance sure?

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Go to; I have-unless the god has lied.

**LEADER**

Hath some night-vision won thee to belief?

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Out on all presage of a slumb'rous soul!

**LEADER**

But wert thou cheered by Rumour's wingless word?

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Peace-thou dost chide me as a credulous girl.

**LEADER**

Say then, how long ago the city fell?

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Even in this night that now brings forth the dawn.

**LEADER**

Yet who so swift could speed the message here?

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

From Ida's top Hephaestus, lord of fire,  
 Sent forth his sign; and on, and ever on,  
 Beacon to beacon sped the courier-flame.  
 From Ida to the crag, that Hermes loves,  
 Of Lemnos; thence unto the steep sublime  
 Of Athos, throne of Zeus, the broad blaze flared.  
 Thence, raised aloft to shoot across the sea,  
 The moving light, rejoicing in its strength,  
 Sped from the pyre of pine, and urged its way,  
 In golden glory, like some strange new sun,  
 Onward, and reached Macistus' watching heights.  
 There, with no dull delay nor heedless sleep,  
 The watcher sped the tidings on in turn,  
 Until the guard upon Messapius' peak  
 Saw the far flame gleam on Euripus' tide,

And from the high-piled heap of withered furze  
 Lit the new sign and bade the message on.  
 Then the strong light, far-flown and yet undimmed,  
 Shot thro' the sky above Asopus' plain,  
 Bright as the moon, and on Cithaeron's crag  
 Aroused another watch of flying fire.

And there the sentinels no whit disowned,  
 But sent redoubled on, the hest of flame  
 Swift shot the light, above Gorgopis' bay,  
 To Aegiplanctus' mount, and bade the peak  
 Fail not the onward ordinance of fire.

And like a long beard streaming in the wind,  
 Full-fed with fuel, roared and rose the blaze,  
 And onward flaring, gleamed above the cape,  
 Beneath which shimmers the Saronic bay,  
 And thence leapt light unto Arachne's peak,  
 The mountain watch that looks upon our town.  
 Thence to th' Atreides' roof-in lineage fair,  
 A bright posterity of Ida's fire.

So sped from stage to stage, fulfilled in turn,  
 Flame after flame, along the course ordained,  
 And lo! the last to speed upon its way  
 Sights the end first, and glows unto the goal.  
 And Troy is ta'en, and by this sign my lord  
 Tells me the tale, and ye have learned my word.

**LEADER**

To heaven, O queen, will I upraise new song:  
 But, wouldst thou speak once more, I fain would Hear  
 from first to last the marvel of the tale.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Think you-this very morn-the Greeks in Troy,  
 And loud therein the voice of utter wail!  
 Within one cup pour vinegar and oil,  
 And look! unblent, unreconciled, they war.  
 So in the twofold issue of the strife  
 Mingle the victor's shout, the captives' moan.  
 For all the conquered whom the sword has spared  
 Cling weeping-some unto a brother slain,  
 Some childlike to a nursing father's form,  
 And wail the loved and lost, the while their neck  
 Bows down already 'neath the captive's chain.  
 And lo! the victors, now the fight is done,  
 Goaded by restless hunger, far and wide  
 Range all disordered thro' the town, to snatch  
 Such victual and such rest as chance may give  
 Within the captive halls that once were Troy-  
 Joyful to rid them of the frost and dew,  
 Wherein they couched upon the plain of old-  
 Joyful to sleep the gracious night all through,  
 Unsummoned of the watching sentinel.  
 Yet let them reverence well the city's gods,  
 The lords of Troy, tho' fallen, and her shrines;  
 So shall the spoilers not in turn be spoiled.  
 Yea, let no craving for forbidden gain

Bid conquerors yield before the darts of greed.  
 For we need yet, before the race be won,  
 Homewards, unharmed, to round the course once more.  
 For should the host wax wanton ere it come,  
 Then, tho'the sudden blow of fate be spared,  
 Yet in the sight of gods shall rise once more  
 The great wrong of the slain, to claim revenge.  
 Now, hearing from this woman's mouth of mine,  
 The tale and eke its warning, pray with me,  
 Luck sway the scale, with no uncertain poise,  
 For my fair hopes are changed to fairer joys.

**LEADER**

A gracious word thy woman's lips have told,  
 Worthy a wise man's utterance, O my queen;  
 Now with clear trust in thy convincing tale  
 I set me to salute the gods with song,  
 Who bring us bliss to counterpoise our pain.

*(CLYTEMNESTRA goes into the palace.)*

**CHORUS** (singing)

Zeus, Lord of heaven! and welcome night  
 Of victory, that hast our might  
 With all the glories crowned!  
 On towers of Ilion, free no more,  
 Hast flung the mighty mesh of war,  
 And closely girt them round,  
 Till neither warrior may 'scape,  
 Nor stripling lightly overleap  
 The trammels as they close, and close,  
 Till with the grip of doom our foes  
 In slavery's coil are bound!

Zeus, Lord of hospitality,  
 In grateful awe I bend to thee-  
 'Tis thou hast struck the blow!  
 At Alexander, long ago,  
 We marked thee bend thy vengeful bow,  
 But long and warily withhold  
 The eager shaft, which, uncontrolled  
 And loosed too soon or launched too high,  
 Had wandered bloodless through the sky.

**STROPHE 1**

Zeus, the high God!-whate'er be dim in doubt,  
 This can our thought track out-  
 The blow that fells the sinner is of God,  
 And as he wills, the rod  
 Of vengeance smiteth sore. One said of old,  
 The gods list not to hold  
 A reckoning with him whose feet oppress  
 The grace of holiness-  
 An impious word! for whenso'er the sire  
 Breathed forth rebellious fire-

What time his household overflowed the  
 Measure of bliss and health and treasure-  
 His children's children read the reckoning plain,  
 At last, in tears and pain.  
 On me let weal that brings no woe be sent,  
 And therewithal, content!  
 Who spurns the shrine of Right, nor wealth nor power  
 Shall be to him a tower,  
 To guard him from the gulf: there lies his lot,  
 Where all things are forgot.

**ANTISTROPHE 1**

Lust drives him on-lust, desperate and wild,  
 Fate's sin-contriving child-  
 And cure is none; beyond concealment clear,  
 Kindles sin's baleful glare.  
 As an ill coin beneath the wearing touch  
 Betrays by stain and smutch  
 Its metal false-such is the sinful wight.  
 Before, on pinions light,  
 Fair Pleasure flits, and lures him childlike on,  
 While home and kin make moan  
 Beneath the grinding burden of his crime;  
 Till, in the end of time,  
 Cast down of heaven, he pours forth fruitless Prayer to  
 powers that will not hear.

And such did Paris come unto Atreides' home,  
 And thence, with sin and shame his welcome to  
 Repay, ravished the wife away-

**STROPHE 2**

And she, unto her country and her kin  
 Leaving the clash of shields and spears and Arming  
 ships, and bearing unto Troy destruction For a dower,  
 and overbold in sin,  
 Went fleetly thro' the gates, at midnight hour.  
 Oft from the prophets' lips  
 Moaned out the warning and the wail-Ah woe!  
 Woe for the home, the home! and for the chieftains,  
 woe! Woe for the bride-bed, warm  
 Yet from the lovely limbs, the impress of the Form of  
 her who loved her lord, awhile ago  
 And woe! for him who stands  
 Shamed, silent, unreprouchful, stretching hands  
 That find her not, and sees, yet will not see,  
 That she is far away!  
 And his sad fancy, yearning o'er the sea,  
 Shall summon and recall  
 Her wraith, once more to queen it in his hall.  
 And sad with many memories,  
 The fair cold beauty of each sculptured face-  
 And all to hatefulness is turned their grace,  
 Seen blankly by forlorn and hungering eyes!

**ANTISTROPHE 2**

And when the night is deep,  
Come visions, sweet and sad, and bearing pain  
Of hopings vain--Void, void and vain, for scarce the  
sleeping sight Has seen its old delight,  
When thro' the grasps of love that bid it stay  
It vanishes away On silent wings that roam adown the  
ways of sleep.

Such are the sights, the sorrows fell,  
About our hearth-and worse, whereof I may not tell.  
But, all the wide town o'er,  
Each home that sent its master far away  
From Hellas' shore,  
Feels the keen thrill of heart, the pang of loss, to-day.  
For, truth to say,  
The touch of bitter death is manifold!  
Familiar was each face, and dear as life,  
That went unto the war,  
But thither, whence a warrior went of old,  
Doth nought return-  
Only a spear and sword, and ashes in an urn!

**STROPHE 3**

For Ares, lord of strife,  
Who doth the swaying scales of battle hold,  
War's money-changer, giving dust for gold,  
Sends back, to hearts that held them dear,  
Scant ash of warriors, wept with many a tear,  
Light to the band, but heavy to the soul;  
Yea, fills the light urn full  
With what survived the flame-  
Death's dusty measure of a hero's frame!

Alas! one cries, and yet alas again!  
Our chief is gone, the hero of the spear,  
And hath not left his peer!  
Ah woe! another moans-my spouse is slain,  
The death of honour, rolled in dust and blood,  
Slain for a woman's sin, a false wife's shame!  
Such muttered words of bitter mood  
Rise against those who went forth to reclaim;  
Yea, jealous wrath creeps on against th' Atreides' name.

And others, far beneath the Ilian wall,  
Sleep their last sleep-the goodly chiefs and tall,  
Couched in the foeman's land, whereon they  
gave their breath, and lords of Troy, each in his Trojan  
grave.

**ANTISTROPHE 3**

Therefore for each and all the city's breast  
Is heavy with a wrath suppress,  
As deeply and deadly as a curse more loud

Flung by the common crowd:  
And, brooding deeply, doth my soul await  
Tidings of coming fate,  
Buried as yet in darkness' womb.  
For not forgetful is the high gods' doom  
Against the sons of carnage: all too long  
Seems the unjust to prosper and be strong,  
Till the dark Furies come,  
And smite with stern reversal all his home,  
Down into dim obstruction-he is gone,  
And help and hope, among the lost, is none!

O'er him who vaunteth an exceeding fame,  
Impends a woe condign;  
The vengeful bolt upon his eyes doth flame,  
Sped from the hand divine.  
This bliss be mine, ungrudged of God, to feel-  
To tread no city to the dust,  
Nor see my own life thrust  
Down to a glave's estate beneath another's heel!

**EPODE**

Behold, throughout the city wide  
Have the swift feet of Rumour hied,  
Roused by the joyful flame:  
But is the news they scatter, sooth?  
Or haply do they give for truth  
Some cheat which heaven doth frame?  
A child were he and all unwise,  
Who let his heart with joy be stirred.  
To see the beacon-fires arise,  
And then, beneath some thwarting word,  
Sicken anon with hope deferred.  
The edge of woman's insight still  
Good news from true divideth ill;  
Light rumours leap within the bound  
Then fences female credence round,  
But, lightly born, as lightly dies  
The tale that springs of her surmise.

*(Several days are assumed to have elapsed.)*

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

Soon shall we know whereof the bale-fires tell,  
The beacons, kindled with transmitted flame;  
Whether, as well I deem, their tale is true,  
Or whether like some dream delusive came  
The welcome blaze but to befool our soul:  
For lo! I see a herald from the shore  
Draw hither, shadowed with the olive-wreath-  
And thirsty dust, twin-brother of the clay,  
Speaks plain of travel far and truthful news-  
No dumb surmise, nor tongue of flame in smoke,  
Fitfully kindled from the mountain pyre;

But plainlier shall his voice say, All is well,  
Or-but away, forebodings adverse, now,  
And on fair promise fair fulfilment come!  
And whoso for the state prays otherwise,  
Himself reap harvest of his ill desire!

*(A HERALD enters. He is an advance messenger from Agamemnon's forces, which have just landed.)*

**HERALD**

O land of Argos, fatherland of mine!  
To thee at last, beneath the tenth year's sun,  
My feet return; the bark of my emprise,  
Tho' one by one hope's anchors broke away,  
Held by the last, and now rides safely here.  
Long, long my soul despaired to win, in death,  
Its longed-for rest within our Argive land:  
And now all hail, O earth, and hail to thee,  
New-risen sun! and hail our country's God,  
High-ruling Zeus, and thou, the Pythian lord,  
Whose arrows smote us once-smite thou no more!  
Was not thy wrath wreaked full upon our heads,  
O king Apollo, by Scamander's side?  
Turn thou, be turned, be saviour, healer, now  
And hail, all gods who rule the street and mart  
And Hermes hail! my patron and my pride,  
Herald of heaven, and lord of heralds here!  
And Heroes, ye who sped us on our way-  
To one and all I cry, Receive again  
With grace such Argives as the spear has spared.

Ah, home of royalty, beloved halls,  
And solemn shrines, and gods that front the morn!  
Benign as erst, with sun-flushed aspect greet  
The king returning after many days.  
For as from night flash out the beams of day,  
So out of darkness dawns a light, a king,  
On you, on Argos-Agamemnon comes.  
Then hail and greet him well I such meed befits  
Him whose right hand hewed down the towers of Troy  
With the great axe of Zeus who righteth wrong-  
And smote the plain, smote down to nothingness  
Each altar, every shrine; and far and wide  
Dies from the whole land's face its offspring fair.  
Such mighty yoke of fate he set on Troy-  
Our lord and monarch, Atreus' elder son,  
And comes at last with blissful honour home;  
Highest of all who walk on earth to-day-  
Not Paris nor the city's self that paid  
Sin's price with him, can boast, Whate'er befall,  
The guerdon we have won outweighs it all.  
But at Fate's judgment-seat the robber stands  
Condemned of rapine, and his prey is torn  
Forth from his hands, and by his deed is reaped

A bloody harvest of his home and land  
Gone down to death, and for his guilt and lust  
His father's race pays double in the dust.

**LEADER**

Hail, herald of the Greeks, new-come from war.

**HERALD**

All hail! not death itself can fright me now.

**LEADER**

Was thine heart wrung with longing for thy land?

**HERALD**

So that this joy doth brim mine eyes with tears.

**LEADER**

On you too then this sweet distress did fall-

**HERALD**

How say'st thou? make me master of thy word.

**LEADER**

You longed for us who pined for you again.

**HERALD**

Craved the land us who craved it, love for love?

**LEADER**

Yea, till my brooding heart moaned out with pain.

**HERALD**

Whence thy despair, that mars the army's joy?

**LEADER**

Sole cure of wrong is silence, saith the saw.

**HERALD**

Thy kings afar, couldst thou fear other men?

**LEADER**

Death had been sweet, as thou didst say but now.

**HERALD**

'Tis true; Fate smiles at last. Throughout our toil,  
These many years, some chances issued fair,  
And some, I wot, were chequered with a curse.  
But who, on earth, hath won the bliss of heaven,  
Thro' time's whole tenor an unbroken weal?  
I could a tale unfold of toiling oars,  
Ill rest, scant landings on a shore rock-strewn,  
All pains, all sorrows, for our daily doom.  
And worse and hatefuller our woes on land;  
For where we couched, close by the foeman's wall,  
The river-plain was ever dank with dews,  
Dropped from the sky, exuded from the earth,  
A curse that clung unto our sodden garb,  
And hair as horrent as a wild beast's fell.  
Why tell the woes of winter, when the birds  
Lay stark and stiff, so stern was Ida's snow?  
Or summer's scorch, what time the stirless wave  
Sank to its sleep beneath the noon-day sun?  
Why mourn old woes? their pain has passed away;  
And passed away, from those who fell, all care,  
For evermore, to rise and live again.  
Why sum the count of death, and render thanks  
For life by moaning over fate malign?  
Farewell, a long farewell to all our woes!

To us, the remnant of the host of Greece,  
Comes weal beyond all counterpoise of woe;  
Thus boast we rightfully to yonder sun,  
Like him far-fleeted over sea and land.  
The Argive host prevailed to conquer Troy,  
And in the temples of the gods of Greece  
Hung up these spoils, a shining sign to Time.  
Let those who learn this legend bless aright  
The city and its chieftains, and repay  
The meed of gratitude to Zeus who willed  
And wrought the deed. So stands the tale fulfilled.

**LEADER**

Thy words o'erbear my doubt: for news of good,  
The ear of age hath ever youth enow:  
But those within and Clytemnestra's self  
Would fain hear all; glad thou their ears and mine.

*(CLYTEMNESTRA enters from the palace.)*

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

That night, when first the fiery courier came,  
In sign that Troy is ta'en and razed to earth,  
So wild a cry of joy my lips gave out,  
That I was chidden-Hath the beacon watch  
Made sure unto thy soul the sack of Troy?  
A very woman thou, whose heart leaps light  
At wandering rumours!-and with words like These they  
showed me how I strayed, misled of Hope. Yet on  
each shrine I set the sacrifice,  
And, in the strain they held for feminine,  
Went heralds thro' the city, to and fro,  
With voice of loud proclaim, announcing joy;  
And in each fane they lit and quenched with  
Wine the spicy perfumes fading in the flame.  
All is fulfilled: I spare your longer tale-  
The king himself anon shall tell me all.

Remains to think what honour best may greet  
My lord, the majesty of Argos, home.  
What day beams fairer on a woman's eyes  
Than this, whereon she flings the portal wide,  
To hail her lord, heaven-shielded, home from war?  
This to my husband, that he tarry not,  
But turn the city's longing into joy!  
Yea, let him come, and coming may he find  
A wife no other than he left her, true  
And faithful as a watch-dog to his home,  
His foemen's foe, in all her duties leal,  
Trusty to keep for ten long years unmarred  
The store whereon he set his master-seal.  
Be steel deep-dyed, before ye look to see  
Ill joy, ill fame, from other wight, in me!

**HERALD**

'Tis fairly said: thus speaks a noble dame,

Nor speaks amiss, when truth informs the boast.

*(CLYTEMNESTRA withdraws again into the palace.)*

**LEADER**

So has she spoken-be it yours to learn  
By clear interpreters her specious word.  
Turn to me, herald-tell me if anon  
The second well-loved lord of Argos comes?  
Hath Menelaus safely sped with you?

**HERALD**

Alas-brief boon unto my friends it were,  
To flatter them, for truth, with falsehoods fair!

**LEADER**

Speak joy, if truth be joy, but truth, at worst-  
Too plainly, truth and joy are here divorced.

**HERALD**

The hero and his bark were rapt away  
Far from the Grecian fleet; 'tis truth I say.

**LEADER**

Whether in all men's sight from Ilion borne,  
Or from the fleet by stress of weather torn?

**HERALD**

Full on the mark thy shaft of speech doth light,  
And one short word hath told long woes aright.

**LEADER**

But say, what now of him each comrade saith?  
What their forebodings, of his life or death?

**HERALD**

Ask me no more: the truth is known to none,  
Save the earth-fostering, all-surveying Sun.

**LEADER**

Say, by what doom the fleet of Greece was driven?  
How rose, how sank the storm, the wrath of heaven?

**HERALD**

Nay, ill it were to mar with sorrow's tale  
The day of blissful news. The gods demand  
Thanksgiving sundered from solicitude.  
If one as herald came with rueful face  
To say, The curse has fallen, and the host  
Gone down to death; and one wide wound has reached  
The city's heart, and out of many homes  
Many are cast and consecrate to death,  
Beneath the double scourge, that Ares loves,  
The bloody pair, the fire and sword of doom-  
If such sore burden weighed upon my tongue,  
'Twere fit to speak such words as gladden fiends.  
But-coming as he comes who bringeth news  
Of safe return from toil, and issues fair,  
To men rejoicing in a weal restored-  
Dare I to dash good words with ill, and say  
For fire and sea, that erst held bitter feud,  
Now swore conspiracy and pledged their faith,  
Wasting the Argives worn with toil and war.

Night and great horror of the rising wave  
 Came o'er us, and the blasts that blow from Thrace  
 Clashed ship with ship, and some with plunging prow  
 Thro' scudding drifts of spray and raving storm  
 Vanished, as strays by some ill shepherd driven.  
 And when at length the sun rose bright, we saw  
 Th' Aegaeon sea-field flecked with flowers of death,  
 Corpses of Grecian men and shattered hulls.  
 For us indeed, some god, as well I deem,  
 No human power, laid hand upon our helm,  
 Snatched us or prayed us from the powers of air,  
 And brought our bark thro'all, unharmed in hull:  
 And saving Fortune sat and steered us fair,  
 So that no surge should gulf us deep in brine,  
 Nor grind our keel upon a rocky shore.

So 'scaped we death that lurks beneath the sea,  
 But, under day's white light, mistrustful all  
 Of fortune's smile, we sat and brooded deep,  
 Shepherds forlorn of thoughts that wandered wild  
 O'er this new woe; for smitten was our host,  
 And lost as ashes scattered from the pyre.  
 Of whom if any draw his life-breath yet,  
 Be well assured, he deems of us as dead,  
 As we of him no other fate forebode.  
 But heaven save all! If Menelaus live,  
 He will not tarry, but will surely come:  
 Therefore if anywhere the high sun's ray  
 Descries him upon earth, preserved by Zeus,  
 Who wills not yet to wipe his race away,  
 Hope still there is that homeward he may wend.  
 Enough-thou hast the truth unto the end.

(The *HERALD* departs.)

**CHORUS** (singing)

**STROPHE 1**

Say, from whose lips the presage fell?  
 Who read the future all too well,  
 And named her, in her natal hour,  
 Helen, the bride with war for dower  
 'Twas one of the Invisible,  
 Guiding his tongue with prescient power.  
 On fleet, and host, and citadel,  
 War, sprung from her, and death did lour,  
 When from the bride-bed's fine-spun veil  
 She to the Zephyr spread her sail.  
 Strong blew the breeze-the surge closed o'er  
 The cloven track of keel and oar,  
 But while she fled, there drove along,  
 Fast in her wake, a mighty throng-  
 Athirst for blood, athirst for war,  
 Forward in fell pursuit they sprung,  
 Then leapt on Simois' bank ashore,  
 The leafy coppices among-

No rangers, they, of wood and field,  
 But huntsmen of the sword and shield.

**ANTISTROPHE 1**

Heaven's jealousy, that works its will,  
 Sped thus on Troy its destined ill,  
 Well named, at once, the Bride and Bane;  
 And loud rang out the bridal strain;  
 But they to whom that song befell  
 Did turn anon to tears again;  
 Zeus tarries, but avenges still  
 The husband's wrong, the household's stain!  
 He, the hearth's lord, brooks not to see  
 Its outraged hospitality.

Even now, and in far other tone,  
 Troy chants her dirge of mighty moan,  
 Woe upon Paris, woe and hate!  
 Who wooed his country's doom for mate-  
 This is the burthen of the groan,  
 Wherewith she wails disconsolate  
 The blood, so many of her own  
 Have poured in vain, to fend her fate;  
 Troy! thou hast fed and freed to roam  
 A lion-cub within thy home!

**STROPHE 2**

A suckling creature, newly ta'en  
 From mother's teat, still fully fain  
 Of nursing care; and oft caressed,  
 Within the arms, upon the breast,  
 Even as an infant, has it lain;  
 Or fawns and licks, by hunger pressed,  
 The hand that will assuage its pain;  
 In life's young dawn, a well-loved guest,  
 A fondling for the children's play,  
 A joy unto the old and grey.

**ANTISTROPHE 2**

But waxing time and growth betrays  
 The blood-thirst of the lion-race,  
 And, for the house's fostering care,  
 Unbidden all, it revels there,  
 And bloody recompense repays-  
 Rent flesh of kine, its talons tare:  
 A mighty beast, that slays, and slays,  
 And mars with blood the household fair,  
 A God-sent pest invincible,  
 A minister of fate and hell.

**STROPHE 3**

Even so to Ilion's city came by stealth  
 A spirit as of windless seas and skies,  
 A gentle phantom-form of joy and wealth,

With love's soft arrows speeding from its eyes-  
Love's rose, whose thorn doth pierce the soul in subtle  
wise.

Ah, well-a-day! the bitter bridal-bed,  
When the fair mischief lay by Paris' side!  
What curse on palace and on people sped  
With her, the Fury sent on Priam's pride,  
By angered Zeus! what tears of many a widowed bride!

#### ANTISTROPHE 3

Long, long ago to mortals this was told,  
How sweet security and blissful state  
Have curses for their children-so men hold-  
And for the man of all-too prosperous fate  
Springs from a bitter seed some woe insatiate.

Alone, alone, I deem far otherwise;  
Not bliss nor wealth it is, but impious deed,  
From which that after-growth of ill doth rise!  
Woe springs from wrong, the plant is like the seed-  
While Right, in honour's house, doth its own likeness  
breed.

#### STROPHE 4

Some past impiety, some grey old crime,  
Breeds the young curse, that wantons in our ill,  
Early or late, when haps th'appointed time-  
And out of light brings power of darkness still,  
A master-fiend, a foe, unseen, invincible;

A pride accursed, that broods upon the race  
And home in which dark Ate holds her sway-  
Sin's child and Woe's, that wears its parents' face;

#### ANTISTROPHE 4

While Right in smoky cribs shines clear as day,  
And decks with weal his life, who walks the righteous  
way.

From gilded halls, that hands polluted raise,  
Right turns away with proud averted eyes,  
And of the wealth, men stamp amiss with praise,  
Heedless, to poorer, holier temples hies,  
And to Fate's goal guides all, in its appointed wise.

*(Agamemnon enters, riding in a chariot and  
accompanied by a great procession. CASSANDRA  
follows in another chariot. The Chorus sings its  
welcome.)*

Hail to thee, chief of Atreus' race,  
Returning proud from Troy subdued!  
How shall I greet thy conquering face?

How nor a fulsome praise obtrude,  
Nor stint the meed of gratitude?  
For mortal men who fall to ill  
Take little heed of open truth,  
But seek unto its semblance still:  
The show of weeping and of ruth  
To the forlorn will all men pay,  
But, of the grief their eyes display,  
Nought to the heart doth pierce its way.  
And, with the joyous, they beguile  
Their lips unto a feigned smile,  
And force a joy, unfelt the while;  
But he who as a shepherd wise

Doth know his flock, can ne'er misread  
Truth in the falsehood of his eyes,  
Who veils beneath a kindly guise  
A lukewarm love in deed.

And thou, our leader-when of yore  
Thou badest Greece go forth to war  
For Helen's sake-I dare avow  
That then I held thee not as now;  
That to my vision thou didst seem  
Dyed in the hues of disesteem.  
I held thee for a pilot ill,  
And reckless, of thy proper will,  
Endowing others doomed to die  
With vain and forced audacity!  
Now from my heart, ungrudgingly,  
To those that wrought, this word be said-  
Well fall the labour ye have sped-  
Let time and search, O king, declare  
What men within thy city's bound  
Were loyal to the kingdom's care,  
And who were faithless found.

**AGAMEMNON** (*still standing in the chariot*)

First, as is meet, a king's All-hail be said  
To Argos, and the gods that guard the land-  
Gods who with me availed to speed us home,  
With me availed to wring from Priam's town  
The due of justice. In the court of heaven  
The gods in conclave sat and judged the cause,  
Not from a pleader's tongue, and at the close,  
Unanimous into the urn of doom  
This sentence gave, On Ilion and her men,  
Death: and where hope drew nigh to pardon's urn  
No hand there was to cast a vote therein.  
And still the smoke of fallen Ilion  
Rises in sight of all men, and the flame  
Of Ate's hecatomb is living yet,  
And where the towers in dusty ashes sink,  
Rise the rich fumes of pomp and wealth consumed  
For this must all men pay unto the gods  
The meed of mindful hearts and gratitude:  
For by our hands the meshes of revenge

Closed on the prey, and for one woman's sake  
 Troy trodden by the Argive monster lies-  
 The foal, the shielded band that leapt the wall,  
 What time with autumn sank the Pleiades.  
 Yea, o'er the fencing wall a lion sprang  
 Ravening, and lapped his fill of blood of kings.

Such prelude spoken to the gods in full,  
 To you I turn, and to the hidden thing  
 Whereof ye spake but now: and in that thought  
 I am as you, and what ye say, say I.  
 For few are they who have such inborn grace,  
 As to look up with love, and envy not,  
 When stands another on the height of weal.  
 Deep in his heart, whom jealousy hath seized,  
 Her poison lurking doth enhance his load;  
 For now beneath his proper woes he chafes,  
 And sighs withal to see another's weal.

I speak not idly, but from knowledge sure-  
 There be who vaunt an utter loyalty,  
 That is but as the ghost of friendship dead,  
 A shadow in a glass, of faith gone by.  
 One only-he who went reluctant forth  
 Across the seas with me-Odysseus-he  
 Was loyal unto me with strength and will,  
 A trusty trace-horse bound unto my car.  
 Thus-be he yet beneath the light of day,  
 Or dead, as well I fear-I speak his praise.  
 Lastly, whate'er be due to men or gods,

With joint debate, in public council held,  
 We will decide, and warily contrive  
 That all which now is well may so abide:  
 For that which haply needs the healer's art,  
 That will we medicine, discerning well  
 If cautory or knife befit the time.

Now, to my palace and the shrines of home,  
 I will pass in, and greet you first and fair,  
 Ye gods, who bade me forth, and home again-  
 And long may Victory tarry in my train!

*(CLYTEMNESTRA enters from the palace, followed by  
 maidens bearing crimson robes.)*

**CLYTEMNESTRA**  
 Old men of Argos, lieges of our realm,  
 Shame shall not bid me shrink lest ye should see  
 The love I bear my lord. Such blushing fear  
 Dies at the last from hearts of human kind.  
 From mine own soul and from no alien lips,  
 I know and will reveal the life I bore.  
 Reluctant, through the lingering livelong years,

The while my lord beleaguered Ilium's wall.

First, that a wife sat sundered from her lord,  
 In widowed solitude, was utter woe  
 And woe, to hear how rumour's many tongues  
 All boded evil-woe, when he who came  
 And he who followed spake of ill on ill,  
 Keening Lost, lost, all lost! thro' hall and bower.  
 Had this my husband met so many wounds,  
 As by a thousand channels rumour told,  
 No network e'er was full of holes as he.  
 Had he been slain, as oft as tidings came  
 That he was dead, he well might boast him now  
 A second Geryon of triple frame,  
 With triple robe of earth above him laid-  
 For that below, no matter-triply dead,  
 Dead by one death for every form he bore.  
 And thus distraught by news of wrath and woe,  
 Oft for self-slaughter had I slung the noose,  
 But others wrenched it from my neck away.  
 Hence haps it that Orestes, thine and mine,  
 The pledge and symbol of our wedded troth,  
 Stands not beside us now, as he should stand.  
 Nor marvel thou at this: he dwells with one  
 Who guards him loyally; 'tis Phocis' king, Strophius,  
 who warned me erst, Bethink thee, queen,  
 What woes of doubtful issue well may fall  
 Thy lord in daily jeopardy at Troy,  
 While here a populace uncurbed may cry,  
 "Down with the council, down!" bethink thee too, 'Tis  
 the world's way to set a harder heel  
 On fallen power.

For thy child's absence then  
 Such mine excuse, no wily afterthought.  
 For me, long since the gushing fount of tears  
 Is wept away; no drop is left to shed.  
 Dim are the eyes that ever watched till dawn,  
 Weeping, the bale-fires, piled for thy return,  
 Night after night unkindled. If I slept,  
 Each sound-the tiny humming of a gnat,  
 Roused me again, again, from fitful dreams  
 Wherein I felt thee smitten, saw thee slain,  
 Thrice for each moment of mine hour of sleep.

All this I bore, and now, released from woe,  
 I hail my lord as watch-dog of a fold,  
 As saving stay-rope of a storm-tossed ship,  
 As column stout that holds the roof aloft,  
 As only child unto a sire bereaved,  
 As land beheld, past hope, by crews forlorn,  
 As sunshine fair when tempest's wrath is past,  
 As gushing spring to thirsty wayfarer.  
 So sweet it is to 'scape the press of pain.

With such salute I bid my husband hail  
Nor heaven be wroth therewith! for long and  
Hard I bore that ire of old.

Sweet lord, step forth,  
Step from thy car, I pray-nay, not on earth  
Plant the proud foot, O king, that trod down Troy!  
Women! why tarry ye, whose task it is  
To spread your monarch's path with tapestry?  
Swift, swift, with purple strew his passage fair,  
That justice lead him to a home, at last,  
He scarcely looked to see.

*(The attendant women spread the tapestry.)*

For what remains,  
Zeal unsubdued by sleep shall nerve my hand  
To work as right and as the gods command.

**AGAMEMNON** *(still in the chariot)*  
Daughter of Leda, watcher o'er my home,  
Thy greeting well befits mine absence long,  
For late and hardly has it reached its end.  
Know, that the praise which honour bids us crave,  
Must come from others' lips, not from our own:  
See too that not in fashion feminine  
Thou make a warrior's pathway delicate;  
Not unto me, as to some Eastern lord,  
Bowing thyself to earth, make homage loud.  
Strew not this purple that shall make each step  
An arrogance; such pomp beseems the gods,  
Not me. A mortal man to set his foot  
On these rich dyes? I hold such pride in fear,  
And bid thee honour me as man, not god.  
Fear not-such footcloths and all gauds apart,  
Loud from the trump of Fame my name is blown; Best  
gift of heaven it is, in glory's hour,  
To think thereon with soberness: and thou-  
Bethink thee of the adage, Call none blest  
Till peaceful death have crowned a life of weal.  
'Tis said: I fain would fare unvexed by fear.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**  
Nay, but unsay it-thwart not thou my will!

**AGAMEMNON**  
Know, I have said, and will not mar my word.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**  
Was it fear made this meekness to the gods?

**AGAMEMNON**  
If cause be cause, 'tis mine for this resolve.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**  
What, think'st thou, in thy place had Priam done?

**AGAMEMNON**  
He surely would have walked on broidered robes.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**  
Then fear not thou the voice of human blame.

**AGAMEMNON**  
Yet mighty is the murmur of a crowd.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**  
Shrink not from envy, appanage of bliss.

**AGAMEMNON**  
War is not woman's part, nor war of words.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**  
Yet happy victors well may yield therein.

**AGAMEMNON**  
Dost crave for triumph in this petty strife?

**CLYTEMNESTRA**  
Yield; of thy grace permit me to prevail!

**AGAMEMNON**  
Then, if thou wilt, let some one stoop to loose  
Swiftly these sandals, slaves beneath my foot;  
And stepping thus upon the sea's rich dye,  
I pray, Let none among the gods look down  
With jealous eye on me-reluctant all,  
To trample thus and mar a thing of price,  
Wasting the wealth of garments silver-worth.  
Enough hereof: and, for the stranger maid,  
Lead her within, but gently: God on high  
Looks graciously on him whom triumph's hour  
Has made not pitiless. None willingly  
Wear the slave's yoke-and she, the prize and flower  
Of all we won, comes hither in my train,  
Gift of the army to its chief and lord.  
-Now, since in this my will bows down to thine,  
I will pass in on purples to my home.

*(He descends from the chariot, and moves towards the palace.)*

**CLYTEMNESTRA**  
A Sea there is-and who shall stay its springs?  
And deep within its breast, a mighty store,  
Precious as silver, of the purple dye,  
Whereby the dipped robe doth its tint renew.  
Enough of such, O king, within thy halls  
There lies, a store that cannot fail; but I-  
I would have gladly vowed unto the gods  
Cost of a thousand garments trodden thus,  
(Had once the oracle such gift required)  
Contriving ransom for thy life preserved.  
For while the stock is firm the foliage climbs,  
Spreading a shade, what time the dog-star glows;  
And thou, returning to thine hearth and home,  
Art as a genial warmth in winter hours,  
Or as a coolness, when the lord of heaven  
Mellows the juice within the bitter grape.  
Such boons and more doth bring into a home  
The present footstep of its proper lord.  
Zeus, Zeus, Fulfilment's lord! my vows fulfil,  
And whatso'er it be, work forth thy will!

*(She follows AGAMEMNON into the palace.)*

**CHORUS** (singing)

**STROPHE 1**

Wherefore for ever on the wings of fear  
Hovers a vision drear  
Before my boding heart? a strain,  
Unbidden and unwelcome, thrills mine ear,  
Oracular of pain.  
Not as of old upon my bosom's throne  
Sits Confidence, to spurn  
Such fears, like dreams we know not to discern.  
Old, old and grey long since the time has grown,  
Which saw the linked cables moor  
The fleet, when erst it came to Ilion's sandy shore;

**ANTISTROPHE 1**

And now mine eyes and not another's see  
Their safe return.

Yet none the less in me  
The inner spirit sings a boding song,  
Self-prompted, sings the Furies' strain-  
And seeks, and seeks in vain,  
To hope and to be strong!

Ah! to some end of Fate, unseen, unguessed,  
Are these wild throbbings of my heart and breast-  
Yea, of some doom they tell-  
Each pulse, a knell.  
Lief, lief I were, that all  
To unfulfilment's hidden realm might fall.

**STROPHE 2**

Too far, too far our mortal spirits strive,  
Grasping at utter weal, unsatisfied-  
Till the fell curse, that dwelleth hard beside,  
Thrust down the Sundering wall. Too fair they blow,  
The gales that waft our bark on Fortune's tide!  
Swiftly we sail, the sooner an to drive  
Upon the hidden rock, the reef of woe.  
Then if the hand of caution warily  
Sling forth into the sea  
Part of the freight, lest all should sink below,  
From the deep death it saves the bark: even so,  
Doom-laden though it be, once more may rise  
His household, who is timely wise.

How oft the famine-stricken field  
Is saved by God's large gift, the new year's yield!

**ANTISTROPHE 2**

But blood of man once spilled, once at his feet  
Shed forth, and darkening the plain,-

Nor chant nor charm can call it back again.  
So Zeus hath willed:

Else had he spared the leech Asclepius, skilled  
To bring man from the dead: the hand divine  
Did smite himself with death-a warning and a sign-

Ah me! if Fate, ordained of old,  
Held not the will of gods constrained, controlled,  
Helpless to us-ward, and apart-  
Swifter than speech my heart  
Had poured its presage out!  
Now, fretting, chafing in the dark of doubt,  
'Tis hopeless to unfold  
Truth, from fear's tangled skein; and, yearning to  
proclaim  
Its thought, my soul is prophecy and flame.

*(CLYTEMNESTRA comes out of the palace and addresses CASSANDRA, who has remained motionless in her chariot.)*

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Get thee within thou too, Cassandra, go!  
For Zeus to thee in gracious mercy grants  
To share the sprinklings of the lustral bowl,  
Beside the altar of his guardianship,  
Slave among many slaves. What, haughty still?  
Step from the car; Alcmena's son, 'tis said,  
Was sold perforce and bore the yoke of old.  
Ay, hard it is, but, if such fate befall,  
'Tis a fair chance to serve within a home  
Of ancient wealth and power. An upstart lord,  
To whom wealth's harvest came beyond his hope,  
Is as a lion to his slaves, in all  
Exceeding fierce, immoderate in sway.  
Pass in: thou hearest what our ways will be.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

Clear unto thee, O maid, is her command,  
But thou-within the toils of Fate thou art-  
If such thy will, I urge thee to obey;  
Yet I misdoubt thou dost nor hear nor heed.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

I wot-unless like swallows she doth use  
Some strange barbarian tongue from oversea-  
My words must speak persuasion to her soul.

**LEADER**

Obeys: there is no gentler way than this.  
Step from the car's high seat and follow her.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Truce to this bootless waiting here without!  
I will not stay: beside the central shrine  
The victims stand, prepared for knife and fire-  
Offerings from hearts beyond all hope made glad.

Thou-if thou reckest aught of my command,  
 'Twere well done soon: but if thy sense be shut  
 From these my words, let thy barbarian hand  
 Fulfil by gesture the default of speech.

**LEADER**

No native is she, thus to read thy words  
 Unaided: like some wild thing of the wood,  
 New-trapped, behold! she shrinks and glares on thee.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

'Tis madness and the rule of mind distraught,  
 Since she beheld her city sink in fire,  
 And hither comes, nor brooks the bit, until  
 In foam and blood her wrath be champ'd away.  
 See ye to her; unqueenly 'tis for me,  
 Unheeded thus to cast away my words.

*(CLYTEMNESTRA enters the palace.)*

**LEADER**

But with me pity sits in anger's place.  
 Poor maiden, come thou from the car; no way  
 There is but this-take up thy servitude.

**CASSANDRA** (chanting)

Woe, woe, alas! Earth, Mother Earth! and thou  
 Apollo, Apollo!

**LEADER**

Peace! shriek not to the bright prophetic god,  
 Who will not brook the suppliance of woe.

**CASSANDRA** (chanting)

Woe, woe, alas! Earth, Mother Earth! and thou  
 Apollo, Apollo!

**LEADER**

Hark, with wild curse she calls anew on him,  
 Who stands far off and loathes the voice of wail.

**CASSANDRA** (chanting)

Apollo, Apollo!  
 God of all ways, but only Death's to me,  
 Once and again, O thou, Destroyer named,  
 Thou hast destroyed me, thou, my love of old!

**LEADER**

She grows presageful of her woes to come,  
 Slave tho' she be, instinct with prophecy.

**CASSANDRA** (chanting)

Apollo, Apollo!  
 God of all ways, but only Death's to me,  
 O thou Apollo, thou Destroyer named!  
 What way hast led me, to what evil home?

**LEADER**

Know'st thou it not? The home of Atreus' race:  
 Take these my words for sooth and ask no more.

**CASSANDRA** (chanting)

Home cursed of God! Bear witness unto me,  
 Ye visioned woes within-  
 The blood-stained hands of them that smite their kin-  
 The strangling noose, and, spattered o'er  
 With human blood, the reeking floor!

**LEADER**

How like a sleuth-hound questing on the track,  
 Keen-scented unto blood and death she hies!

**CASSANDRA** (chanting)

Ah! can the ghostly guidance fail,  
 Whereby my prophet-soul is onwards led?  
 Look! for their flesh the spectre-children wail,  
 Their sodden limbs on which their father fed!

**LEADER**

Long since we knew of thy prophetic fame,-  
 But for those deeds we seek no prophet's tongue-

**CASSANDRA** (chanting)

God! 'tis another crime-  
 Worse than the storied woe of olden time,  
 Cureless, abhorred, that one is plotting here-  
 A shaming death, for those that should be dear  
 Alas! and far away, in foreign land,  
 He that should help doth stand!

**LEADER**

I knew th' old tales, the city rings withal-  
 But now thy speech is dark, beyond my ken.

**CASSANDRA** (chanting)

Ah, damned woman, will you do this thing? Your  
 husband, the partner of your bed, when you have  
 cheered him with the bath, will you -- how shall I tell  
 the end? [1110] Soon it will be done. Now this hand,  
 now that, she stretches forth!

**CHORUS**

Not yet do I comprehend; for now, after riddles, I am  
 bewildered by dark oracles.

**CASSANDRA**

Ah! Ah! What apparition is this? [1115] Is it a net of  
 death? No, it is a snare that shares his bed, that shares  
 the guilt of murder. Let the fatal pack, insatiable  
 against the race, raise a shout of jubilation over a victim  
 accursed!

**CHORUS**

What Spirit of Vengeance is this that you bid [1120]  
 raise its voice over this house? Your words do not  
 cheer me. Back to my heart surge the drops of my  
 pallid blood, even as when they drip from a mortal  
 wound, ebbing away as life's beams sink low; and death  
 comes speedily.

**CASSANDRA**

[1125] Ah, ah, see there, see there! Keep the bull from  
 his mate! She has caught him in the robe and gores him  
 with the crafty device of her black horn! He falls in a  
 vessel of water! It is of doom wrought by guile in a  
 murderous bath that I am telling you.

**CHORUS**

[1130] I cannot boast that I am a keen judge of  
 prophecies; but these, I think, spell some evil. But from  
 prophecies what word of good ever comes to mortals?  
 Through terms of evil their wordy arts [1135] bring

men to know fear chanted in prophetic strains.

**CASSANDRA**

Alas, alas, the sorrow of my ill-starred doom! For it is my own affliction, crowning the cup, that I bewail. Ah, to what end did you bring me here, unhappy as I am? For nothing except to die -- and not alone. What else?

**CHORUS**

[1140] Frenzied in soul you are, by some god possessed, and you wail in wild strains your own fate, like that brown bird that never ceases making lament (ah me!), and in the misery of her heart moans Itys, Itys, [1145] throughout all her days abounding in sorrow, the nightingale.

**CASSANDRA**

Ah, fate of the clear-voiced nightingale! The gods clothed her in a winged form and gave to her a sweet life without tears. But for me waits destruction by the two-edged sword.

**CHORUS**

[1150] From where come these vain pangs of prophecy that assail you? And why do you mold to melody these terrors with dismal cries blended with piercing strains? How do you know the bounds of the path of your [1155] ill-boding prophecy?

**CASSANDRA**

Ah, the marriage, the marriage of Paris, that destroyed his friends! Ah me, Scamander, my native stream! Upon your banks in bygone days, unhappy maid, was I nurtured with fostering care; [1160] but now by Cocytus and the banks of Acheron, I think, I soon must chant my prophecies.

**CHORUS**

What words are these you utter, words all too plain? A new-born child hearing them could understand. I am smitten with a deadly pain, while, [1165] by reason of your cruel fortune, you cry aloud your pitiful moans that break my heart to hear.

**CASSANDRA**

O the sufferings, the sufferings of my city utterly destroyed! Alas, the sacrifices my father offered, the many pasturing cattle slain to save its towers! [1170] Yet they provided no remedy to save the city from suffering even as it has; and I, my soul on fire, must soon fall to the ground.

**CHORUS**

Your present speech chimes with your former strain. [1175] Surely some malignant spirit, falling upon you with heavy swoop, moves you to chant your piteous woes fraught with death. But the end I am helpless to discover.

**CASSANDRA**

And now, no more shall my prophecy peer forth from behind a veil like a new-wedded bride; but [1180] it will rush upon me clear as a fresh wind blowing against

the sun's uprising so as to dash against its rays, like a wave, a woe far mightier than mine. No more by riddles will I instruct you. And bear me witness, as, running close behind, [1185] I scent the track of crimes done long ago. For from this roof never departs a choir chanting in unison, but singing no harmonious tune; for it tells not of good. And so, gorged on human blood, so as to be the more emboldened, a revel-rout of kindred Furies haunts the house, [1190] hard to be drive away. Lodged within its halls they chant their chant, the primal sin; and, each in turn, they spurn with loathing a brother's bed, for they bitterly spurn the one who defiled it. Have I missed the mark, or, like a true archer, do I strike my quarry? [1195] Or am I prophet of lies, a door-to-door babblers? Bear witness upon your oath that I know the deeds of sin, ancient in story, of this house.

**CHORUS**

How could an oath, a pledge although given in honor, effect any cure? Yet I marvel at you that, [1200] though bred beyond the sea, you speak truth of a foreign city, even as if you had been present there.

**CASSANDRA**

The seer Apollo appointed me to this office.

**CHORUS** [1204]

Can it be that he, a god, was smitten with desire?

**CASSANDRA**

[1203] Before now I was ashamed to speak of this.

**CHORUS**

[1205] In prosperity all take on airs.

**CASSANDRA**

Oh, but he struggled to win me, breathing ardent love for me.

**CHORUS**

Did you in due course come to the rite of marriage?

**CASSANDRA**

I consented to Loxias but broke my word.

**CHORUS**

[1210] Were you already possessed by the art inspired of the god?

**CASSANDRA**

Already I prophesied to my countrymen all their disasters.

**CHORUS**

How came it then that you were unharmed by Loxias' wrath?

**CASSANDRA**

Ever since that fault I could persuade no one of anything.

**CHORUS**

And yet to us at least the prophecies you utter seem true enough.

**CASSANDRA**

Ah, ah! Oh, oh, the agony! [1215] Once more the dreadful throes of true prophecy whirl and distract me

with their ill-boding onset. Do you see them there -- sitting before the house -- young creatures like phantoms of dreams? Children, they seem, slaughtered by their own kindred, [1220] their hands full of the meat of their own flesh; they are clear to my sight, holding their vitals and their inward parts (piteous burden!), which their father tasted. For this cause I tell you that a strengthless lion, wallowing in his bed, plots vengeance, [1225] a watchman waiting (ah me!) for my master's coming home -- yes, my master, for I must bear the yoke of slavery. The commander of the fleet and the overthrower of Ilium little knows what deeds shall be brought to evil accomplishment by the hateful hound, whose tongue licked his hand, who stretched forth her ears in gladness, [1230] like treacherous Ate. Such boldness has she, a woman to slay a man. What odious monster shall I fitly call her? An Amphisbaena? Or a Scylla, tenanting the rocks, a pest to mariners, [1235] a raging, devil's mother, breathing relentless war against her husband? And how the all-daring woman raised a shout of triumph, as when the battle turns, the while she feigned to joy at his safe return! And yet, it is all one, whether or not I am believed. What does it matter? [1240] What is to come, will come. And soon you, yourself present here, shall with great pity pronounce me all too true a prophetess.

**CHORUS**

Thyestes' banquet on his children's flesh I understood, and I tremble. Terror possesses me as I hear the truth, nothing fashioned out of falsehood to resemble truth. [1245] But as for the rest I heard I am thrown off the track.

**CASSANDRA**

I say you shall look upon Agamemnon dead.

**CHORUS**

To words propitious, miserable girl, lull your speech.

**CASSANDRA**

Over what I tell no healing god presides.

**CHORUS**

No, if it is to be; but may it not be so!

**CASSANDRA**

[1250] You do but pray; their business is to slay.

**CHORUS**

What man is he that contrived this wickedness?

**CASSANDRA**

Surely you must have missed the meaning of my prophecies.

**CHORUS**

I do not understand the scheme of him who is to do the deed.

**CASSANDRA**

And yet all too well I understand the Greek language.

**CHORUS**

[1255] So too do the Pythian oracles; yet they are hard

to understand.

**CASSANDRA**

Oh, oh! What fire! It comes upon me! Woe, woe! Lycean Apollo! Ah me, ah me! This two-footed lioness, who mates with a wolf in the absence of the noble lion, [1260] will slay me, miserable as I am. Brewing as it were a drug, she vows that with her wrath she will mix requital for me too, while she whets her sword against her husband, to take murderous vengeance for bringing me here. Why then do I bear these mockeries of myself, [1265] this wand, these prophetic chaplets on my neck?

*[Breaking her wand, she throws it and the other insignia of her prophetic office upon the ground, and tramples them underfoot]*

You at least I will destroy before I die myself. To destruction with you! And fallen there, thus do I repay you. Enrich with doom some other in my place. Look, Apollo himself is stripping me [1270] of my prophetic garb -- he that saw me mocked to bitter scorn, even in this bravery, by friends turned foes, with one accord, in vain -- but, like some vagrant mountebank, called "beggar," "wretch," "starveling," I bore it all. [1275] And now the prophet, having undone me, his prophetess, has brought me to this lethal pass. Instead of my father's altar a block awaits me, where I am to be butchered in a hot and bloody sacrifice. Yet, we shall not die unavenged by the gods; [1280] for there shall come in turn another, our avenger, a scion of the race, to slay his mother and exact requital for his sire; an exile, a wanderer, a stranger from this land, he shall return to put the coping-stone upon these unspeakable iniquities of his house. For the gods have sworn a mighty oath [1285] that his slain father's outstretched corpse shall bring him home. Why then thus raise my voice in pitiful lament? Since first I saw the city of Ilium fare what it has fared, while her captors, by the gods' sentence, are coming to such an end, [1290] I will go in and meet my fate. I will dare to die. This door I greet as the gates of Death. And I pray that, dealt a mortal stroke, without a struggle, my life-blood ebbing away in easy death, I may close these eyes.

**CHORUS**

[1295] O woman, pitiful exceedingly and exceeding wise, long has been your speech. But if, in truth, you have knowledge of your own death, how can you step with calm courage to the altar like an ox, driven by the god?

**CASSANDRA**

There is no escape; no, my friends, there is none any more.

**CHORUS**

[1300] Yet he that is last has the advantage in respect of time.

**CASSANDRA**

The day has come; flight would profit me but little.

**CHORUS**

Well, be assured, you brave suffering with a courageous spirit.

**CASSANDRA**

None who is happy is commended thus.

**CHORUS**

Yet surely to die nobly is a blessing for mortals.

**CASSANDRA**

[1305] Alas for you, my father and for your noble children! [*She starts back in horror*]

**CHORUS**

What ails you? What terror turns you back?

**CASSANDRA**

Alas, alas!

**CHORUS**

Why do you cry "alas"? Unless perhaps there is some horror in your soul.

**CASSANDRA**

This house stinks of blood-dripping slaughter.

**CHORUS**

[1310] And what of that? It is just the savor of victims at the hearth.

**CASSANDRA**

It is like a breath from a charnel-house.

**CHORUS**

You are not speaking of proud Syrian incense for the house.

**CASSANDRA**

Nay, I will go to bewail also within the palace my own and Agamemnon's fate. Enough of life! [1315] Alas, my friends, not with vain terror do I shrink, as a bird that fears a bush. After I am dead, bear witness for me of this -- when for me, a woman, another woman shall be slain, and for an ill-wedded man another man shall fall. [1320] I claim this favor from you now that my hour is come.

**CHORUS**

Poor woman, I pity you for your death foretold.

**CASSANDRA**

Yet once more I would like to speak, but not a dirge. I pray to the sun, in presence of his latest light, that my enemies may at the same time pay to my avengers a bloody penalty for [1325] slaughtering a slave, an easy prey. Alas for human fortune! When prosperous, a mere shadow can overturn it; if misfortune strikes, the dash of a wet sponge blots out the drawing. [1330] And this last I deem far more pitiable than that. [*Enters the palace*]

**CHORUS**

It is the nature of all human kind to be unsatisfied with

prosperity. From stately halls none bars it with warning voice that utters the words "Enter no more." [1335] So the Blessed Ones have granted to our prince to capture Priam's town; and, divinely-honored, he returns to his home. Yet if he now must pay the penalty for the blood shed by others before him, and by dying for the dead [1340] he is to bring to pass retribution of other deaths, what mortal man, on hearing this, can boast that he was born with scatheless destiny?

[*A shriek is heard from within*]

**AGAMEMNON**

Alas! I am struck deep with a mortal blow!

**CHORUS**

Silence! Who is this that cries out, wounded by a mortal blow?

**AGAMEMNON**

[1345] And once again, alas! I am struck by a second blow.

**CHORUS**

The deed is done, it seems -- to judge by the groans of the king. But come, let us take counsel together if there is perhaps some safe plan of action.

[*The members of the CHORUS discuss their opinions on the course to be taken.*]

-- I tell you my advice: summon the townfolk to bring rescue here to the palace. [1350]

-- To my thinking we must burst in and charge them with the deed while the sword is still dripping in their hands.

-- I, too, am for taking part in some such plan, and vote for action of some sort. It is no time to keep on delaying.

-- It is plain. Their opening act [1355] marks a plan to set up a tyranny in the State.

-- Yes, because we are wasting time, while they, trampling underfoot that famous name, Delay, allow their hands no slumber.

-- I know not what plan I could hit on to propose. It is the doer's part likewise to do the planning. [1360]

-- I too am of this mind, for I know no way to bring the dead back to life by mere words.

-- What! To prolong our lives shall we thus submit to the rule of those defilers of the house?

-- No, it is not to be endured. No, death would be better, [1365] for that would be a milder lot than tyranny.

-- And shall we, upon the evidence of mere groans, divine that our lord is dead?

-- We should be sure of the facts before we indulge our wrath. For surmise differs from assurance. [1370]

-- I am supported on all sides to approve this course.

-- that we get clear assurance how it stands with

Atreus' son.

[*The bodies of AGAMEMNON and CASSANDRA are disclosed; the queen stands by their side*]

**CLYTAEMESTRA**

Much have I said before to serve my need and I shall feel no shame to contradict it now. For how else could one, devising hate against a hated foe [1375] who bears the semblance of a friend, fence the snares of ruin too high to be overleaped? This is the contest of an ancient feud, pondered by me of old, and it has come, however long delayed. I stand where I dealt the blow; my purpose is achieved. [1380] Thus have I done the deed; deny it I will not. Round him, as if to catch a haul of fish, I cast an impassable net -- fatal wealth of robe -- so that he should neither escape nor ward off doom. Twice I struck him, and with two groans [1385] his limbs relaxed. Once he had fallen, I dealt him yet a third stroke to grace my prayer to the infernal Zeus, the savior of the dead. Fallen thus, he gasped away his life, and as he breathed forth quick spurts of blood, [1390] he struck me with dark drops of gory dew; while I rejoiced no less than the sown earth is gladdened in heaven's refreshing rain at the birthtime of the flower buds. Since then the case stands thus, old men of Argos, rejoice, if you would rejoice; as for me, I glory in the deed. [1395] And had it been a fitting act to pour libations on the corpse, over him this would have been done justly, more than justly. With so many accursed lies has he filled the mixing-bowl in his own house, and now he has come home and himself drained it to the dregs.

**CHORUS**

We are shocked at your tongue, how bold-mouthed you are, [1400] that over your husband you can utter such a boastful speech.

**CLYTAEMESTRA**

You are testing me as if I were a witless woman. But my heart does not quail, and I say to you who know it well -- and whether you wish to praise or to blame me, it is all one -- here is Agamemnon, [1405] my husband, now a corpse, the work of this right hand, a just workman. So stands the case.

**CHORUS**

Woman, what poisonous herb nourished by the earth have you tasted, what potion drawn from the flowing sea, that you have taken upon yourself this maddened rage and the loud curses voiced by the public? [1410] You have cast him off; you have cut him off; and out from the land shall you be cast, a burden of hatred to your people.

**CLYTAEMESTRA**

It's now that you would doom me to exile from the land, to the hatred of my people and the execration of

the public voice; though then you had nothing to urge against him that lies here. And yet he, [1415] valuing no more than if it had been a beast that perished -- though sheep were plenty in his fleecy folds -- he sacrificed his own child, she whom I bore with dearest travail, to charm the blasts of Thrace. Is it not he whom you should have banished from this land [1420] in requital for his polluting deed? No! When you arraign what I have done, you are a stern judge. Well, I warn you: threaten me thus on the understanding that I am prepared, conditions equal, to let you lord it over me if you shall vanquish me by force. But if a god shall bring the contrary to pass, [1425] you shall learn discretion though taught the lesson late.

**CHORUS**

You are proud of spirit, and your speech is overbearing. Even as your mind is maddened by your deed of blood, upon your face a stain of blood shows full plain to behold. Bereft of all honor, forsaken of your friends, [1430] you shall hereafter atone for stroke with stroke,

**CLYTAEMESTRA**

Listen then to this too, this the righteous sanction on my oath: by Justice, exacted for my child, by Ate, by the Avenging Spirit, to whom I sacrificed that man, hope does not tread for me the halls of fear, [1435] so long as the fire upon my hearth is kindled by Aegisthus, loyal in heart to me as in days gone by. For he is no slight shield of confidence to me. Here lies the man who did me wrong, plaything of each Chryseis at Ilium; [1440] and here she lies, his captive, and augress, and concubine, his oracular faithful whore, yet equally familiar with the seamen's benches. The pair has met no undeserved fate. For he lies thus; while she, who, like a swan, [1445] has sung her last lament in death, lies here, his beloved; but to me she has brought for my bed an added relish of delight.

**CHORUS**

Alas! Ah that some fate, free from excess of suffering, nor yet with lingering bed of pain, [1450] might come full soon and bring to us everlasting and endless sleep, now that our most gracious guardian has been laid low, who in a woman's cause had much endured and by a woman's hand has lost his life. [1455] O mad Helen, who did yourself alone destroy these many lives, these lives exceeding many, beneath the walls of Troy. Now you have bedecked yourself with your final crown, that shall long last in memory, [1460] because of blood not to be washed away. Truly in those days strife, an affliction that has subdued its lord, dwelt in the house.

**CLYTAEMESTRA**

Do not burden yourself with thoughts such as these, nor invoke upon yourself the fate of death. Nor yet turn your wrath upon Helen, [1465] and deem her a slayer

of men, as if she alone had destroyed many a Danaan life and had wrought anguish past all cure.

**CHORUS**

O Fiend who falls upon this house and Tantalus' two descendants, [1470] you who by the hands of women exert a rule matching their temper, a rule bitter to my soul! Perched over his body like a hateful raven, in hoarse notes she chants her song of triumph.

**CLYTAEMESTRA**

[1475] Now you have corrected the judgment of your lips in that you name the thrice-gorged Fiend of this race. For by him the lust for lapping blood is fostered in the mouth; so before [1480] the ancient wound is healed, fresh blood is spilled.

**CHORUS**

Truly you speak of a mighty Fiend, haunting the house, and heavy in his wrath (alas, alas!) -- an evil tale of catastrophic fate insatiate; [1485] woe, woe, done by will of Zeus, author of all, worker of all! For what is brought to pass for mortal men save by will of Zeus? What herein is not wrought of god? Alas, alas, my King, my King, [1490] how shall I bewail you? How voice my heartfelt love for you? To lie in this spider's web, breathing forth your life in an impious death! Ah me, to lie on this ignoble bed, struck down in treacherous death wrought [1495] by a weapon of double edge wielded by the hand of your own wife!

**CLYTAEMESTRA**

Do you affirm this deed is mine? Do not imagine that I am Agamemnon's spouse. [1500] A phantom resembling that corpse's wife, the ancient bitter evil spirit of Atreus, that grim banqueter, has offered him in payment, sacrificing a full-grown victim in vengeance for those slain babes.

**CHORUS**

[1505] That you are innocent of this murder -- who will bear you witness? How could anyone do so? And yet the evil genius of his father might well be your accomplice. By force [1510] amid streams of kindred blood black Havoc presses on to where he shall grant vengeance for the gore of children served for meat. Alas, alas, my King, my King, how shall I bewail you? [1515] How voice my heartfelt love for you? To lie in this spider's web, breathing forth your life in impious death! Alas, to lie on this ignoble bed, struck down in treacherous death [1520] wrought by a weapon of double edge wielded by your own wife's hand!

**CLYTAEMESTRA**

[Neither do I think he met an ignoble death.] And did he not himself by treachery bring ruin on his house? [1525] Yet, as he has suffered -- worthy meed of worthy deed -- for what he did to my sweet flower, shoot sprung from him, the sore-wept Iphigenia, let him make no great boasts in the halls of Hades, since with

death dealt him by the sword he has paid for what he first began.

**CHORUS**

[1530] Bereft of any ready expedient of thought, I am bewildered where to turn now that the house is tottering. I fear the beating storm of bloody rain that shakes the house; no longer does it descend in drops. [1535] Yet on other whetstones Destiny is sharpening justice for another evil deed. O Earth, Earth, if only you had taken me to yourself before ever I had lived to see my lord [1540] occupying a lowly bed of a silver-sided bath! Who shall bury him? Who shall lament him? Will you harden your heart to do this -- you who have slain your own husband -- to lament for him [1545] and crown your unholy work with an uncharitable gift to his spirit, atoning for your monstrous deeds? And who, as with tears he utters praise over the hero's grave, [1550] shall sorrow in sincerity of heart?

**CLYTAEMESTRA**

To care for that duty is no concern of yours. By your hands down he fell, down to death, and down below shall we bury him -- but not with wailings from his household. [1555] No! Iphigenia, his daughter, as is due, shall meet her father lovingly at the swift-flowing ford of sorrows, and shall fling her arms around him and kiss him.

**CHORUS**

[1560] Reproach thus meets reproach in turn -- hard is the struggle to decide. The spoiler is despoiled, the slayer pays penalty. Yet, while Zeus remains on his throne, it remains true that to him who does it shall be done; for it is law. [1565] Who can cast from out the house the seed of the curse? The race is bound fast in calamity.

**CLYTAEMESTRA**

Upon this divine deliverance have you rightly touched. As for me, however, I am willing to make a sworn compact with the Fiend of the house of Pleisthenes [1570] that I will be content with what is done, hard to endure though it is. Henceforth he shall leave this house and bring tribulation upon some other race by murder of kin. A small part of the wealth is fully enough for me, if I may but rid these halls [1575] of the frenzy of mutual murder.

[Enter *AEGISTHUS* with armed retainers]

**AEGISTHUS**

Hail gracious light of the day of retribution! At last the hour has come when I can say that the gods who avenge mortal men look down from on high upon the crimes of earth. [1580] Now that, to my joy, I behold this man lying here in a robe spun by the Avenging Spirits and making full payment for the deeds contrived in craft by his father's hand. For Atreus, lord of this

land, this man's father, challenged in his sovereignty, drove forth, from city and from home, Thyestes, who (to speak it clearly) was my father [1585] and his own brother. And when he had come back as a suppliant to his hearth, unhappy Thyestes secured such safety for his lot as not himself to suffer death and stain with his blood his native soil. [1590] But Atreus, the godless father of this slain man, with welcome more hearty than kind, on the pretence that he was cheerfully celebrating a happy day by serving meat, served up to my father as entertainment a banquet of his own children's flesh. [1595] The toes and fingers he broke off sitting apart. And when all unwittingly my father had quickly taken servings that he did not recognize, he ate a meal which, as you see, has proved fatal to his race. Now, discovering his unhallowed deed, he uttered a great cry, reeled back, vomiting forth the slaughtered flesh, and invoked [1600] an unbearable curse upon the line of Pelops, kicking the banquet table to aid his curse, "thus perish all the race of Pleisthenes!" This is the reason that you see this man fallen here. I am he who planned this murder and with justice. For together with my hapless father he drove me out, [1605] me his third child, as yet a baby in swaddling-clothes. But grown to manhood, justice has brought me back again. Exile though I was, I laid my hand upon my enemy, compassing every device of cunning to his ruin. [1610] So even death would be sweet to me now that I behold him in justice's net.

**CHORUS**

Aegisthus, excessive triumph amid distress I do not honor. You say that of your own intent you slew this man and did alone plot this pitiful murder. [1615] I tell you in the hour of justice that you yourself, be sure of that, will not escape the people's curses and death by stoning at their hand.

**AEGISTHUS**

You speak like that, you who sit at the lower oar when those upon the higher bench control the ship? Old as you are, you shall learn how bitter it is [1620] at your age to be schooled when prudence is the lesson set before you. Bonds and the pangs of hunger are far the best doctors of the spirit when it comes to instructing the old. Do you have eyes and lack understanding? Do not kick against the goads lest you strike to your own hurt.

**CHORUS**

[1625] Woman that you are! Skulking at home and awaiting the return of the men from war, all the while defiling a hero's bed, did you contrive this death against a warrior chief?

**AEGISTHUS**

These words of yours likewise shall prove a source of tears. The tongue of Orpheus is quite the opposite of

yours. [1630] He led all things by the rapture of his voice; but you, who have stirred our wrath by your silly yelping, shall be led off yourself. You will appear tamer when put down by force.

**CHORUS**

As if you would ever truly be my master here in Argos, you who did contrive our king's death, and [1635] then had not the courage to do this deed of murder with your own hand!

**AEGISTHUS**

Because to ensnare him was clearly the woman's part; I was suspect as his enemy of old. However, with his gold I shall endeavor to control the people; and whoever is unruly, [1640] him I'll yoke with a heavy collar, and in truth he shall be no well-fed trace-horse! No! Loathsome hunger that houses with darkness shall see him gentle.

**CHORUS**

Why then, in the baseness of your soul, did you not kill him yourself, but leave his slaying to a woman, [1645] a plague to her country and her country's gods? Oh, does Orestes perhaps still behold the light, that, with favoring fortune, he may come home and be the slayer of this pair with victory complete?

**AEGISTHUS**

Oh well, since you plan to act and speak like that, you shall be taught a lesson soon. [1650] On guard, my trusty guardsmen, your work lies close to hand.

**CHORUS**

On guard then! Let every one make ready his sword with hand on hilt.

**AEGISTHUS**

My hand too is laid on my sword hilt, and I do not shrink from death.

**CHORUS**

"Death for yourself," you say. We hail the omen. We welcome fortune's test.

**CLYTAEMESTRA**

No, my dearest, let us work no further ills. [1655] Even these are many to reap, a wretched harvest. Of woe we have enough; let us have no bloodshed. Venerable elders, go back to your homes, and yield in time to destiny before you come to harm. What we did had to be done. But should this trouble prove enough, we will accept it, [1660] sorely battered as we are by the heavy hand of fate. Such is a woman's counsel, if any care to learn from it.

**AEGISTHUS**

But to think that these men should let their wanton tongues thus blossom into speech against me and cast about such insults, putting their fortune to the test! To reject wise counsel and insult their master!

**CHORUS**

[1665] It would not be like men of Argos to cringe

before a man as low as you.

**AEGISTHUS**

Ha! I will visit you with vengeance yet in days to come.

**CHORUS**

Not if fate shall guide Orestes to return home.

**AEGISTHUS**

From my own experience I know that exiles feed on hope.

**CHORUS**

Keep on, grow fat, polluting justice, since you can.

**AEGISTHUS**

[1670] Know that you shall atone to me for your insolent folly.

**CHORUS**

Brag in your bravery like a cock beside his hen.

**CLYTAEMESTRA**

Do no care for their idle yelpings. I and you will be masters of this house and order it aright.

**THE END**

**AGAMEMNON IN THE STYLE OF DR. SEUSS (DR. ZEUS?)**

1. The fair winds did not blow  
It was too rough to sail  
So they sat on the beach  
Like a moribund whale.  
The twin-throned Atridae  
They sat without joy  
And they said, "How we wish we could go burn down Troy!"  
So all they could do was to sit! sit! sit! sit!  
And they did not like it, not one little bit.  
And then something went "eek!"  
(But that shriek was in Greek)--  
They looked, and they saw something not at all funny,  
Two eagles devouring a fat pregnant bunny.

2. Clyt. That Agamemnon! That Agamemnon! I do not like that Agamemnon!

Chorus. Do you want to kill your man?

Clyt. Yes, I would like to kill my man.  
Listen, listen, here's my plan.  
I will kill him in my wrath,  
I will kill him in his bath.  
I will wrap him in this rug  
and I will get that no-good thug.  
I will kill him when he comes near,  
and I will kill him and that seer.  
I will not hide or run for cover;  
I will rule here with my lover.  
So there you have it, that's my plan.  
I do so want to kill my man!

LIBATION BEARERS The Libation Bearers

450 B.C.  
by Aeschylus  
translated by E.D.A. Moreshead

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ORESTES, son of AGAMEMNON and CLYTEMNESTRA  
CHORUS OF SLAVE WOMEN  
ELECTRA, sister of ORESTES  
A NURSE  
CLYTEMNESTRA  
AEGISTHUS  
AN ATTENDANT  
PYLADES, friend of ORESTES

ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ

(SCENE:-By the tomb of Agamemnon near the palace in Argos. ORESTES and PYLADES enter, dressed as travellers. ORESTES carries two locks of hair in his hand.)

ORESTES

Lord of the shades and patron of the realm  
That erst my father swayed, list now my prayer,  
Hermes, and save me with thine aiding arm,  
Me who from banishment returning stand  
On this my country; lo, my foot is set  
On this grave-mound, and herald-like, as thou,  
Once and again, I bid my father hear.  
And these twin locks, from mine head shorn, I bring,  
And one to Inachus the river-god,  
My young life's nurturer, I dedicate,  
And one in sign of mourning unfulfilled  
I lay, though late, on this my father's grave.  
For O my father, not beside thy corse  
Stood I to wail thy death, nor was my hand  
Stretched out to bear thee forth to burial.

What sight is yonder? what this woman-throng  
Hitherward coming, by their sable garb  
Made manifest as mourners? What hath chanced?  
Doth some new sorrow hap within the home?  
Or rightly may I deem that they draw near  
Bearing libations, such as soothe the ire  
Of dead men angered, to my father's grave?  
Nay, such they are indeed; for I descry

Electra mine own sister pacing hither,  
In moody grief conspicuous. Grant, O Zeus,  
Grant me my father's murder to avenge-  
Be thou my willing champion!

Pylades,

Pass we aside, till rightly I discern  
Wherefore these women throng in supplicance.

(PYLADES and ORESTES withdraw; the CHORUS enters bearing vessels for libation; ELECTRA follows them; they pace slowly towards the tomb of Agamemnon.)

CHORUS (singing)

strophe 1

Forth from the royal halls by high command  
I bear libations for the dead.  
Rings on my smitten breast my smiting hand,  
And all my cheek is rent and red,  
Fresh-furrowed by my nails, and all my soul  
This many a day doth feed on cries of dole.  
And trailing tatters of my vest,  
In looped and windowed raggedness forlorn,  
Hang rent around my breast,  
Even as I, by blows of Fate most stern  
Saddened and torn.

antistrophe 1

Oracular thro' visions, ghastly clear,  
 Bearing a blast of wrath from realms below,  
 And stiffening each rising hair with dread,  
   Came out of dream-land Fear,  
 And, loud and awful, bade  
 The shriek ring out at midnight's witching hour,  
 And brooded, stern with woe,  
 Above the inner house, the woman's bower  
 And seers inspired did read the dream on oath,  
   Chanting aloud In realms below  
   The dead are wroth;  
 Against their slayers yet their ire doth glow.

### strophe 2

Therefore to bear this gift of graceless worth-  
   O Earth, my nursing mother!-  
 The woman god-accurs'd doth send me forth  
   Lest one crime bring another.  
 Ill is the very word to speak, for none  
   Can ransom or atone  
 For blood once shed and darkening the plain.  
   O hearth of woe and bane,  
   O state that low doth lie!  
 Sunless, accursed of men, the shadows brood  
 Above the home of murdered majesty.

### antistrophe 2

Rumour of might, unquestioned, unsubdued,  
 Pervading ears and soul of lesser men,  
   Is silent now and dead.  
   Yet rules a viler dread;  
 For bliss and power, however won,  
 As gods, and more than gods, dazzle our mortal ken.

Justice doth mark, with scales that swiftly sway,  
 Some that are yet in light;  
 Others in interspace of day and night,  
   Till Fate arouse them, stay;  
 And some are lapped in night, where all things are  
 undone

### strophe 3

On the life-giving lap of Earth  
   Blood hath flowed forth;  
 And now, the seed of vengeance, clots the plain-  
   Unmelting, uneffaced the stain.  
 And Ate tarries long, but at the last  
   The sinner's heart is cast  
 Into pervading, waxing pangs of pain.

### antistrophe 3

Lo, when man's force doth ope  
 The virgin doors, there is nor cure nor hope  
 For what is lost, -even so, I deem,  
 Though in one channel ran Earth's every stream,  
 Laving the hand defiled from murder's stain,  
   It were in vain.

### epode

And upon me-ah me!-the gods have laid  
 The woe that wrapped round Troy,  
 What time they led me down from home and kin  
   Unto a slave's employ-  
   The doom to bow the head  
 And watch our master's will  
   Work deeds of good and ill-  
 To see the headlong sway of force and sin,  
 And hold restrained the spirit's bitter hate,  
 Wailing the monarch's fruitless fate,  
 Hiding my face within my robe, and fain  
 Of tears, and chilled with frost of hidden pain.

#### ELECTRA

Handmaidens, orderers of the palace-halls,  
 Since at my side ye come, a suppliant train,  
 Companions of this offering, counsel me  
 As best befits the time: for I, who pour  
 Upon the grave these streams funereal,  
 With what fair word can I invoke my sire?  
 Shall I aver, Behold, I bear these gifts  
 From well-loved wife unto her well-loved lord,  
 When 'tis from her, my mother, that they come?  
 I dare not say it: of all words I fail  
 Wherewith to consecrate unto my sire  
 These sacrificial honours on his grave.  
 Or shall I speak this word, as mortals use-  
 Give back, to those who send these coronals,  
 Full recompense-of ills for acts malign?  
 Or shall I pour this draught for Earth to drink,  
 Sans word or reverence, as my sire was slain,  
 And homeward pass with unreverted eyes,  
 Casting the bowl away, as one who flings  
 The household cleansings to the common road?  
 Be art and part, O friends, in this my doubt,  
 Even as ye are in that one common hate  
 Whereby we live attended: fear ye not  
 The wrath of any man, nor hide your word  
 Within your breast: the day of death and doom  
 Awaits alike the freeman and the slave.  
 Speak, then, if you know anything to aid us more.

#### LEADER OF THE CHORUS

Thou biddest; I will speak my soul's thought out,  
 Revering as a shrine thy father's grave.

**ELECTRA**  
 Say then thy say, as thou his tomb reverest.  
**LEADER**  
 Speak solemn words to them that love, and pour.  
**ELECTRA**  
 And of his kin whom dare I name as kind?  
**LEADER**  
 Thyself; and next, whoe'er Aegisthus scorns.  
**ELECTRA**  
 Then 'tis myself and thou, my prayer must name.  
**LEADER**  
 Whoe'er they be, 'tis thine to know and name them.  
**ELECTRA**  
 Is there no other we may claim as ours?  
**LEADER**  
 Think of Orestes, though far-off he be.  
**ELECTRA**  
 Right well in this too hast thou schooled my thought.  
**LEADER**  
 Mindfully, next, on those who shed the blood-  
**ELECTRA**  
 Pray on them what? expound, instruct my doubt.  
**LEADER**  
 This: Upon them some god or mortal come-  
**ELECTRA**  
 As judge or as avenger? speak thy thought.  
**LEADER**  
 Pray in set terms, Who shall the slayer slay.  
**ELECTRA**  
 Beseemeth it to ask such boon of heaven?  
**LEADER**  
 How not, to wreak a wrong upon a foe?  
**ELECTRA** (praying at the tomb)  
 O mighty Hermes, warder of the shades,  
 Herald of upper and of under world,  
 Proclaim and usher down my prayer's appeal  
 Unto the gods below, that they with eyes  
 Watchful behold these halls. my sire's of old-  
 And unto Earth, the mother of all things,  
 And loster-nurse, and womb that takes their seed.  
 Lo, I that pour these draughts for men now dead,  
 Call on my father, who yet holds in ruth  
 Me and mine own Orestes, Father, speak-  
 How shall thy children rule thine halls again?  
 Homeless we are and sold; and she who sold  
 Is she who bore us; and the price she took  
 Is he who joined with her to work thy death,  
 Aegisthus, her new lord. Behold me here  
 Brought down to slave's estate, and far away  
 Wanders Orestes, banished from the wealth  
 That once was thine, the profit of thy care,  
 Whereon these revel in a shameful joy.  
 Father, my prayer is said; 'tis thine to hear-  
 Grant that some fair fate bring Orestes home,

And unto me grant these-a purer soul  
 Than is my mother's, a more stainless hand.  
 These be my prayers for us; for thee, O sire,  
 I cry that one may come to smite thy fops,  
 And that the slayers may in turn be slain.  
 Cursed is their prayer, and thus I bar its path,  
 Praying mine own, a counter-curse on them.  
 And thou, send up to us the righteous boon  
 For which we pray; thine aids be heaven and earth,  
 And justice guide the right to victory.

(To the **CHORUS**)

Thus have I prayed, and thus I shed these streams,  
 And follow ye the wont, and as with flowers  
 Crown ye with many a tear and cry the dirge  
 Your lips ring out above the dead man's grave.

(She pours the libations.)

**CHORUS** (chanting)

Woe, woe, woe!

Let the teardrop fall, plashing on the ground  
 Where our lord lies low:

Fall and cleanse away the cursed libation's stair.,  
 Shed on this grave-mound,

Fenced wherein together, gifts of good or bane  
 From the dead are found.

Lord of Argos, hearken!

Though around thee darken

Mist of death and hell, arise and hear  
 Harken and awaken to our cry of woe!

Who with might of spear

Shall our home deliver?

Who like Ares bend until it quiver,

Bend the northern bow?

Who with hand upon the hilt himself will thrust with  
 glaive,

Thrust and slay and save?

**ELECTRA**

Lo! the earth drinks them, to my sire they pass--

(She notices the locks of **ORESTES**.)

Learn ye with me of this thing new and strange.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

Speak thou; my breast doth palpitate with fear.

**ELECTRA**

I see upon the tomb a curl new shorn.

**LEADER**

Shorn from what man or what deep-girded maid?

**ELECTRA**

That may he, guess who will; the sign is plain.

**LEADER**

Let me learn this of thee; let youth prompt age.

**ELECTRA**

None is there here but I, to clip such gift.

**LEADER**

For they who thus should mourn him hate him sore.

**ELECTRA**

And lo! in truth the hair exceeding like-

**LEADER**

Like to what locks and whose? instruct me that.

**ELECTRA**

Like unto those my father's children wear.

**LEADER**

Then is this lock Orestes' secret gift?

**ELECTRA**

Most like it is unto the curls he wore.

**LEADER**

Yet how dared he to come unto his home?

**ELECTRA**

He hath but sent it, clipt to mourn his sire.

**LEADER**

It is a sorrow grievous as his death,

That he should live yet never dare return.

**ELECTRA**

Yea, and my heart o'erflows with gall of grief,

And I am pierced as with a cleaving dart;

Like to the first drops after drought, my tears

Fall down at will, a bitter bursting tide,

As on this lock I gaze; I cannot deem

That any Argive save Orestes' self

Was ever lord thereof; nor, well I wot,

Hath she, the murd'ress, shorn and laid this lock

To mourn him whom she slew-my mother she,

Bearing no mother's heart, but to her race

A loathing spirit, loathed itself of heaven!

Yet to affirm, as utterly made sure,

That this adornment cometh of the hand

Of mine Orestes, brother of my soul,

I may not venture, yet hope flatters fair!

Ah well-a-day, that this dumb hair had voice

To glad mine ears, as might a messenger,

Bidding me sway no more 'twixt fear and hope,

Clearly commanding, Cast me hence away,

Clipped was I from some head thou lovest not;

Or, I am kin to thee, and here, as thou,

I come to weep and deck our father's grave.

Aid me, ye gods! for well indeed ye know

How in the gale and counter-gale of doubt,

Like to the seaman's bark, we whirl and stray.

But, if God will our life, how strong shall spring,

From seed how small, the new tree of our home!-

Lo ye, a second sign-these footsteps, looks-

Like to my own, a corresponsive print;

And look, another footmark,-this his own,

And that the foot of one who walked with him.

Mark, how the heel and tendons' print combine,

Measured exact, with mine coincident!

Alas, for doubt and anguish rack my mind.

*(ORESTES and PYLADES enter suddenly.)*

**ORESTES**

Pray thou, in gratitude for prayers fulfilled,

Fair fall the rest of what I ask of heaven.

**ELECTRA**

Wherefore? what win I from the gods by prayer?

**ORESTES**

This, that thine eyes behold thy heart's desire.

**ELECTRA**

On whom of mortals know'st thou that I call?

**ORESTES**

I know thy yearning for Orestes deep.

**ELECTRA**

Say then, wherein event hath crowned my prayer?

**ORESTES**

I, I am he; seek not one more akin.

**ELECTRA**

Some fraud, O stranger, weavest thou for me?

**ORESTES**

Against myself I weave it, if I weave.

**ELECTRA**

Ah, thou hast mind to mock me in my woel

**ORESTES**

'Tis at mine own I mock then, mocking thine.

**ELECTRA**

Speak I with thee then as Orestes' self?

**ORESTES**

My very face thou see'st and know'st me not,

And yet but now, when thou didst see the lock

Shorn for my father's grave, and when thy quest

Was eager on the footprints I had made,

Even I, thy brother, shaped and sized as thou,

Fluttered thy spirit, as at sight of me!

Lay now this ringlet whence 'twas shorn, and judge,

And look upon this robe, thine own hands' work,

The shuttle-prints, the creature wrought thereon-

refrain thyself, nor prudence lose in joy,

For well I wot, our kin are less than kind.

**ELECTRA**

O thou that art unto our father's home

Love, grief and hope, for thee the tears ran down,

For thee, the son, the saviour that should be;

Trust thou thine arm and win thy father's halls!

O aspect sweet of fourfold love to me,

Whom upon thee the heart's constraint bids cal

As on my father, and the claim of love

From me unto my mother turns to thee,

For she is very hate; to thee too turns

What of my heart went out to her who died

A ruthless death upon the altar-stone;

And for myself I love thee-thee that wast

A brother leal, sole stay of love to me.

Now by thy side be strength and right, and Zeus

Saviour almighty, stand to aid the twain!

**ORESTES**

Zeus, Zeus! look down on our estate and us,

The orphaned brood of him, our eagle-sire,

Whom to his death a fearful serpent brought,  
 Enwinding him in coils; and we, bereft  
 And foodless, sink with famine, all too weak  
 To bear unto the eyrie, as he bore,  
 Such quarry as he slew. Lo! I and she,  
 Electra, stand before thee, fatherless,  
 And each alike cast out and homeless made.

**ELECTRA**

And if thou leave to death the brood of him  
 Whose altar blazed for thee, whose reverence  
 Was thine, all thine,-whence, in the after years,  
 Shall any hand like his adorn thy shrine  
 With sacrifice of flesh? the eaglets slain,  
 Thou wouldst not have a messenger to bear  
 Thine omens, once so clear, to mortal men;  
 So, if this kingly stock be withered all,  
 None on high festivals will fend thy shrine.  
 Stoop thou to raise us! strong the race shall grow,  
 Though puny now it seem, and fallen low.

**LEADER**

O children, saviours of your father's home,  
 Beware ye of your words, lest one should hear  
 And bear them, for the tongue hath lust to tell,  
 Unto our masters-whom God grant to me  
 In pitchy reek of fun'ral flame to seel

**ORESTES**

Nay, mighty is Apollo's oracle  
 And shall not fail me, whom it bade to pass  
 Thro' all this peril; clear the voice rang out  
 With many warnings, sternly threatening  
 To my hot heart the wintry chill of pain,  
 Unless upon the slayers of my sire  
 I pressed for vengeance: this the god's command-  
 That I, in ire for home and wealth despoiled,  
 Should with a craft like theirs the slayers slay:  
 Else with my very life I should atone  
 This deed undone, in many a ghastly wise.  
 For he proclaimed unto the ears of men  
 That offerings, poured to angry powers of death,  
 Exude again, unless their will be done,  
 As grim disease on those that poured them forth-  
 As leprous ulcers mounting on the flesh  
 And with fell fangs corroding what of old  
 Wore natural form; and on the brow arise  
 White poisoned hairs, the crown of this disease.  
 He spake moreover of assailing fiends  
 Empowered to quit on me my father's blood,  
 Wreaking their wrath on me, what time in night  
 Beneath shut lids the spirit's eye sees clear.  
 The dart that flies in darkness, sped from hell  
 By spirits of the murdered dead who call  
 Unto their kin for vengeance, formless fear,  
 The night-tide's visitant, and madness' curse  
 Should drive and rack me; and my tortured frame

Should be chased forth from man's community  
 As with the brazen scorpions of the scourge.  
 For me and such as me no lustral bowl  
 Should stand, no spilth of wine be poured to God  
 For me, and wrath unseen of my dead sire  
 Should drive me from the shrine; no man should dare  
 To take me to his hearth, nor dwell with me:  
 Slow, friendless, cursed of all should be mine end,  
 And pitiless horror wind me for the grave.  
 This spake the god-this dare I disobey?  
 Yea, though I dared, the deed must yet be done;  
 For to that end diverse desires combine,-  
 The god's behest, deep grief for him who died,  
 And last, the grievous blank of wealth despoiled-  
 All these weigh on me, urge that Argive men,  
 Minions of valour, who with soul of fire  
 Did make of fenced Troy a ruinous heap,  
 Be not left slaves to two and each a woman!  
 For he, the man, wears woman's heart; if not,  
 Soon shall he know, confronted by a man.

*(ORESTES, ELECTRA, and the CHORUS gather round  
 the tomb of Agamemnon. The following lines are  
 chanted responsively.)*

**CHORUS**

Mighty Fates, on you we call!  
 Bid the will of Zeus ordain  
 Power to those, to whom again  
 Justice turns with hand and aid!  
 Grievous was the prayer one made  
 Grievous let the answer fall!  
 Where the mighty doom is set,  
 Justice claims aloud her debt.  
 Who in blood hath dipped the steel,  
 Deep in blood her meed shall feel  
 List an immemorial word-  
 Whosoe'er shall take the sword  
 Shall perish by the sword.

**ORESTES**

Father, unblest in death, O father mine!  
 What breath of word or deed  
 Can I waft on thee from this far confine  
 Unto thy lowly bed,-  
 Waft upon thee, in midst of darkness lying,  
 Hope's counter-gleam of fire?  
 Yet the loud dirge of praise brings grace undying  
 Unto each parted sire.

**CHORUS**

O child, the spirit of the dead,  
 Altho' upon his flesh have fed  
 The grim teeth of the flame,  
 Is quelled not; after many days  
 The sting of wrath his soul shall raise,

A vengeance to reclaim!  
To the dead rings loud our cry-  
Plain the living's treachery-  
Swelling, shrilling, urged on high,  
The vengeful dirge, for parents slain,  
Shall strive and shall attain.

**ELECTRA**

Hear me too, even me, O father, hear!  
Not by one child alone these groans, these tears are  
shed

Upon thy sepulchre.  
Each, each, where thou art lowly laid,  
Stands, a suppliant, homeless made:  
Ah, and all is full of ill,  
Comfort is there none to say!  
Strive and wrestle as we may,  
Still stands doom invincible.

**CHORUS**

Nay, if so he will, the god  
Still our tears to joy can turn.  
He can bid a triumph-ode  
Drown the dirge beside this urn;  
He to kingly halls can greet  
The child restored, the homeward-guided feet.

**ORESTES**

Ah my father! hadst thou lain  
Under Ilion's wall,  
By some Lycian spearman slain,  
Thou hadst left in this thine hall  
Honour; thou hadst wrought for us  
Fame and life most glorious.  
Over-seas if thou hadst died,  
Heavily had stood thy tomb,  
Heaped on high; but, quenched in pride,  
Grief were light unto thy home.

**CHORUS**

Loved and honoured hadst thou lain  
By the dead that nobly fell,  
In the under-world again,  
Where are throned the kings of hell,  
Full of sway, adorable  
Thou hadst stood at their right hand-  
Thou that wert, in mortal land,  
By Fate's ordinance and law,  
King of kings who bear the crown  
And the staff, to which in awe  
Mortal men bow down.

**ELECTRA**

Nay, O father, I were fain  
Other fate had fallen on thee.  
Ill it were if thou hadst lain  
One among the common slain,  
Fallen by Scamander's side-  
Those who slew thee there should be!

Then, untouched by slavery,  
We had heard as from afar  
Deaths of those who should have died  
'Mid the chance of war.

**CHORUS**

O child, forbear! things all too high thou sayest.  
Easy, but vain, thy cry!  
A boon above all gold is that thou prayest,  
An unreached destiny,  
As of the blessed land that far aloof  
Beyond the north wind lies;  
Yet doth your double prayer ring loud reproof;  
A double scourge of sighs  
Awakes the dead; th' avengers rise, though late;  
Blood stains the guilty pride  
Of the accursed who rule on earth, and Fate  
Stands on the children's side.

**ELECTRA**

That hath sped thro' mine ear, like a shaft from a bow!  
Zeus, Zeus! it is thou who dost send from below  
A doom on the desperate ere long  
On a mother a father shall visit his wrong.

**CHORUS**

Be it mine to upraise thro' the reek of the pyre  
The chant of delight, while the funeral fire  
Devoureth the corpse of a man that is slain  
And a woman laid low!  
For who bids me conceal it! out-rending control,  
Blows ever the stern blast of hate thro' my soul,  
And before me a vision of wrath and of bane  
Flits and waves to and fro.

**ORESTES**

Zeus, thou alone to us art parent now.  
Smite with a rending blow  
Upon their heads, and bid the land be well:  
Set right where wrong hath stood; and thou give ear,  
O Earth, unto my prayer-  
Yea, hear O mother Earth, and monarchy of hell

**CHORUS**

Nay, the law is sternly set-  
Blood-drops shed upon the ground  
Plead for other bloodshed yet;  
Loud the call of death doth sound,  
Calling guilt of olden time,  
A Fury, crowning crime with crime.

**ELECTRA**

Where, where are ye, avenging powers,  
Puissant Furies of the slain?  
Behold the relics of the race  
Of Atreus, thrust from pride of place!  
O Zeus, what borne henceforth is ours,  
What refuge to attain?

**CHORUS**

Lo, at your wail my heart throbs, wildly stirred;

Now am I lorn with sadness,  
Darkened in all my soul, to hear your sorrow's word  
Anon to hope, the seat of strength, I rise,-  
She, thrusting grief away, lifts up mine eyes  
To the new dawn of gladness.

**ORESTES**

Skills it to tell of aught save wrong on wrong,  
Wrought by our mother's deed?  
Though now she fawn for pardon, sternly strong  
Standeth our wrath, and will nor hear nor heed.  
Her children's soul is wolfish, born from hers,  
And softens not by prayers.

**CHORUS**

I dealt upon my breast the blow  
That Asian mourning women know;  
Wails from-my breast the fun'ral cry,  
The Cissian weeping melody;  
Stretched rendingly forth, to tatter and tear,  
My clenched hands wander, here and there,  
From head to breast; distraught with blows  
Throb dizzily my brows.

**ELECTRA**

Aweless in hate, O mother, sternly brave!  
As in a foeman's grave  
Thou laid'st in earth a king, but to the bier  
No citizen drew nears-  
Thy husband, thine, yet for his obsequies,  
Thou bad'st no wail arise!

**ORESTES**

Alas, the shameful burial thou dost speak!  
Yet I the vengeance of his shame will wreak-  
That do the gods command!  
That shall achieve mine hand!  
Grant me to thrust her life away, and  
Will dare to die!

**CHORUS**

List thou the deed! Hewn down and foully torn,  
He to the tomb was borne;  
Yea, by her hand, the deed who wrought,  
With like dishonour to the grave was brought,  
And by her hand she strove, with strong desire,  
Thy life to crush, O child, by murder of thy sire:  
Bethink thee, hearing, of the shame, the pain  
Wherewith that sire was slain!

**ELECTRA**

Yea, such was the doom of my sire; well-a-day,  
I was thrust from his side,-  
As a dog from the chamber they thrust me away,  
And in place of my laughter rose sobbing and tears,  
As in darkness I lay.  
O father, if this word can pass to thine ears,  
To thy soul let it reach and abide!

**CHORUS**

Let it pass, let it pierce, through the sense of thine ear,

To thy soul, where in silence it waiteth the hour!  
The past is accomplished; but rouse thee to hear  
What the future prepareth; awake and appear,  
Our champion, in wrath and in power!

**ORESTES**

O father, to thy loved ones come in aid.

**ELECTRA**

With tears I call on thee.

**CHORUS**

Listen and rise to light!  
Be thou with us, be thou against the foe!  
Swiftly this cry arises-even so  
Pray we, the loyal band, as we have prayed!

**ORESTES**

Let their might meet with mine, and their right with  
my right.

**ELECTRA**

O ye Gods, it is yours to decree.

**CHORUS**

Ye call unto the dead; I quake to hear.  
Fate is ordained of old, and shall fulfil your prayer.

**ELECTRA**

Alas, the inborn curse that haunts our home,  
Of Ate's bloodstained scourge the tuneless sound!  
Alas, the deep insufferable doom,  
The stanchless wound!

**ORESTES**

It shall be stanch'd, the task is ours,-  
Not by a stranger's, but by kindred hand,  
Shall be chased forth the blood-fiend of our land.  
Be this our spoken spell, to call Earth's nether  
powers!

**CHORUS**

Lords of a dark eternity,  
To you has come the children's cry,  
Send up from hell, fulfil your aid  
To them who prayed.

*(The chant is concluded.)*

**ORESTES**

O father, murdered in unkingly wise,  
Fulfil my prayer, grant me thine halls to sway.

**ELECTRA**

To me, too, grant this boon-dark death to deal  
Unto Aegisthus, and to 'scape my doom.

**ORESTES**

So shall the rightful feasts that mortals pay  
Be set for thee; else, not for thee shall rise  
The scented reek of altars fed with flesh,  
But thou shalt lie dishonoured: hear thou me!

**ELECTRA**

I too, from my full heritage restored,  
Will pour the lustral streams, what time I pass  
Forth as a bride from these paternal halls,  
And honour first, beyond all graves, thy tomb.

**ORESTES**  
 Earth, send my sire to fend me in the fight!

**ELECTRA**  
 Give fair-faced fortune, O Persephone!

**ORESTES**  
 Bethink thee, father, in the laver slain-

**ELECTRA**  
 Bethink thee of the net they handselled for thee!

**ORESTES**  
 Bonds not of brass ensnared thee, father mine.

**ELECTRA**  
 Yea, the ill craft of an enfolding robe.

**ORESTES**  
 By this our bitter speech arise, O sire!

**ELECTRA**  
 Raise thou thine head at love's last, dearest call!

**ORESTES**  
 Yea, speed forth Right to aid thy kinsmen's cause;  
 Grip for grip, let them grasp the foe, if thou  
 Willest in triumph to forget thy fall.

**ELECTRA**  
 Hear me, O father, once again hear me.  
 Lo! at thy tomb, two fledglings of thy brood-  
 A man-child and a maid; hold them in ruth,  
 Nor wipe them out, the last of Pelops' line.  
 For while they live, thou livest from the dead;  
 Children are memory's voices, and preserve  
 The dead from wholly dying: as a net  
 Is ever by the buoyant corks upheld,  
 Which save the flax-mesh, in the depth submerged.  
 Listen, this wail of ours doth rise for thee,  
 And as thou heedest it thyself art saved.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**  
 In sooth, a blameless prayer ye spake at length-  
 The tomb's requital for its dirge denied:  
 Now, for the rest, as thou art fixed to do,  
 Take fortune by the hand and work thy will.

**ORESTES**  
 The doom is set; and yet I fain would ask-  
 Not swerving from the course of my resolve,-  
 Wherefore she sent these offerings, and why  
 She softens all too late her cureless deed?  
 An idle boon it was, to send them here  
 Unto the dead who recks not of such gifts.  
 I cannot guess her thought, but well I ween  
 Such gifts are skillless to atone such crime.  
 Be blood once spilled, an idle strife he strives  
 Who seeks with other wealth or wine outpoured  
 To atone the deed. So stands the word, nor fails.  
 Yet would I know her thought; speak, if thou knowest.

**LEADER**  
 I know it, son; for at her side I stood.  
 'Twas the night-wandering terror of a dream  
 That flung her shivering from her couch, and bade her-

Her, the accursed of God-these offerings send.

**ORESTES**  
 Heard ye the dream, to tell it forth aright?

**LEADER**  
 Yea, from herself; her womb a serpent bare.

**ORESTES**  
 What then the sum and issue of the tale?

**LEADER**  
 Even as a swaddled child, she lull'd the thing.

**ORESTES**  
 What suckling craved the creature, born full-fanged?

**LEADER**  
 Yet in her dreams she proffered it the breast.

**ORESTES**  
 How? did the hateful thing not bite her teat?

**LEADER**  
 Yea, and sucked forth a blood-gout in the milk.

**ORESTES**  
 Not vain this dream-it bodes a man's revenge.

**LEADER**  
 Then out of sleep she started with a cry,  
 And thro' the palace for their mistress' aid  
 Full many lamps, that erst lay blind with night,  
 Flared into light; then, even as mourners use,  
 She sends these offerings, in hope to win  
 A cure to cleave and sunder sin from doom.

**ORESTES**  
 Earth and my father's grave, to you I call-  
 Give this her dream fulfilment, and thro' me.  
 I read it in each part coincident  
 With what shall be; for mark, that serpent sprang  
 From the same womb as I, in swaddling bands  
 By the same hands was swathed, lipped the same  
 breast,  
 And sucking forth the same sweet mother's-milk  
 Infused a clot of blood; and in alarm  
 She cried upon her wound the cry of pain.  
 The rede is clear: the thing of dread she nursed,  
 The death of blood she dies; and I, 'tis I,  
 In semblance of a serpent, that must slay her.  
 Thou art my seer, and thus I read the dream.

**LEADER**  
 So do; yet ere thou doest, speak to us,  
 Bidding some act, some, by not acting, aid.

**ORESTES**  
 Brief my command: I bid my sister pass  
 In silence to the house, and all I bid  
 This my design with wariness conceal,  
 That they who did by craft a chieftain slay  
 May by like craft and in like noose be taken,  
 Dying the death which Loxias foretold-  
 Apollo, king and prophet undisproved.  
 I with this warrior Pylades will come  
 In likeness of a stranger, full equipt

As travellers come, and at the palace gates  
 Will stand, as stranger yet in friendship's bond  
 Unto this house allied; and each of us  
 Will speak the tongue that round Parnassus sounds,  
 Feigning such speech as Phocian voices use.  
 And what if none of those that tend the gates  
 Shall welcome us with gladness, since the house  
 With ills divine is baunted? If this hap,  
 We at the gate will bide, till, passing by,  
 Some townsman make conjecture and proclaim,  
 How? is Aegisthus here, and knowingly  
 Keeps suppliants aloof, by bolt and bar?  
 Then shall I win my way; and if I cross  
 The threshold of the gate, the palace' guard,  
 And find him throned where once my father sat-  
 Or if he come anon, and face to face  
 Confronting, drop his eyes from mine-I swear  
 He shall not utter, Who art thou and whence?  
 Ere my steel leap, and compassed round with death  
 Low he shall lie: and thus, full-fed with doom,  
 The Fury of the house shall drain once more  
 A deep third draught of rich unmingled blood.  
 But thou, O sister, look that all within  
 Be well prepared to give these things event.  
 And ye-I say 'twere well to bear a tongue  
 Full of fair silence and of fitting speech  
 As each beseems the time; and last, do thou,  
 Hermes the warder-god, keep watch and ward,  
 And guide to victory my striving sword.  
 (*ORESTES, PYLADES, and ELECTRA depart.*)

CHORUS (singing)

strophe 1

Many and marvellous the things of fear  
 Earth's breast doth bear;  
 And the sea's lap with many monsters teems,  
 And windy levin-bolts and meteor gleams  
 Breed many deadly things-  
 Unknown and flying forms, with fear upon their  
 wings,  
 And in their tread is death;  
 And rushing whirlwinds, of whose blasting breath  
 Man's tongue can tell.

antistrophe 1

But who can tell aright the fiercer thing,  
 The aweless soul, within man's breast inhabiting?  
 Who tell how, passion-fraught and love-distraught,  
 The woman's eager, craving thought  
 Doth wed mankind to woe and ruin fell?  
 Yea, how the loveless love that doth possess  
 The woman, even as the lioness,

Doth rend and wrest apart, with eager strife,  
 The link of wedded life?

strophe 2

Let him be the witness, whose thought is not borne on  
 light wings thro' the air,  
 But abideth with knowledge, what thing was wrought  
 by Althea's despair;  
 For she marr'd the life-grace of her son, with ill  
 counsel rekindled the flame  
 That was quenched as it glowed on the brand, what  
 time from his mother he came,  
 With the cry of a new-born child; and the brand from  
 the burning she won,  
 For the Fates had foretold it coeval, in life and in  
 death, with her son.

antistrophe 2

Yea, and man's hate tells of another, even Scylla of  
 murderous guile,  
 Who slew for an enemy's sake her father, won o'er by  
 the wile  
 And the gifts of Cretan Minos, the gauds of the  
 high-wrought gold;  
 For she clipped from her father's head the lock that  
 should never wax old,  
 As he breathed in the silence of sleep, and knew not  
 her craft and her crime-  
 But Hermes, the guard of the dead, doth grasp her, in  
 fulness of time.

strophe 3

And since of the crimes of the cruel I tell, let my  
 singing record  
 The bitter wedlock and loveless, the curse on these  
 halls outpoured,  
 The crafty device of a woman, whereby did a chieftain  
 fall,  
 A warrior stern in his wrath, the fear of his enemies  
 all,-  
 A song of dishonour, untimely! and cold is the hearth  
 that was warm,  
 And ruled by the cowardly spear, the woman's  
 unwomanly arm.

antistrophe 3

But the summit and crown of all crimes is that which  
 in Lemnos befell;  
 A woe and a mourning it is, a shame and a spitting to  
 tell;

And he that in after time doth speak of his deadliest  
 thought,  
 Doth say, It is like to the deed that of old time in  
 Lemnos was wrought;  
 And loathed of men were the doers, and perished, they  
 and their seed,  
 For the gods brought hate upon them; none loveth the  
 impious deed.

**strophe 4**

It is well of these tales to tell; for the sword in the  
 grasp of right  
 With a cleaving, a piercing blow to the innermost  
 heart doth smite,  
 And the deed unlawfully done is not trodden down nor  
 forgot,  
 When the sinner out-steppeth the law and heedeth the  
 high God not;

**antistrophe 4**

But justice hath planted the anvil, and Destiny forgeth  
 the sword  
 That shall smite in her chosen time; by her is the child  
 restored;  
 And, darkly devising, the Fiend of the house,  
 world-cursed, will repay  
 The price of the blood of the slain, that was shed in the  
 bygone day.

*(The scene now is before the palace. ORESTES and  
 PYLADES enter, still dressed as travellers.)*

**ORESTES** (knocking at the palace gate)  
 What ho! slave, ho! I smite the palace gate  
 In vain, it seems; what ho, attend within,-  
 Once more, attend; come forth and ope the halls,  
 If yet Aegisthus holds them hospitable.

**SLAVE** (*from within*)  
 Anon, anon! (*Opens the door*)  
 Speak, from what land art thou, and sent from whom?

**ORESTES**  
 Go, tell to them who rule the palace-halls,  
 Since 'tis to them I come with tidings new--  
 (Delay not-Night's dark car is speeding on,  
 And time is now for wayfarers to cast  
 Anchor in haven, wheresoe'er a house  
 Doth welcome strangers)--that there now come forth  
 Some one who holds authority within--  
 The queen, or, if some man, more seemly were it;  
 For when man standeth face to face with man,  
 No stammering modesty confounds their speech,  
 But each to each doth tell his meaning clear.

*(CLYTEMNESTRA comes out of the  
 palace.)*

**CLYTEMNESTRA**  
 Speak on, O strangers: have ye need of aught?  
 Here is whate'er beseems a house like this--  
 Warm bath and bed, tired Nature's soft restorer,  
 And courteous eyes to greet you; and if aught  
 Of graver import needeth act as well,  
 That, as man's charge, I to a man will tell.

**ORESTES**  
 A Daulian man am I, from Phocis bound,  
 And as with mine own travel-scrip self-laden  
 I went toward Argos, parting hitherward  
 With travelling foot, there did encounter me  
 One whom I knew not and who knew not me,  
 But asked my purposed way nor hid his own,  
 And, as we talked together, told his name--  
 Strophius of Phocis; then he said, "Good sir,  
 Since in all case thou art to Argos bound,  
 Forget not this my message, heed it well,  
 Tell to his own, Orestes is no more.  
 And-whatsoever his kinsfolk shall resolve.  
 Whether to bear his dust unto his home,  
 Or lay him here, in death as erst in life  
 Exiled for aye, a child of banishment--  
 Bring me their hest, upon thy backward road;  
 For now in brazen compass of an urn  
 His ashes lie, their dues of weeping paid."  
 So much I heard, and so much tell to thee,  
 Not knowing if I speak unto his kin  
 Who rule his home; but well, I deem, it were,  
 Such news should earliest reach a parent's ear.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**  
 Ah woe is me! thy word our ruin tells;  
 From roof-tree unto base are we despoiled.-  
 O thou whom nevermore we wrestle down,  
 Thou Fury of this home, how oft and oft  
 Thou dost descry what far aloof is laid,  
 Yea, from afar dost bend th' unerring bow  
 And rendest from my wretchedness its friends;  
 As now Orestes-who, a brief while since,  
 Safe from the mire of death stood warily,-  
 Was the home's hope to cure th' exulting wrong;  
 Now thou ordainest, Let the ill abide.

**ORESTES**  
 To host and hostess thus with fortune blest,  
 Lief had I come with better news to bear  
 Unto your greeting and acquaintanceship;  
 For what goodwill lies deeper than the bond  
 Of guest and host? and wrong abhorred it were,  
 As well I deem, if I, who pledged my faith  
 To one, and greetings from the other had,  
 Bore not aright the tidings 'twixt the twain.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Whate'er thy news, thou shalt not welcome lack,  
Meet and deserved, nor scant our grace shall be.  
Hadst thou thyself not come, such tale to tell,  
Another, sure, had borne it to our ears.

But lo! the hour is here when travelling guests,  
Fresh from the daylong labour of the road,  
Should win their rightful due.

*(To the slave)* Take him within  
To the man-chamber's hospitable rest-  
Him and these fellow-farers at his side;  
Give them such guest-right as beseems our halls;  
I bid thee do as thou shalt answer for it,  
And I unto the prince who rules our home  
Will tell the tale, and, since we lack not friends,  
With them will counsel how this hap to bear.

*(CLYTEMNESTRA goes back into the palace. ORESTES and PYLADES are conducted to the guest quarters.)*

**CHORUS** (singing)

So be it done-  
Sister-servants, when draws nigh  
Time for us aloud to cry  
Orestes and his victory?

O holy earth and holy tomb  
Over the grave-pit heaped on high,  
Where low doth Agamemnon lie,  
The king of ships, the army's lord!  
Now is the hour-give ear and come,  
For now doth Craft her aid afford,  
And Hermes, guard of shades in hell,  
Stands o'er their strife, to sentinel  
The dooming of the sword.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

I wot the stranger worketh woe within-  
For lo! I see come forth, suffused with tears,  
Orestes' nurse.

*(The NURSE enters from the palace.)*

What ho, Kilissa-thou  
Beyond the doors? Where goest thou? Methinks  
Some grief unbidden walketh at thy side.

**NURSE**

My mistress bids me, with what speed I may,  
Call in Aegisthus to the stranger guests,  
That he may come, and standing face to face,  
A man with men, way thus more clearly learn  
This rumour new. Thus speaking, to her slaves  
Laughter for what is wrought-to her desire  
Too well; but ill, ill, ill besets the house,  
Brought by the tale these guests have told so clear.  
And he, God wot, will gladden all his heart  
Hearing this rumour. Woe and well-a-day!

The bitter mingled cup of ancient woes,  
Hard to be borne, that here in Atreus' house  
Befell, was grievous to mine inmost heart,  
But never yet did I endure such pain.  
All else I bore with set soul patiently;  
But now-alack, alack!--Orestes dear,  
The day and night-long travail of my soul  
Whom from his mother's womb, a new-born child,  
I clasped and cherished! Many a time and oft  
Toilsome and profitless my service was,  
When his shrill outcry called me from my couch!  
For the young child, before the sense is born,  
Hath but a dumb thing's life, must needs be nursed  
As its own nature bids. The swaddled thing  
Hath nought of speech, whate'er discomfort come,-  
Hunger or thirst or lower weakling need,-  
For the babe's stomach works its own relief.  
Which knowing well before, yet oft surprised,  
'Twas mine to cleanse the swaddling clothes-poor  
Was nurse to tend and fuller to make white:  
Two works in one, two handicrafts I took,  
When in mine arms the father laid the boy.  
And now he's dead-alack and well-a-day!  
Yet must I go to him whose wrongful power  
Pollutes this house-fair tidings these to him!

**LEADER**

Say then, with what array she bids him come?

**NURSE**

What say'st thou! Speak. more clearly for mine ear.

**LEADER**

Bids she bring henchmen, or to come alone?

**NURSE**

She bids him bring a spear-armed body-guard.  
Nay, tell not that unto our loathed lord,  
But speed to him, put on the mien of joy,  
Say, Come alone, fear nought, the news is good:  
A bearer can tell straight a twisted tale.

**NURSE**

Does then thy mind in this new tale find joy?

**LEADER**

What if Zeus bid our ill wind veer to fair?

**NURSE**

And how? the home's hope with Orestes dies.

**LEADER**

Not yet-a seer, though feeble, this might see.

**NURSE**

What say'st thou? Know'st thou aught, this tale  
belying?

**LEADER**

Go, tell the news to him, perform thine hest,-  
What the gods will, themselves can well provide.

**NURSE**

Well, I will go, herein obeying thee;  
And luck fall fair, with favour sent from heaven.

(She goes out.)

CHORUS (singing)

strophe 1

Zeus, sire of them who on Olympus dwell,  
Hear thou, O hear my prayer!  
Grant to my rightful lords to prosper well  
Even as their zeal is fair!  
For right, for right goes up aloud my cry-  
Zeus, aid him, stand anigh!

refrain 1

Into his father's hall he goes  
To smite his father's foes.  
Bid him prevail by thee on throne of triumph set,  
Twice, yea and thrice with joy shall he acquit the debt.

antistrophe 1

Bethink thee, the young steed, the orphan foal  
Of sire beloved by thee, unto the car  
Of doom is harnessed fast.  
Guide him aright, plant firm a lasting goal,  
Speed thou his pace,-O that no chance may mar  
The homeward course, the last!

strophe 2

And ye who dwell within the inner chamber  
Where shines the stored joy of gold-  
Gods of one heart, O hear ye, and remember;  
Up and avenge the blood shed forth of old,  
With sudden rightful blow;  
Then let the old curse die, nor be renewed  
With progeny of blood,-  
Once more, and not again, be latter guilt laid low!

refrain 2

O thou who dwell'st in Delphi's mighty cave,  
Grant us to see this home once more restored  
Unto its rightful lord!  
Let it look forth, from veils of death, with joyous eye  
Unto the dawning light of liberty;

antistrophe 2

And Hermes, Maia's child, lend hand to save,  
Willing the right, and guide  
Our state with Fortune's breeze adown the favouring  
tide.  
Whate'er in darkness hidden lies,

He utters at his will;  
He at his will throws darkness on our eyes,  
By night and eke by day inscrutable.

strophe 3

Then, then shall wealth atone  
The ills that here were done.  
Then, then will we unbind,  
Fling free on wafting wind  
Of joy, the woman's voice that waileth now  
In piercing accents for a chief laid low;

refrain 3

And this our song shall be-  
Hail to the commonwealth restored!  
Hail to the freedom won to me!  
All hail! for doom hath passed from him, my  
well-loved lord!

antistrophe 3

And thou, O child, when Time and Chance agree,  
Up to the deed that for thy sire is done!  
And if she wail unto thee, Spare, O son-  
Cry, Aid, O father-and achieve the deed,  
The horror of man's tongue, the gods' great need!  
Hold in thy breast such heart as Perseus had,  
The bitter woe work forth,  
Appease the summons of the dead,  
The wrath of friends on earth;  
Yea, set within a sign of blood and doom,  
And do to utter death him that polities thy home.

(AEGISTHUS enters alone.)

AEGISTHUS  
Hither and not unsummoned have I come;  
For a new rumour, borne by stranger men  
Arriving hither, hath attained mine ears,  
Of hap unwished-for, even Orestes' death.  
This were new sorrow, a blood-bolter'd load  
Laid on the house that doth already bow  
Beneath a former wound that festers deep.  
Dare I opine these words have truth and life?  
Or are they tales, of woman's terror born,  
That fly in the void air, and die disproved?  
Canst thou tell aught, and prove it to my soul?

LEADER OF THE CHORUS  
What we have heard, we heard; go thou within  
Thyself to ask the strangers of their tale.  
Strengthless are tidings, thro' another heard;  
Question is his, to whom the tale is brought.

AEGISTHUS  
I too will meet and test the messenger,

Whether himself stood witness of the death,  
Or tells it merely from dim rumour learnt:  
None shall cheat me, whose soul hath watchful eyes.

*(He goes into the palace.)*

**CHORUS** (singing)

Zeus, Zeus! what word to me is given?  
What cry or prayer, invoking heaven,  
Shall first by me be uttered?  
What speech of craft-nor all revealing,  
Nor all too warily concealing-  
Ending my speech, shall aid the deed?  
For lo! in readiness is laid  
The dark emprise, the rending blade;  
Blood-dropping daggers shall achieve  
The dateless doom of Atreus' name,  
Or-kindling torch and joyful flame  
In sign of new-won liberty-  
Once more Orestes shall retrieve  
His father's wealth, and, throned on high,  
Shall hold the city's fealty.  
So mighty is the grasp whereby,  
Heaven-holpen, he shall trip and throw,  
Unseconded, a double foe.  
Ho for the victory!

*(A loud cry is heard within.)*

**VOICE OF AEGISTHUS**

Help, help, alas!

**CHORUS**

Ho there, ho I how is't within?  
Is't done? is't over? Stand we here aloof  
While it is wrought, that guiltless we may seem  
Of this dark deed; with death is strife fulfilled.

*(An ATTENDANT enters from the palace.)*

**ATTENDANT**

O woe, O woe, my lord is done to death!  
Woe, woe, and woe again, Aegisthus gone!  
Hasten, fling wide the doors, unloose the bolts  
Of the queen's chamber. O for some young strength  
To match the need! but aid availeth nought  
To him laid low for ever. Help, help, help  
Sure to deaf ears I shout, and call in vain  
To slumber ineffectual. What ho!  
The queen! how fareth Clytemnestra's self?  
Her neck too, hers, is close upon the steel,  
And soon shall sing, hewn thro' as justice wills.

*(CLYTEMNESTRA enters.)*

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

What ails thee, raising this ado for us?

**ATTENDANT**

I say the dead are come to slay the living.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Alack, I read thy riddles all too clear-  
We slew by craft and by like craft shall die.  
Swift, bring the axe that slew my lord of old;

I'll know anon or death or victory-  
So stands the curse, so I confront it here.

*(ORESTES rushes from the palace; his sword dripping with blood. PYLADES is with him.)*

**ORESTES**

Thee too I seek: for him what's done will serve.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Woe, woe! Aegisthus, spouse and champion, slain!

**ORESTES**

What, lov'st the man? then in his grave lie down,  
Be his in death, desert him nevermore!

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Stay, child, and fear to strike. O son, this breast  
Pillowed thine head full oft, while, drowsed with sleep,  
Thy toothless mouth drew mother's milk from me.

**ORESTES**

Can I my mother spare? speak, Pylades.

**PYLADES**

Where then would fall the hest Apollo gave  
At Delphi, where the solemn compact sworn?  
Choose thou the hate of all men, not of gods.

**ORESTES**

Thou dost prevail; I hold thy counsel good.

*(To CLYTEMNESTRA)*

Follow; I will to slay thee at his side.  
With him whom in his life thou loved'st more  
Than Agamemnon, sleep in death, the meed  
For hate where love, and love where hate was due!

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

I nursed thee young; must I forego mine eld?

**ORESTES**

Thou slew'st my father; shalt thou dwell with me?

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Fate bore a share in these things, O my child

**ORESTES**

Fate also doth provide this doom for thee.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Beware, O child, a parent's dying curse.

**ORESTES**

A parent who did cast me out to ill!

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Not cast thee out, but to a friendly home.

**ORESTES**

Born free, I was by twofold bargain sold.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Where then the price that I received for thee?

**ORESTES**

The price of shame; I taunt thee not more plainly.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Nay, but recount thy father's lewdness too.

**ORESTES**

Home-keeping, chide not him who toils without.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

'Tis hard for wives to live as widows, child.

**ORESTES**

The absent husband toils for them at home.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Thou growest fain to slay thy mother, child.

**ORESTES**

Nay, 'tis thyself wilt slay thyself, not I.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Beware thy mother's vengeful hounds from hell.

**ORESTES**

How shall I 'scape my father's, sparing thee?

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Living, I cry as to a tomb, unheard.

**ORESTES**

My father's fate ordains this doom for thee.

**CLYTEMNESTRA**

Ah me! this snake it was I bore and nursed.

**ORESTES**

Ay, right prophetic was thy visioned fear.

Shameful thy deed was—die the death of shame!

*(He drives her into the house before him.)*

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

Lo, even for these I mourn, a double death:

Yet since Orestes, driven on by doom,

Thus crowns the height of murders manifold,

I say, 'tis well—that not in night and death

Should sink the eye and light of this our home.

**CHORUS** (singing)

**strophe 1**

There came on Priam's race and name

A vengeance; though it tarried long,

With heavy doom it came.

Came, too, on Agamemnon's hall

A lion-pair, twin swordsmen strong.

And last, the heritage doth fall

To him, to whom from Pythian cave

The god his deepest counsel gave.

**refrain 1**

Cry out, rejoice! our kingly hall

Hath 'scaped from ruin—ne'er again

Its ancient wealth be wasted all

By two usurpers, sin-defiled—

An evil path of woe and bane!

**antistrophe 1**

On him who dealt the dastard blow

Comes Craft, Revenge's scheming child.

And hand in hand with him doth go,

Eager for fight,

The child of Zeus, whom men below

Call justice, naming her aright.

And on her foes her breath

Is as the blast of death;

**strophe 2**

For her the god who dwells in deep recess

Beneath Parnassus' brow,

Summons with loud acclaim

To rise, though late and lame,

And come with craft that worketh righteousness.

For even o'er Powers divine this law is strong—

Thou shalt not serve the wrong.

**refrain 2**

To that which ruleth heaven beseems it that we bow

Lo, freedom's light hath come!

Lo, now is rent away

The grim and curbing bit that held us dumb.

Up to the light, ye halls I this many a day

Too low on earth ye lay.

**antistrophe 2**

And Time, the great Accomplisher,

Shall cross the threshold, whensoever

He choose with purging hand to cleanse

The palace, driving all pollution thence.

And fair the cast of Fortune's die

Before our state's new lords shall lie,

Not as of old, but bringing fairer doom.

Lo, freedom's light hath come!

*(The central doors of the palace open, disclosing ORESTES standing over the corpses of AEGISTHUS and CLYTEMNESTRA; in one hand he holds his sword, in the other the robe in which AGAMEMNON was entangled and slain.)*

**ORESTES**

There lies our country's twofold tyranny,

My father's slayers, spoilers of my home.

Erst were they royal, sitting on the throne,

And loving are they yet,—their common fate

Tells the tale truly, shows their trothplight firm.

They swore to work mine ill-starred father's death,

They swore to die together; 'tis fulfilled.

O ye who stand, this great doom's witnesses,

Behold this too, the dark device which bound

My sire unhappy to his death,—behold

The mesh which trapped his hands, enwound his feet  
 Stand round, unfold it-'tis the trammel-net  
 That wrapped a chieftain; hold it that he see,  
 The father-not my sire, but he whose eye  
 Is judge of all things, the all-seeing Sun!  
 Let him behold my mother's damned deed,  
 Then let him stand, when need shall be to me,  
 Witness that justly I have sought and slain  
 My mother; blameless was Aegisthus' doom-  
 He died the death law bids adulterers die.  
 But she who plotted this accursed thing  
 To slay her lord, by whom she bare beneath  
 Her girdle once the burden of her babes,  
 Beloved erewhile, now turned to hateful foes-  
 What deem ye of her? or what venom'd thing,  
 Sea-snake or adder, had more power than she  
 To poison with a touch the flesh unscarred?  
 So great her daring, such her impious will.  
 How name her, if I may not speak a curse?  
 A lion-springle! a laver's swathing cloth,  
 Wrapping a dead man, twining round his feet-  
 A net, a trammel, an entangling robe?  
 Such were the weapon of some strangling thief,  
 The terror of the road, a cut-purse hound-  
 With such device full many might he kill,  
 Full oft exult in heat of villainy.  
 Ne'er have my house so cursed an indweller-  
 Heaven send me, rather, childless to be slain!

**CHORUS** (chanting)

Woe for each desperate deed!

Woe for the queen, with shame of life bereft!

And ah, for him who still is left,

Madness, dark blossom of a bloody seed!

**ORESTES**

Did she the deed or not? this robe gives proof,  
 Imbrued with blood that bathed Aegisthus' sword:  
 Look, how the spurted stain combines with time  
 To blur the many dyes that once adorned  
 Its pattern manifold! I now stand here,  
 Made glad, made sad with blood, exulting, wailing-  
 Hear, O thou woven web that slew my sire!  
 I grieve for deed and death and all my home-  
 Victor, pollution's damned stain for prize.

**CHORUS** (chanting)

Alas, that none of mortal men

Can pass his life untouched by pain!

Behold, one woe is here-

Another loometh near.

**ORESTES**

Hark ye and learn-for what the end shall be  
 For me I know not: breaking from the curb  
 My spirit whirls me off, a conquered prey,  
 Borne as a charioteer by steeds distraught  
 Far from the course, and madness in my breast

Burneth to chant its song, and leap, and rave-  
 Hark ye and learn, friends, ere my reason goes!  
 I say that rightfully I slew my mother,  
 A thing God-scorned, that foully slew my sire.  
 And chiefest wizard of the spell that bound me  
 Unto this deed I name the Pythian seer  
 Apollo, who foretold that if I slew,  
 The guilt of murder done should pass from me;  
 But if I spared, the fate that should be mine  
 I dare not blazon forth-the bow of speech  
 Can reach not to the mark, that doom to tell.  
 And now behold me, how with branch and crown  
 I pass, a suppliant made meet to go  
 Unto Earth's midmost shrine, the holy ground  
 Of Loxias, and that renowned light  
 Of ever-burning fire, to 'scape the doom  
 Of kindred murder: to no other shrine  
 (So Loxias bade) may I for refuge turn.  
 Bear witness, Argives, in the after time,  
 How came on me this dread fatality.  
 Living, I pass a banished wanderer hence,  
 To leave in death the memory of this cry.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

Nay, but the deed is well; link not thy lips  
 To speech ill-starred, nor vent ill-boding words-  
 Who hast to Argos her full freedom given,  
 Lopping two serpents' heads with timely blow.

**ORESTES**

Look, look, alas!

Handmaidens, see-what Gorgon shapes throng up  
 Dusky their robes and all their hair enwound-  
 Snakes coiled with snakes-off, off,-I must away!

**LEADER**

Most loyal of all sons unto thy sire,  
 What visions thus distract thee? Hold, abide;  
 Great was thy victory, and shalt thou fear?

**ORESTES**

These are no dreams, void shapes of haunting ill,  
 But clear to sight another's hell-hounds come!

**LEADER**

Nay, the fresh bloodshed still imbrues thine hands,  
 And thence distraction sinks into thy soul.

**ORESTES**

O king Apollo-see, they swarm and throng-  
 Black blood of hatred dripping from their eyes!

**LEADER**

One remedy thou hast; go, touch the shrine  
 Of Loxias, and rid thee of these woes.

**ORESTES**

Ye can behold them not, but I behold them.  
 Up and away! I dare abide no more.

*(He rushes out.)*

**LEADER**

Farewell then as thou mayst,-the god thy friend

Guard thee and aid with chances favouring.

**CHORUS** (chanting)

Behold, the storm of woe divine  
That raves and beats on Atreus' line  
Its great third blast hath blown.

First was Thyestes' loathly woe  
The rueful feast of long ago,  
On children's flesh, unknown.

And next the kingly chief's despite,  
When he who led the Greeks to fight  
Was in the bath hewn down.

And now the offspring of the race  
Stands in the third, the saviour's place,  
To save-or to consume?

O whither, ere it be fulfilled,  
Ere its fierce blast be hushed and stilled,  
Shall blow the wind of doom?

**THE END**

## *The EUMENIDES*

450 BC  
by Aeschylus

translated by E. D. A. Morshead

### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THE PYTHIAN PRIESTESS  
APOLLO  
ORESTES  
THE GHOST OF CLYTEMNESTRA  
CHORUS OF FURIES (THE EUMENIDES)  
ATHENA  
ATTENDENTS OF ATHENA  
JURY OF ATHENIAN CITIZENS

### ΕΥΜΕΝΙΑΔΕΣ

[SCENE:-Before the temple of APOLLO at Delphi.  
THE PYTHIAN PRIESTESS enters and approaches the  
doors of the temple.)

THE PYTHIAN PRIESTESS  
First, in this prayer, of all the gods I name  
The prophet-mother Earth; and Themis next,  
Second who sat-for so with truth is said-  
On this her mother's shrine oracular.  
Then by her grace, who unconstrained allowed,  
There sat thereon another child of Earth-  
Titanian Phoebe. She, in after time,  
Gave o'er the throne, as birthgift to a god,  
Phoebus, who in his own bears Phoebe's name.  
He from the lake and ridge of Delos' isle  
Steered to the port of Pallas' Attic shores,  
The home of ships; and thence he passed and came  
Unto this land and to Pamassus' shrine.  
And at his side, with awe revering him,  
There went the children of Hephaestus' seed,  
The hewers of the sacred way, who tame  
The stubborn tract that erst was wilderness.

And all this folk, and Delphos, chieftain-king  
Of this their land, with honour gave him home;  
And in his breast Zeus set a prophet's soul,  
And gave to him this throne, whereon he sits,  
Fourth prophet of the shrine, and, Loxias hight,

Gives voice to that which Zeus his sire decrees.

Such gods I name in my prelude prayer,  
And after them, I call with honour due  
On Pallas, wardress of the fane, and Nymphs  
Who dwell around the rock Corycian,  
Where in the hollow cave, the wild birds' haunt,  
Wander the feet of lesser gods; and there,  
Right well I know it, Bromian Bacchus dwells,  
Since he in godship led his Maenad host,  
Devising death for Pentheus, whom they rent  
Piecemeal, as hare among the hounds. And last,  
I call on Pleistus' springs, Poseidon's might,  
And Zeus most high, the great Accomplisher.  
Then as a seeress to the sacred chair  
I pass and sit; and may the powers divine  
Make this mine entrance fruitful in response  
Beyond each former advent, triply blest.  
And if there stand without, from Hellas bound,  
Men seeking oracles, let each pass in  
In order of the lot, as use allows;  
For the god guides whate'er my tongue proclaims.

[She goes into the interior of the temple; after a  
short interval, she returns in great fear.]

Things fell to speak of, fell for eyes to see,  
Have sped me forth again from Loxias' shrine,

With strength unstrung, moving erect no more,  
 But aiding with my hands my failing feet,  
 Unnerved by fear. A beldame's force is naught-  
 Is as a child's, when age and fear combine.  
 For as I pace towards the inmost fane  
 Bay-filleted by many a suppliant's hand,  
 Lo, at the central altar I descry  
 One crouching as for refuge-yea, a man  
 Abhorred of heaven; and from his hands, wherein  
 A sword new-drawn he holds, blood reeked and fell:  
 A wand he bears, the olive's topmost bough,  
 Twined as of purpose with a deep close tuft  
 Of whitest wool. This, that I plainly saw,  
 Plainly I tell. But lo, in front of him,  
 Crouched on the altar-steps, a grisly band  
 Of women slumbers-not like women they,  
 But Gorgons rather; nay, that word is weak,  
 Nor may I match the Gorgons' shape with theirs!  
 Such have I seen in painted semblance erst-  
 Winged Harpies, snatching food from Phineus'  
 board,-  
 But these are wingless, black, and all their shape  
 The eye's abomination to behold.  
 Fell is the breath-let none draw nigh to it-  
 Exude the damned drops of poisonous ire:  
 And such their garb as none should dare to bring  
 To statues of the gods or homes of men.  
 I wot not of the tribe wherefrom can come  
 So fell a legion, nor in what land Earth  
 Could rear, unharmed, such creatures, nor avow  
 That she had travailed and had brought forth death.  
 But, for the rest, be all these things a carp  
 Unto the mighty Loxias, the lord  
 Of this our shrine: healer and prophet he,  
 Discerner he of portents, and the cleanser  
 Of other homes-behold, his own to cleanse!

[She goes out. The central doors open, disclosing the interior of the temple. **ORESTES** clings to the central altar; the **FURIES** lie slumbering at a little distance; **APOLLO** and **HERMES** appear from the innermost shrine.]

**APOLLO** (to **ORESTES**)

Lo, I desert thee never: to the end,  
 Hard at thy side as now, or sundered far,  
 I am thy guard, and to thine enemies  
 Implacably oppose me: look on them,  
 These greedy fiends, beneath my craft subdued I  
 See, they are fallen on sleep, these beldames old,  
 Unto whose grim and wizened maidenhood  
 Nor god nor man nor beast can e'er draw near.  
 Yea, evil were they born, for evil's doom,  
 Evil the dark abyss of Tartarus

Wherein they dwell, and they themselves the hate  
 Of men on earth, and of Olympian gods.  
 But thou, flee far and with unfaltering speed;  
 For they shall hunt thee through the mainland wide  
 Where'er throughout the tract of travelled earth  
 Thy foot may roam, and o'er and o'er the seas  
 And island homes of men. Faint not nor fail,  
 Too soon and timidly within thy breast  
 Shepherding thoughts forlorn of this thy toil;  
 But unto Pallas' city go, and there  
 Crouch at her shrine, and in thine arms enfold  
 Her ancient image: there we well shall find  
 Meet judges for this cause and suasive pleas,  
 Skilled to contrive for thee deliverance  
 For by my hest thou didst thy mother slay.

**ORESTES**

O king Apollo, since right well thou know'st  
 What justice bids, have heed, fulfil the same,-  
 Thy strength is all-sufficient to achieve.

**APOLLO**

Have thou too heed, nor let thy fear prevail  
 Above thy will. And do thou guard him, Hermes,  
 Whose blood is brother unto mine, whose sire  
 The same high God. Men call thee guide and guard,  
 Guide therefore thou and guard my suppliant;  
 For Zeus himself reveres the outlaw's right,  
 Boon of fair escort, upon man conferred.

(**APOLLO**, **HERMES**, and **ORESTES** go out. The **GHOST OF CLYTEMNESTRA** rises.)

**GHOST OF CLYTEMNESTRA**

Sleep on! awake! what skills your sleep to me-  
 Me, among all the dead by you dishonoured-  
 Me from whom never, in the world of death,  
 Dieth this course, 'Tis she who smote and slew,  
 And shamed and scorned I roam? Awake, and hear  
 My plaint of dead men's hate intolerable.  
 Me, sternly slain by them that should have loved,  
 Me doth no god arouse him to avenge,  
 Hewn down in blood by matricidal hands.  
 Mark ye these wounds from which the heart's blood  
 ran,  
 And by whose hand, bethink ye! for the sense  
 When shut in sleep hath then the spirit-sight,  
 But in the day the inward eye is blind.  
 List, ye who drank so oft with lapping tongue  
 The wineless draught by me outpoured to soothe  
 Your vengeful ire! how oft on kindled shrine  
 I laid the feast of darkness, at the hour  
 Abhorred of every god but you alone!  
 Lo, all my service trampled down and scorned!  
 And he bath baulked your chase, as stag the hounds;  
 Yea, lightly bounding from the circling toils,

Hath wried his face in scorn, and flieth far.  
 Awake and hear-for mine own soul I cry-  
 Awake, ye powers of hell! the wandering ghost  
 That once was Clytemnestra calls-Arise!

(The FURIES mutter grimly, as in a dream.)

Mutter and murmur! He hath flown afar-  
 My kin have gods to guard them, I have none!

(The FURIES mutter as before.)

O drowsed in sleep too deep to heed my pain!  
 Orestes flies, who me, his mother, slew.

(The FURIES give a confused cry.)

Yelping, and drowsed again? Up and be doing  
 That which alone is yours, the deed of hell!

(The FURIES give another cry.)

Lo, sleep and toil, the sworn confederates,  
 Have quelled your dragon-anger, once so fell!

THE FURIES (muttering more fiercely and loudly)  
 Seize, seize, seize, seize-mark, yonder!

#### GHOST

In dreams ye chase a prey, and like some hound,  
 That even in sleep doth ply woodland toil,  
 Ye bell and bay. What do ye, sleeping here?  
 Be not o'ercome with toil, nor, sleep-subdued,  
 Be heedless of my wrong. Up! thrill your heart  
 With the just chidings of my tongue,-Such words  
 Are as a spur to purpose firmly held.  
 Blow forth on him the breath of wrath and blood,  
 Scorch him with reek of fire that burns in you,  
 Waste him with new pursuit-swift, hound him down!

(The GHOST sinks.)

FIRST FURY (awaking)

Up! rouse another as I rouse thee; up!  
 Sleep'st thou? Rise up, and spurning sleep away,  
 See we if false to us this prelude rang.

CHORUS OF EUMENIDES (singing)

#### STROPHE 1

Alack, alack, O sisters, we have toiled,  
 O much and vainly have we toiled and borne!  
 Vainly! and all we wrought the gods have foiled,  
 And turned us to scorn!  
 He hath slipped from the net, whom we chased: he  
 hath 'scaped us  
 who should be our prey-  
 O'er-mastered by slumber we sank, and our quarry  
 hath stolen away!

#### ANTISTROPHE 1

Thou, child of the high God Zeus, Apollo, hast  
 robbed us and wronged;  
 Thou, a youth, hast down-trodden the right that to  
 godship more ancient belonged;  
 Thou hast cherished thy suppliant man; the slayer,  
 the God-forsaken,  
 The bane of a parent, by craft from out of our grasp  
 thou hast taken;  
 A god, thou hast stolen from us the avengers a  
 matricide son-  
 And who shall consider thy deed and say, It is  
 rightfully done?

#### STROPHE 2

The sound of chiding scorn  
 Came from the land of dream;  
 Deep to mine inmost heart I felt it thrill and burn,  
 Thrust as a strong-grasped goad, to urge  
 Onward the chariot's team.  
 Thrilled, chilled with bitter inward pain  
 I stand as one beneath the doomsman's scourge.

#### ANTISTROPHE 2

Shame on the younger gods who tread down right,  
 Sitting on thrones of might!  
 Woe on the altar of earth's central fane!  
 Clotted on step and shrine,  
 Behold, the guilt of blood, the ghastly stain!

#### STROPHE 3

Woe upon thee, Apollo! uncontrolled,  
 Unbidden, hast thou, prophet-god, imbrued  
 The pure prophetic shrine with wrongful blood!  
 For thou too heinous a respect didst hold  
 Of man, too little heed of powers divine!  
 And us the Fates, the ancients of the earth,  
 Didst deem as nothing worth.

#### ANTISTROPHE 3

Scornful to me thou art, yet shalt not fend  
 My wrath from him; though unto hell he flee,  
 There too are we!  
 And he the blood-defiled, should feel and rue,  
 Though I were not, fiend-wrath that shall not end,  
 Descending on his head who foully slew.  
 (APOLLO enters from the inner shrine.)

#### APOLLO

Out! I command you. Out from this my home-  
 Haste, tarry not! Out from the mystic shrine,  
 Lest thy lot be to take into thy breast  
 The winged bright dart that from my golden string  
 Speeds hissing as a snake,-lest, pierced and thrilled

With agony, thou shouldst spew forth again  
 Black frothy heart's-blood, drawn from mortal men,  
 Belching the gory clots sucked forth from wounds.  
 These be no halls where such as you can prowl-  
 Go where men lay on men the doom of blood,  
 Heads lopped from necks, eyes from their spheres  
 plucked out,  
 Hacked flesh, the flower of youthful seed crushed  
 out,  
 Feet hewn away, and hands, and death beneath  
 The smiting stone, low moans and piteous  
 Of men impaled-Hark, hear ye for what feast  
 Ye hanker ever, and the loathing gods  
 Do spit upon your craving? Lo, your shape  
 Is all too fitted to your greed; the cave  
 Where lurks some lion, lapping gore, were home  
 More meet for you. Avaunt from sacred shrines,  
 Nor bring pollution by your touch on all  
 That nears yuu. Hence! and roam unshepherded-  
 No god there is to tend such herd as you.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

O king Apollo, in our turn hear us.  
 Thou hast not only part in these ill things,  
 But art chief cause and doer of the same.

**APOLLO**

How? stretch thy speech to tell this, and have done.

**LEADER**

Thine oracle bade this man slay his mother.

**APOLLO**

I bade him quit his sire's death,-wherefore not?

**LEADER**

Then didst thou aid and guard red-handed crime.

**APOLLO**

Yea, and I bade him to this temple flee.

**LEADER**

And yet forsooth dost chide us following him!,

**APOLLO**

Ay-not for you it is, to near this fane.

**LEADER**

Yet is such office ours, imposed by fate.

**APOLLO**

What office? vaunt the thing ye deem so fair.

**LEADER**

From home to home we chase the matricide.

**APOLLO**

What? to avenge a wife who slays her lord?

**LEADER**

That is not blood outpoured by kindred hands.

**APOLLO**

How darkly ye dishonour and annul  
 The troth to which the high accomplishes,  
 Hera and Zeus, do honour. Yea, and thus  
 Is Aphrodite to dishonour cast,  
 The queen of rapture unto mortal men.

Know, that above the marriage-bed ordained  
 For man and woman staddeth Right as guard,  
 Enhancing sanctity of trothplight sworn;  
 Therefore, if thou art placable to those  
 Who have their consort slain, nor will'st to turn  
 On them the eye of wrath, unjust art thou  
 In hounding to his doom the man who slew  
 His mother. Lo, I know thee full of wrath  
 Against one deed, but all too placable  
 Unto the other, minishing the crime.  
 But in this cause shall Pallas guard the right.

**LEADER**

Deem not my quest shall ever quit that man.

**APOLLO**

Follow then, make thee, double toil in vain

**LEADER**

Think not by speech mine office to curtail.

**APOLLO**

None hast thou, that I would accept of thee!

**LEADER**

Yea, high thine honour by the throne of Zeus:  
 But I, drawn on by scent of mother's blood,  
 Seek vengeance on this man and hound him down.

(The CHORUS goes in pursuit of

**ORESTES.)****APOLLO**

But I will stand beside him; 'tis for me  
 To guard my suppliant: gods and men alike  
 Do dread the curse of such an one betrayed,  
 And in me Fear and Will say Leave him not.  
 (He goes into the temple.)

(The scene changes to Athens. In the foreground is  
 the Temple of ATHENA on the Acropolis; her statue  
 stands in the centre; ORESTES is seen clinging to it.)

**ORESTES**

Look on me, queen Athena; lo, I come  
 By Loxias' behest; thou of thy grace  
 Receive me, driven of avenging powers-  
 Not now a red-hand slayer unannealed,  
 But with guilt fading, half-effaced, outworn  
 On many homes and paths of mortal men.  
 For to the limit of each land, each sea,  
 I roamed, obedient to Apollo's best,  
 And come at last, O Goddess, to thy fane,  
 And clinging to thine image, bide my doom.

(The CHORUS OF EUMENIDES enters, questing like  
 hounds.)

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

Ho! clear is here the trace of him we seek:  
 Follow the track of blood, the silent sign!

Like to some hound that hunts a wounded fawn,  
 We snuff along the scent of dripping gore,  
 And inwardly we pant, for many a day  
 Toiling in chase that shall fordo the man;  
 For o'er and o'er the wide land have I ranged,  
 And o'er the wide sea, flying without wings,  
 Swift as a sail I pressed upon his track,  
 Who now hard by is crouching, well I wot,  
 For scent of mortal blood allures me here.

**CHORUS** (chanting)

Follow, seek him-round and round  
 Scent and snuff and scan the ground,  
 Lest unharmed he slip away,  
 He who did his mother slay!  
 Hist-he is there! See him his arms entwine  
 Around the image of the maid divine-  
 Thus aided, for the deed he wrought  
 Unto the judgment wills he to be brought.

It may not be! a mother's blood, poured forth  
 Upon the stained earth,  
 None gathers up: it lies-bear witness, Hell!-  
 For aye indelible  
 And thou who sheddest it shalt give thine own  
 That shedding to atone!  
 Yea, from thy living limbs I suck it out,  
 Red, clotted, gout by gout,-  
 A draught abhorred of men and gods; but  
 Will drain it, suck thee dry;  
 Yea, I will waste thee living, nerve and vein;  
 Yea, for thy mother slain,  
 Will drag thee downward, there where thou shalt  
 dree  
 The weird of agony!  
 And thou and whosoe'er of men hath sinned-  
 Hath wronged or God, or friend,  
 Or parent,-learn ye how to all and each  
 The arm of doom can reach!  
 Sternly requiteth, in the world beneath,  
 The judgment-seat of Death;  
 Yea, Death, beholding every man's endeavour,  
 Recordeth it for ever.

**ORESTES**

I, schooled in many miseries, have learnt  
 How many refuges of cleansing shrines  
 And when imposeth silence. Lo, I stand  
 Fixed now to speak, for he whose word is wise  
 Commands the same. Look, how the stain of blood  
 Is dull upon mine hand and wastes away,  
 And laved and lost therewith is the deep curse  
 Of matricide; for while the guilt was new,  
 'Twas banished from me at Apollo's hearth,  
 Atoned and purified by death of swine.  
 Long were my word if I should sum the tale,

How oft since then among my fellow-men  
 I stood and brought no curse. Time cleanses all-  
 Time, the coeval of all things that are.

Now from pure lips, in words of omen fair,  
 I call Athena, lady of this land,  
 To come, my champion: so, in aftertime,  
 She shall not fail of love and service leal,  
 Not won by war, from me and from my land  
 And all the folk of Argos, vowed to her.

Now, be she far away in Libyan land  
 Where flows from Triton's lake her natal wave,-  
 Stand she with planted feet, or in some hour  
 Of rest conceal them, champion of her friends  
 Where'er she be,-Or whether o'er the plain  
 Phlegraean she look forth, as warrior bold-  
 I cry to her to come, where'er she be,  
 (And she, as goddess, from afar can hear)  
 And aid and free me, set among my foes.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

Thee not Apollo nor Athena's strength  
 Can save from perishing, a castaway  
 Amid the Lost, where no delight shall meet  
 Thy soul-a bloodless prey of nether powers,  
 A shadow among shadows. Answerest thou  
 Nothing? dost cast away my words with scorn,  
 Thou, prey prepared and dedicate to me?  
 Not as a victim slain upon the shrine,  
 But living shalt thou see thy flesh my food.  
 Hear now the binding chant that makes thee mine.

**CHORUS** (chanting)

Weave the weird dance,-behold the hour  
 To utter forth the chant of hell,  
 Our sway among mankind to tell,  
 The guidance of our power.  
 Of justice are we ministers,  
 And whosoe'er of men may stand  
 Lifting a pure unsullied hand,  
 That man no doom of ours incurs,  
 And walks thro' all his mortal path  
 Untouched by woe, unharmed by wrath.  
 But if, as yonder man, he hath  
 Blood on the hands he strives to hide,  
 We stand avengers at his side,  
 Decreeing, Thou hast wronged the dead:  
 We are doom's witnesses to thee.  
 The price of blood, his hands have shed,  
 We wring from him; in life, in death,  
 Hard at his side are we!

**STROPHE 1**

Night, Mother Night, who brought me forth, a  
 torment

To living men and dead,  
 Hear me, O hear! by Leto's stripling son

I am dishonoured:  
 He hath ta'en from me him who cowers in refuge,  
 To me made consecrates-  
 A rightful victim, him who slew his mother,  
 Given o'er to me and fate.

**REFRAIN 1**

Hear the hymn of hell,  
 O'er the victim sounding,-  
 Chant of frenzy, chant of ill,  
 Sense and will confounding!  
 Round the soul entwining  
 Without lute or lyre-  
 Soul in madness pining,  
 Wasting as with fire!

**ANTISTROPHE 1**

Fate, all-pervading Fate, this service spun,  
 commanding  
 That I should bide therein:  
 Whosoe'er of mortals, made perverse and lawless,  
 Is stained with blood of kin,  
 By his side are we, and hunt him ever onward,  
 Till to the Silent Land,  
 The realm of death, he cometh; neither yonder  
 In freedom shall he stand.

**REFRAIN 1**

Hear the hymn of hell,  
 O'er the victim sounding,-  
 Chant of frenzy, chant of ill,  
 Sense and will confounding!  
 Round the soul entwining  
 Without lute or lyre-  
 Soul in madness pining,  
 Wasting as with fire!

**STROPHE 2**

When from womb of Night we sprang, on us this  
 labour  
 Was laid and shall abide.  
 Gods immortal are ye, yet beware ye touch not  
 That which is our pride!  
 None may come beside us gathered round the  
 blood-feast-  
 For us no garments white  
 Gleam on a festal day; for us a darker fate is,  
 Another darker rite.

**REFRAIN 2**

That is mine hour when falls an ancient line

When in the household's heart  
 The God of blood doth slay by kindred hands,-  
 Then do we bear our part:  
 On him who slays we sweep with chasing cry:  
 Though he be triply strong,  
 We wear and waste him; blood atones for blood,  
 Yew pain for ancient wrong.

**ANTISTROPHE 2**

I hold this task-'tis mine, and not another's.  
 The very gods on high,  
 Though they can silence and annul the prayers  
 Of those who on us cry,  
 They may not strive with us who stand apart,  
 A race by Zeus abhorred,  
 Blood-boltered, held unworthy of the council  
 And converse of Heaven's lord.

**STROPHE 3**

Therefore the more I leap upon my prey;  
 Upon their head I bound;  
 My foot is hard; as one that trips a runner  
 I cast them to the ground;  
 Yea, to the depth of doom intolerable;  
 And they who erst were great,  
 And upon earth held high their pride and glory,  
 Are brought to low estate.  
 In underworld they waste and are diminished,  
 The while around them fleet  
 Dark wavings of my robes, and, subtly woven,  
 The paces of my feet.

**ANTISTROPHE 3**

Who falls infatuate, he sees not neither knows he  
 That we are at his side;  
 So closely round about him, darkly flitting,  
 The cloud of guilt doth glide.  
 Heavily 'tis uttered, how around his hearthstone  
 The mirk of hell doth rise.

**STROPHE 4**

Stern and fixed the law is; we have hands t' achieve  
 it,  
 Cunning to devise.  
 Queens are we and mindful of our solemn  
 vengeance.  
 Not by tear or prayer  
 Shall a man avert it. In unhonoured darkness,  
 Far from gods, we fare,  
 Lit unto our task with torch of sunless regions,  
 And o'er a deadly way-  
 Deadly to the living as to those who see not  
 Life and light of day-  
 Hunt we and press onward.

## ANTISTROPHE 4

Who of mortals hearing  
 Doth not quake for awe,  
 Hearing all that Fate thro' hand of God hath given us  
 For ordinance and law?  
 Yea, this right to us, in dark abysm and backward  
 Of ages it befell:  
 None shall wrong mine office, tho' in nether regions  
 And sunless dark I dwell.  
 (ATHENA enters.)

**ATHENA**  
 Far off I heard the clamour of your cry,  
 As by Scamander's side I set my foot  
 Asserting right upon the land given o'er  
 To me by those who o'er Achaea's host  
 Held sway and leadership: no scanty part  
 Of all they won by spear and sword, to me  
 They gave it, land and all that grew thereon,  
 As chosen heirloom for my Theseus' clan.  
 Thence summoned, sped I with a tireless foot,-  
 Hummed on the wind, instead of wings, the fold  
 Of this mine aegis, by my feet propelled,  
 As, linked to mettled horses, speeds a car.  
 And now, beholding here Earth's nether brood,  
 I fear it nought, yet are mine eyes amazed  
 With wonder. Who are ye? of all I ask,  
 And of this stranger to my statue clinging.  
 But ye-your shape is like no human form,  
 Like to no goddess whom the gods behold,  
 Like to no shape which mortal women wear.  
 Yet to stand by and chide a monstrous form  
 Is all unjust-from such words Right revolts.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**  
 O child of Zeus, one word shall tell thee all.  
 We are the children of eternal Night,  
 And Furies in the underworld are called.

**ATHENA**  
 I know your lineage now and eke your name.

**LEADER**  
 Yea, and eftsoons indeed my rights shalt know.

**ATHENA**  
 Fain would I learn them; speak them clearly forth,

**LEADER**  
 We chase from home the murderers of men.

**ATHENA**  
 And where at last can he that slew make pause?

**LEADER**  
 Where this is law-All joy abandon here.

**ATHENA**  
 Say, do ye bay this man to such a flight?

**LEADER**  
 Yea, for of choice he did his mother slay.

**ATHENA**

Urged by no fear of other wrath and doom?

**LEADER**  
 What spur can rightly goad to matricide?

**ATHENA**  
 Two stand to plead-one only have I heard.

**LEADER**  
 He wiR not swear nor challenge us to oath.

**ATHENA**  
 The form of justice, not its deed, thou willest.

**LEADER**  
 Prove thou that word; thou art not scant of skill.

**ATHENA**  
 I say that oaths shall not enforce the wrong.

**LEADER**  
 Then test the cause, judge and award the right.

**ATHENA**  
 Will ye to me then this decision trust?

**LEADER**  
 Yea, reverencing true child of worthy sire.

**ATHENA (to ORESTES)**  
 O man unknown, make thou thy plea in turn.  
 Speak forth thy land, thy lineage, and thy woes;  
 Then, if thou canst, avert this bitter blame-  
 If, as I deem, in confidence of right  
 Thou sittest hard beside my holy place,  
 Claspings this statue, as Ixion sat,  
 A sacred suppliant for Zeus to cleanse,-  
 To all this answer me in words made plain.

**ORESTES**  
 O queen Athena, first from thy last words  
 Will I a great solicitude remove.  
 Not one blood-guilty am I; no foul stain  
 Clings to thine image from my clinging hand;  
 Whereof one potent proof I have to tell.  
 Lo, the law stands-The slayer shall not plead,  
 Till by the hand of him who cleanses blood  
 A suckling creature's blood besprinkle him.  
 Long since have I this expiation done,-  
 In many a home, slain beasts and running streams  
 Have cleansed me. Thus I speak away that fear.  
 Next, of my lineage quickly thou shalt learn:  
 An Argive am I, and right well thou know'st  
 My sire, that Agamemnon who arrayed  
 The fleet and them that went therein to war-  
 That chief with whom thy hand combined to crush  
 To an uncitied heap what once was Troy;  
 That Agamemnon, when he homeward came,  
 Was brought unto no honourable death,  
 Slain by the dark-souled wife who brought me forth  
 To him,-enwound and slain in wily nets,  
 Blazoned with blood that in the laver ran.  
 And I, returning from an exiled youth,  
 Slew her, my mother-lo, it stands avowed!  
 With blood for blood avenging my loved sire;

And in this deed doth Loxias bear part,  
Decreeing agonies, to goad my will,  
Unless by me the guilty found their doom.  
Do thou decide if right or wrong were done-  
Thy dooming, whatsoever it be, contents me.

**ATHENA**

Too mighty is this matter, whose'er  
Of mortals claims to judge hereof aright.  
Yea, me, even me, eternal Right forbids  
To judge the issues of blood-guilt, and wrath  
That follows swift behind. This too gives pause,  
That thou as one with all due rites performed  
Dost come, unsinning, pure, unto my shrine.  
Whate'er thou art, in this my city's name,  
As uncondemned, I take thee to my side.-  
Yet have these foes of thine such dues by fate,  
O'erthrown in judgment of the cause, forthwith  
Their anger's poison shall infect the land-  
A dropping plague-spot of eternal ill.  
Thus stand we with a woe on either hand:  
Stay they, or go at my commandment forth,  
Perplexity or pain must needs befall.  
Yet, as on me Fate hath imposed the cause,  
I choose unto me judges that shall be  
An ordinance for ever, set to rule  
The dues of blood-guilt, upon oath declared.  
But ye, call forth your witness and your proof,  
Words strong for justice, fortified by oath;  
And I, whose'er are truest in my town,  
Them will I choose and bring, and straitly charge,  
Look on this cause, discriminating well,  
And pledge your oath to utter nought of wrong.  
(ATHENA withdraws.)

**CHORUS (singing)****STROPHE 1**

Now are they all undone, the ancient laws,  
If here the slayer's cause  
Prevail; new wrong for ancient right shall be  
If matricide go free.  
Henceforth a deed like his by all shall stand,  
Too ready to the hand:  
Too oft shall parents in the aftertime  
Rue and lament this crime,-  
Taught, not in false imagining, to feel  
Their children's thrusting steel:  
No more the wrath, that erst on murder fell  
From us, the queens of Hell,  
Shall fall, no more our watching gaze impend-  
Death shall smite unrestrained.

**ANTISTROPHE 1**

Henceforth shall one unto another cry  
Lo, they are stricken, lo, they fall and die  
Around me! and that other answers him,  
O thou that lookest that thy woes should cease,  
Behold, with dark increase  
They throng and press upon thee; yea, and dim  
Is all the cure, and every comfort vain!

**STROPHE 2**

Let none henceforth cry out, when falls the blow  
Of sudden-smiting woe,  
Cry out in sad reiterated strain  
O Justice, aid! aid, O ye thrones of Hell!  
So though a father or a mother wail  
New-smitten by a son, it shall no more avail,  
Since, overthrown by wrong, the fane of justice fell!

**ANTISTROPHE 2**

Know, that a throne there is that may not pass away,  
And one that sitteth on it-even Fear,  
Searching with steadfast eyes man's inner soul:  
Wisdom is child of pain, and born with many a tear;  
But who henceforth,  
What man of mortal men, what nation upon earth,  
That holdeth nought in awe nor in the light  
Of inner reverence, shall worship Right  
As in the older day?

**STROPHE 3**

Praise not, O man, the life beyond control,  
Nor that which bows unto a tyrant's sway.  
Know that the middle way  
Is dearest unto God, and they thereon who wend,  
They shall achieve the end;  
But they who wander or to left or right  
Are sinners in his sight.  
Take to thy heart this one, this soothfast word-  
Of wantonness impiety is sire;  
Only from calm control and sanity unstirred  
Cometh true weal, the goal of every man's desire.

**ANTISTROPHE 3**

Yea, whatsoever befall, hold thou this word of mine:  
Bow down at Justice' shrine,  
Turn thou thine eyes away from earthly lure,  
Nor with a godless foot that altar spurn.  
For as thou dost shall Fate do in return,  
And the great doom is sure.  
Therefore let each adore a parent's trust,  
And each with loyalty revere the guest  
That in his halls doth rest.

**STROPHE 4**

For whoso uncompelled doth follow what is just,  
 He ne'er shall be unblest;  
 Yea, never to the gulf of doom  
 That man shall come.

But he whose will is set against the gods,  
 Who treads beyond the law with foot impure,  
 Till o'er the wreck of Right confusion broods,-  
 Know that for him, though now he sail secure,  
 The day of storm shall be; then shall he strive and fail  
 Down from the shivered yard to furl the sail,

**ANTISTROPHE 4**

And call on Powers, that heed him nought, to save,  
 And vainly wrestle with the whirling wave.  
 Hot was his heart with pride-  
 I shall not fall, he cried.  
 But him with watching scorn  
 The god beholds, forlorn,  
 Tangled in toils of Fate beyond escape,  
 Hopeless of haven safe beyond the cape-  
 Till all his wealth and bliss of bygone day  
 Upon the reef of Rightful Doom is hurled,  
 And he is rapt away  
 Unwept, for ever, to the dead forgotten world.

(**ATHENA** enters, with **A JURY OF ATHENIAN CITIZENS**. A large crowd follows.)

**ATHENA**

O herald, make proclaim, bid all men come.  
 Then let the shrill blast of the Tyrrhene trump,  
 Fulfilled with mortal breath, thro' the wide air  
 Peal a loud summons, bidding all men heed.  
 For, till my judges fill this judgment-seat,  
 Silence behoves,-that this whole city learn,  
 What for all time mine ordinance commands,  
 And these men, that the cause be judged aright.

(**APOLLO** enters.)

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

O king Apollo, rule what is thine own,  
 But in this thing what share pertains to thee?

**APOLLO**

First, as a witness come I, for this man  
 Is suppliant of mine by sacred right,  
 Guest of my holy hearth and cleansed by me  
 Of blood-guilt: then, to set me at his side  
 And in his cause bear part, as part I bore  
 Erst in his deed, whereby his mother fell.  
 Let whoso knoweth now announce the cause.

**ATHENA** (to the **CHORUS**)

'Tis I announce the cause-first speech be yours;

For rightfully shall they whose plaint is tried  
 Tell the tale first and set the matter clear.

**LEADER**

Though we be many, brief shall be our tale.

(To **ORESTES**)

Answer thou, setting word to match with word;  
 And first avow-hast thou thy mother slain?

**ORESTES**

I slew her. I deny no word hereof.

**LEADER**

Three falls decide the wrestle-this is one.

**ORESTES**

Thou vauntest thee-but o'er no final fall.

**LEADER**

Yet must thou tell the manner of thy deed.

**ORESTES**

Drawn sword in hand, I gashed her neck. 'Tis told.

**LEADER**

But by whose word, whose craft, wert thou  
 impelled?

**ORESTES**

By oracles of him who here attests me.

**LEADER**

The prophet-god bade thee thy mother slay?

**ORESTES**

Yea, and thro' him less ill I fared, till now.

**LEADER**

If the vote grip thee, thou shalt change that word.

**ORESTES**

Strong is my hope; my buried sire shall aid.

**LEADER**

Go to now, trust the dead, a matricide!

**ORESTES**

Yea, for in her combined two stains of sin.

**LEADER**

How? speak this clearly to the judges' mind.

**ORESTES**

Slaying her husband, she did slay my sire.

**LEADER**

Therefore thou livest; death assoils her deed.

**ORESTES**

Then while she lived why didst thou hunt her not?

**LEADER**

She was not kin by blood to him she slew.

**ORESTES**

And I, am I by blood my mother's kin?

**LEADER**

O cursed with murder's guilt, how else wert thou  
 The burden of her womb? Dost thou forswear  
 Thy mother's kinship, closest bond of love?

**ORESTES**

It is thine hour, Apollo-speak the law,  
 Averring if this deed were justly done;

For done it is, and clear and undenied.  
But if to thee this murder's cause seem right  
Or wrongful, speak-that I to these may tell.

**APOLLO**

To you, Athena's mighty council-court,  
Justly for justice will I plead, even I,  
The prophet-god, nor cheat you by one word.  
For never spake I from my prophet-seat  
One word, of man, of woman, or of state,  
Save what the Father of Olympian gods  
Commanded unto me. I rede you then,  
Bethink you of my plea, how strong it stands,  
And follow the decree of Zeus our sire,-  
For oaths prevail not over Zeus' command.

**LEADER**

Go to; thou sayest that from Zeus befell  
The oracle that this Orestes bade  
With vengeance quit the slaying of his sire,  
And hold as nought his mother's right of kin!

**APOLLO**

Yea, for it stands not with a common death,  
That he should die, a chieftain and a king  
Decked with the sceptre which high heaven confers-  
Die, and by female hands, not smitten down  
By a far-shooting bow, held stalwartly  
By some strong Amazon. Another doom  
Was his: O Pallas, hear, and ye who sit  
In judgment, to discern this thing aright!-  
She with a specious voice of welcome true  
Hailed him, returning from the mighty mart  
Where war for life gives fame, triumphant home;  
Then o'er the laver, as he bathed himself,  
She spread from head to foot a covering net,  
And in the endless mesh of cunning robes  
Enwound and trapped her lord, and smote him  
down.

Lo, ye have heard what doom this chieftain met,  
The majesty of Greece, the fleet's high lord:  
Such as I tell it, let it gall your ears,  
Who stand as judges to decide this cause.

**LEADER**

Zeus, as thou sayest, holds a father's death  
As first of crimes,-yet he of his own act  
Cast into chains his father, Cronus old:  
How suits that deed with that which now ye tell?  
O ye who judge, I bid ye mark my words!

**APOLLO**

O monsters loathed of all, O scorn of gods,  
He that hath bound may loose: a cure there is.  
Yea, many a plan that can unbind the chain.  
But when the thirsty dust sucks up man's blood  
Once shed in death, he shall arise no more.  
No chant nor charm for this my Sire hath wrought.  
All else there is, he moulds and shifts at will,

Not scant of strength nor breath, whate'er he do.

**LEADER**

Think yet, for what acquittal thou dost plead:  
He who hath shed a mother's kindred blood,  
Shall he in Argos dwell, where dwelt his sire?  
How shall he stand before the city's shrines,  
How share the clansmen's holy lustral bowl?

**APOLLO**

This too I answer; mark a soothfast word  
Not the true parent is the woman's womb  
That bears the child; she doth but nurse the seed  
New-sown: the male is parent; she for him,  
As stranger for a stranger, hoards the germ  
Of life, unless the god its promise blight.  
And proof hereof before you will I set.  
Birth may from fathers, without mothers, be:  
See at your side a witness of the same,  
Athena, daughter of Olympian Zeus,  
Never within the darkness of the womb  
Fostered nor fashioned, but a bud more bright  
Than any goddess in her breast might bear.  
And I, O Pallas, howsoe'er I may,  
Henceforth will glorify thy town, thy clan,  
And for this end have sent my suppliant here  
Unto thy shrine; that he from this time forth  
Be loyal unto thee for evermore,  
O goddess-queen, and thou unto thy side  
Mayst win and hold him faithful, and his line,  
And that for aye this pledge and troth remain  
To children's children of AtheniaD seed.

**ATHENA**

Enough is said; I bid the judges now  
With pure intent deliver just award.

**LEADER**

We too have shot our every shaft of speech,  
And now abide to hear the doom of law.

**ATHENA (to APOLLO and ORESTES)**

Say, how ordaining shall I 'scape your blame?

**APOLLO**

I spake, ye heard; enough. O stranger men,  
Heed well your oath as ye decide the cause.

**ATHENA**

O men of Athens, ye who first do judge  
The law of bloodshed, hear me now ordain.  
Here to all time for Aegeus' Attic host  
Shall stand this council-court of judges sworn,  
Here the tribunal, set on Ares' Hill  
Where camped of old the tented Amazons,  
What time in hate of Theseus they assailed  
Athens, and set against her citadel  
A counterwork of new sky-pointing towers,  
And there to Ares held their sacrifice,  
Where now the rock hath name, even Ares' Hill.  
And hence shall Reverence and her kinsman Fear

Pass to each free man's heart, by day and night  
 Enjoining, Thou shalt do no unjust thing,  
 So long as law stands as it stood of old  
 Unmarred by civic change. Look you, the spring  
 Is pure; but foul it once with influx vile  
 And muddy clay, and none can drink thereof.  
 Therefore, O citizens, I bid ye bow  
 In awe to this command, Let no man live,  
 Uncurbed by law nor curbed by tyranny;  
 Nor banish ye the monarchy of Awe  
 Beyond the walls; untouched by fear divine,  
 No man doth justice in the world of men.  
 Therefore in purity and holy dread  
 Stand and revere; so shall ye have and hold  
 A saving bulwark of the state and land,  
 Such as no man hath ever elsewhere known,  
 Nor in far Scythia, nor in Pelops' realm.  
 Thus I ordain it now, a council-court  
 Pure and unsullied by the lust of gain,  
 Sacred and swift to vengeance, wakeful ever  
 To champion men who sleep, the country's guard.  
 Thus have I spoken, thus to mine own clan  
 Commended it for ever. Ye who judge,  
 Arise, take each his vote, mete out the right,  
 Your oath revering. Lo, my word is said.

(The twelve judges come forward, one by one, to the urns of decision; the first votes; as each of the others follows, the LEADER and APOLLO speak alternately.)

**LEADER**

I rede ye well, beware! nor put to shame,  
 In aught, this grievous company of hell.

**APOLLO**

I too would warn you, fear mine oracles-  
 From Zeus they are,-nor make them void of fruit.

**LEADER**

Presumptuous is thy claim, blood-guilt to judge,  
 And false henceforth thine oracles shall be.

**APOLLO**

Failed then the counsels of my sire, when turned  
 Ixion, first of slayers, to his side?

**LEADER**

These are but words; but I, if justice fail me,  
 Will haunt this land in grim and deadly deed.

**APOLLO**

Scorn of the younger and the elder gods  
 Art thou: 'tis I that shall prevail anon.

**LEADER**

Thus didst thou too of old in Pheres' halls,  
 O'erreaching Fate to make a mortal deathless.

**APOLLO**

Was it not well, my worshipper to aid,

Then most of all when hardest was the need?

**LEADER**

I say thou didst annul the lots of life,  
 Cheating with wine the deities of eld.

**APOLLO**

I say thou shalt anon, thy pleadings foiled,  
 Spit venom vainly on thine enemies.

**LEADER**

Since this young god o'errides mine ancient right,  
 I tarry but to claim your law, not knowing  
 If wrath of mine shall blast your state or spare.

**ATHENA**

Mine is the right to add the final vote,  
 And I award it to Orestes' cause.  
 For me no mother bore within her womb,  
 And, save for wedlock evermore eschewed,  
 I vouch myself the champion of the man,  
 Not of the woman, yea, with all my soul,-  
 In heart, as birth, a father's child alone.  
 Thus will I not too heinously regard  
 A woman's death who did her husband slay,  
 The guardian of her home; and if the votes  
 Equal do fall, Orestes shall prevail.  
 Ye of the judges who are named thereto,  
 Swiftly shake forth the lots from either urn.

(Two judges come forward, one to each urn.)

**ORESTES**

O bright Apollo, what shall be the end?

**LEADER**

O Night, dark mother mine, dost mark these things?

**ORESTES**

Now shall my doom be life, or strangling cords.

**LEADER**

And mine, lost honour or a wider sway.

**APOLLO**

O stranger judges, sum aright the count  
 Of votes cast forth, and, parting them, take heed  
 Ye err not in decision. The default  
 Of one vote only bringeth ruin deep,  
 One, cast aright. doth stablish house and home.

**ATHENA**

Behold, this man is free from guilt of blood,  
 For half the votes condemn him, half set free!

**ORESTES**

O Pallas, light and safety of my home,  
 Thou, thou hast given me back to dwell once more  
 In that my fatherland, amerced of which  
 I wandered; now shall Grecian lips say this,  
 The man is Argive once again, and dwells  
 Again within kiss father's wealthy hall,  
 By Pallas saved, by Loxias, and by Him,  
 The great third saviour, Zeus omnipotent-  
 Who thus in pity for my father's fate  
 Doth pluck me from my doom, beholding these,

Confederates of my mother. Lo, I pass  
 To mine own home, but proffering this vow  
 Unto thy land and people: Nevermore,  
 Thro' all the manifold years of Time to be,  
 Shall any chieftain of mine Argive land  
 Bear hitherward his spears for fight arrayed.  
 For we, though lapped in earth we then shall lie,  
 By thwart adversities will work our will  
 On them who shall transgress this oath of mine,  
 Paths of despair and journeyings ill-starred  
 For them ordaining, till their task they rue.  
 But if this oath be rightly kept, to them  
 Will we the dead be full of grace, the while  
 With loyal league they honour Pallas' town.  
 And now farewell, thou and thy city's folk-  
 Firm be thine arms' grasp, closing with thy foes,  
 And, strong to save, bring victory to thy spear.

(ORESTES and APOLLO depart.)

**CHORUS** (chanting)

Woe on you, younger gods! the ancient right  
 Ye have o'erridden, rent it from my hands.

I am dishonoured of you, thrust to scorn!  
 But heavily my wrath  
 Shall on this land fling forth the drops that blast and  
 burn,

Venom of vengeance, that shall work such scathe  
 As I have suffered; where that dew shall fall,  
 Shall leafless blight arise,  
 Wasting Earth's offspring,-Justice, hear my call!-  
 And thorough all the land in deadly wise  
 Shall scatter venom, to exude again

In pestilence on men.

What cry avails me now, what deed of blood,  
 Unto this land what dark despite?

Alack, alack, forlorn

Are we, a bitter injury have borne!

Alack, O sisters, O dishonoured brood

Of mother Night!

**ATHENA**

Nay, bow ye to my words, chafe not nor moan:  
 Ye are not worsted nor disgraced; behold,  
 With balanced vote the cause had issue fair,  
 Nor in the end did aught dishonour thee.  
 But thus the will of Zeus shone clearly forth,  
 And his own prophet-god avouched the same,  
 Orestes slew: his slaying is atoned.  
 Therefore I pray you, not upon this land  
 Shoot forth the dart of vengeance; be appeased,  
 Nor blast the land with blight, nor loose thereon  
 Drops of eternal venom, direful darts  
 Wasting and marring nature's seed of growth.  
 For I, the queen of Athens' sacred right,  
 Do pledge to you a holy sanctuary

Deep in the heart of this my land, made just  
 By your indwelling presence, while ye sit  
 Hard by your sacred shrines that gleam with oil  
 Of sacrifice, and by this folk adored.

**CHORUS** (chanting)

Woe on you, younger gods! the ancient right  
 Ye have o'erridden, rent it from my hands.

I am dishonoured of you, thrust to scorn!

But heavily my wrath

Shall on this land fling forth the drops that blast and  
 burn,

Venom of vengeance, that shall work such scathe

As I have suffered; where that dew shall fall,

Shall leafless blight arise,

Wasting Earth's offspring,-justice, hear my call!-

And thorough all the land in deadly wise

Shall scatter venom, to exude again

In pestilence on men.

What cry avails me now, what deed of blood,  
 Unto this land what dark despite?

Alack, alack, forlorn

Are we, a bitter injury have borne!

Alack, O sisters, O dishonoured brood

Of mother Night!

**ATHENA**

Dishonoured are ye not; turn not, I pray,  
 As goddesses your swelling wrath on men,  
 Nor make the friendly earth spiteful to them.  
 I too have Zeus for champion-'tis enough-  
 I only of all goddesses do know  
 To ope the chamber where his thunderbolts  
 Lie stored and sealed; but here is no such need.  
 Nay, be appeased, nor cast upon the ground  
 The malice of thy tongue, to blast the world;  
 Calm thou thy bitter wrath's black inward surge,  
 For high shall be thine honour, set beside me  
 For ever in this land, whose fertile lap  
 Shall pour its teeming firstfruits unto you,  
 Gifts for fair childbirth and for wedlock's crown:  
 Thus honoured, praise my spoken pledge for aye.

**CHORUS** (chanting)

I, I dishonoured in this earth to dwell,-  
 Ancient of days and wisdom! I breathe forth  
 Poison and breath of frenzied ire. O Earth,

Woe, woe for thee, for me!

From side to side what pains be these that thrill?

Hearken, O mother Night, my wrath, mine agony!

Whom from mine ancient rights the gods have thrust

And brought me to the dust-

Woe, woe is me!-with craft invincible.

**ATHENA**

Older art thou than I, and I will bear

With this thy fury. Know, although thou be

More wise in ancient wisdom, yet have  
 From Zeus no scant measure of the same,  
 Wherefore take heed unto this prophecy-  
 If to another land of alien men  
 Ye go, too late shall ye feel longing dreep  
 For mine. The rolling tides of time bring round  
 A day of brighter glory for this town;  
 And thou, enshrined in honour by the halls  
 Where dwelt Erechtheus, shalt a worship win  
 From men and from the train of womankind,  
 Greater than any tribe elsewhere shall pay.  
 Cast thou not therefore on this soil of mine  
 Whetstones that sharpen souls to bloodshedding,  
 The burning goads of youthful hearts, made hot  
 With frenzy of the spirit, not of wine.  
 Nor pluck as 'twere the heart from cocks that strive,  
 To set it in the breast of citizens  
 Of mine, a war-god's spirit, keen for fight,  
 Made stern against their country and their kin.  
 The man who grievously doth lust for fame,  
 War, full, immitigable, let him wage  
 Against the stranger; but of kindred birds  
 I hold the challenge hateful. Such the boon  
 I proffer thee-within this land of lands,  
 Most loved of gods, with me to show and share  
 Fair mercy, gratitude and grace as fair.

**CHORUS** (chanting)

I, I dishonoured in this earth to dwell,-  
 Ancient of days and wisdom! I breathe forth  
 Poison and breath of frenzied ire. O Earth,  
 Woe, woe for thee, for me!  
 From side to side what pains be these that thrill?  
 Harken, O mother Night, my wrath, mine agony!  
 Whom from mine ancient rights the gods have thrust  
 And brought me to the dust-  
 Woe, woe is me!-with craft invincible.

**ATHENA**

I will not weary of soft words to thee,  
 That never mayst thou say, Behold me spurned,  
 An elder by a younger deity,  
 And from this land rejected and forlorn,  
 Unhonoured by the men who dwell therein.  
 But, if Persuasion's grace be sacred to thee,  
 Soft in the soothing accents of my tongue,  
 Tarry, I Dray thee, yet, if go thou wilt.  
 Not rightfully wilt thou on this my town  
 Sway down the scale that beareth wrath and teen  
 Or wasting plague uport this folk. 'Tis thine,  
 If so thou wilt, inheritress to be  
 Of this my land, its utmost grace to win.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS**

O queen, what refuge dost thou promise me?

**ATHENA**

Refuge untouched by bale: take thou my boon.

**LEADER**

What, if I take it, shall mine honour be?

**ATHENA**

No house shall prosper without grace of thine.

**LEADER**

Canst thou achieve and grant such power to me?

**ATHENA**

Yea, for my hand shall bless thy worshippers.

**LEADER**

And wilt thou pledge me this for time eterne?

**ATHENA**

Yea: none can bid me pledge beyond my power.

**LEADER**

Lo, I desist from wrath, appeased by thee.

**ATHENA**

Then in the land's heart shalt thou win thee friends.

**LEADER**

What chant dost bid me raise, to greet the land?

**ATHENA**

Such as aspires towards a victory  
 Unrued by any: chants from breast of earth,  
 From wave, from sky; and let the wild winds' breath  
 Pass with soft sunlight o'er the lap of land,-  
 Strong wax the fruits of earth, fair teem the kine,  
 Unfailing, for my town's prosperity,  
 And constant be the growth of mortal seed.  
 But more and more root out the impious,  
 For as a gardener fosters what he sows,  
 So foster I this race, whom righteousness  
 Doth fend from sorrow. Such the proffered boon.  
 But I, if wars must be, and their loud clash  
 And carnage, for my town, will ne'er endure  
 That aught but victory shall crown her fame.

**CHORUS** (chanting)

Lo, I accept it; at her very side

Doth Pallas bid me dwell:

I will not wrong the city of her pride,  
 Which even Almighty Zeus and Ares hold  
 Heaven's earthly citadel,  
 Loved home of Grecian gods, the young, the old,  
 The sanctuary divine,  
 The shield of every shrine!

For Athens I say forth a gracious prophecy,-  
 The glory of the sunlight and the skies  
 Shall bid from earth arise

Warm wavelets of new life and glad prosperity.

**ATHENA** (chanting)

Behold, with gracious heart well pleased

I for my citizens do grant

Fulfilment of this covenant:

And here, their wrath at length appeased,

These mighty deities shall stay.

For theirs it is by right to sway

The lot that rules our mortal day,

And he who hath not inly felt  
Their stern decree, ere long on him,  
Not knowing why and whence, the grim  
Life-crushing blow is dealt.

The father's sin upon the child  
Descends, and sin is silent death,  
And leads him on the downward path,  
By stealth beguiled,

Unto the Furies: though his state  
On earth were high, and loud his boast,  
Victim of silent ire and hate  
He dwells among the Lost.

**CHORUS** (chanting)

To my blessing now give ear.-  
Scorching blight nor singed air  
Never blast thine olives fair!  
Drouth, that wasteth bud and plant,  
Keep to thine own place. Avaunt,  
Famine fell, and come not hither  
Stealthily to waste and wither!  
Let the land, in season due,  
Twice her waxing fruits renew;  
Teem the kine in double measure;  
Rich in new god-given treasure;  
Here let men the powers adore  
For sudden gifts unhop'd before!

**ATHENA** (chanting)

O hearken, warders of the wall  
That guards mine Athens, what a dower  
Is unto her ordained and given!  
For mighty is the Furies' power,  
And deep-revered in courts of heaven  
And realms of hell; and clear to all  
They weave thy doom, mortality!  
And some in joy and peace shall sing;  
But unto other some they bring  
Sad life and tear-dimmed eye.

**CHORUS** (chanting)

And far away I ban thee and remove,  
Untimely death of youths too soon brought low!  
And to each maid, O gods, when time is come for  
love,  
Grant ye a warrior's heart, a wedded life to know.  
Ye too, O Fates, children of mother Night,  
Whose children too are we, O goddesses  
Of just award, of all by sacred right  
Queens, who in time and in eternity  
Do rule, a present power for righteousness,  
Honoured beyond all Gods, hear ye and grant my  
cry!

**ATHENA** (chanting)

And I too, I with joy am fain,  
Hearing your voice this gift ordain  
Unto my land. High thanks be thine,

Persuasion, who with eyes divine  
Into my tongue didst look thy strength,  
To bend and to appease at length

Those who would not be comforted.  
Zeus, king of parley, doth prevail,  
And ye and I will strive nor fail,  
That good may stand in evil's stead,  
And lasting bliss for bale.

**CHORUS** (chanting)

And nevermore these walls within  
Shall echo fierce sedition's din,  
Unslaked with blood and crime;  
The thirsty dust shall nevermore  
Suck up the darkly streaming gore  
Of civic broils, shed out in wrath  
And vengeance, crying death for death!  
But man with man and state with state  
Shall vow The pledge of common hate  
And common friendship, that for man  
Hath oft made blessing, out of ban,  
Be ours unto all time.

**ATHENA** (chanting)

Skill they, or not, the path to find  
Of favouring speech and presage kind?  
Yea, even from these, who, grim and stern,  
Glared anger upon you of old,  
O citizens, ye now shall earn  
A recompense right manifold.  
Deck them aright, extol them high,  
Be loyal to their loyalty,  
And ye shall make your town and land  
Sure, propped on justice' saving hand,  
And Fame's eternity.

**CHORUS** (chanting)

Hail ye, all hail! and yet again, all hail,  
O Athens, happy in a weal secured!  
O ye who sit by Zeus' right hand, nor fail  
Of wisdom set among you and assured,  
Loved of the well-loved Goddess-Maid! the King  
Of gods doth reverence you, beneath her guarding  
wing.

**ATHENA** (chanting)

All hail unto each honoured guest!  
Whom to the chambers of your rest  
'Tis mine to lead, and to provide  
The hallowed torch, the guard and guide.  
Pass down, the while these altars glow  
With sacred fire, to earth below  
And your appointed shrine.  
There dwelling, from the land restrain  
The force of fate, the breath of bane,  
But waft on us the gift and gain  
Of Victory divine!  
And ye, the men of Cranaos' seed,

**THE END**

I bid you now with reverence lead  
 These alien Powers that thus are made  
 Athenian evermore. To you  
 Fair be their will henceforth, to do  
 Whate'er may bless and aid!

**CHORUS** (chanting)

Hail to you all! hail yet again,  
 All who love Athens, gods and men,  
 Adoring her as Pallas' home!  
 And while ye reverence what ye grant-  
 My sacred shrine and hidden haunt-  
 Blameless and blissful be your doom!

**ATHENA**

Once more I praise the promise of your vows,  
 And now I bid the golden torches' glow  
 Pass down before you to the hidden depth  
 Of earth, by mine own sacred servants borne,  
 My loyal guards of statue and of shrine.  
 Come forth, O flower of Attic land,  
 O glorious band of children and of wives,  
 And ye, O train of matrons crowned with eld!  
 Deck you with festal robes of scarlet dye  
 In honour of this day: O gleaming torch,  
 Lead onward, that these gracious powers of earth  
 Henceforth be seen to bless the life of men.

(**ATHENA** leads the procession downwards into the  
 Cave of the **FURIES**, now Eumenides, under the  
 Areopagus: as they go, the escort of women and  
 children chant aloud)

**CHANT**

With loyalty we lead you; proudly go,  
 Night's childless children, to your home below!  
 (O citizens, awhile from words forbear!)  
 To darkness' deep primeval lair,  
 Far in Earth's bosom, downward fare,  
 Adored with prayer and sacrifice.  
 (O citizens, forbear your cries!)  
 Pass hitherward, ye powers of Dread,  
 With all your former wrath allayed,  
 Into the heart of this loved land;  
 With joy unto your temple wend,  
 The while upon your steps attend  
 The flames that feed upon the brand-  
 (Now, now ring out your chant, your joy's acclaim!)  
 Behind them, as they downward fare,  
 Let holy hands libations bear,  
 And torches' sacred flame.  
 All-seeing Zeus and Fate come down  
 To battle fair for Pallas' town!  
 Ring out your chant, ring out your joy's acclaim!

**PROMETHEUS**  
 by Aeschylus  
 460

Prometheus Bound  
 460 BC

**DRAMATIS PERSONÆ**

KRATOS (POWER)  
 BIA (FORCE)  
 HEPHAESTUS  
 PROMETHEUS  
 CHORUS OF THE OCEANIDES  
 OCEANUS  
 IO  
 HERMES

**ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ ΔΕΣΜΩΤΗΣ**

*(Scene. Mountainous country, and in the middle of a deep gorge a Rock, towards which KRATOS and BIA carry the gigantic form OF PROMETHEUS. HEPHAESTUS follows dejectedly with hammer, nails, chains, etc.)*

**KRATOS**

Now have we journeyed to a spot of earth  
 Remote--the Scythian wild, a waste untrod.  
 And now, Hephaestus, thou must execute  
 The task our father laid on thee, and fetter  
 This malefactor to the jagged rocks  
 In adamantine bonds infrangible;  
 For thine own blossom of all forging fire  
 He stole and gave to mortals; trespass grave  
 For which the Gods have called him to account,  
 That he may learn to bear Zeus' tyranny  
 And cease to play the lover of mankind.

**HEPHAESTUS**

Kratos and Bia, for ye twain the hest  
 Of Zeus is done with; nothing lets you further.  
 But forcibly to bind a brother God,  
 In chains, in this deep chasm raked by all storms  
 I have not courage; yet needs must I pluck  
 Courage from manifest necessity,  
 For woe worth him that slights the Father's word.  
 O high-souled son of them is sage in counsel,  
 With heavy heart I must make thy heart heavy,  
 In bonds of brass not easy to be loosed,  
 Nailing thee to this crag where no wight dwells,  
 Nor sound of human voice nor shape of man  
 Shall visit thee; but the sun-blaze shall roast  
 Thy flesh; thy hue, flower-fair, shall suffer change;

Welcome will Night be when with spangled robe  
 She hides the light of day; welcome the sun  
 Returning to disperse the frosts of dawn.  
 And every hour shall bring its weight of woe  
 To wear thy heart away; for yet unborn  
 Is he who shall release thee from thy pain.  
 This is thy wage for loving humankind.  
 For, being a God, thou dared'st the Gods' ill will,  
 Preferring, to exceeding honour, Man.  
 Wherefore thy long watch shall be comfortless,  
 Stretched on this rock, never to close an eye  
 Or bend a knee; and vainly shalt thou lift,  
 With groanings deep and lamentable cries,  
 Thy voice; for Zeus is hard to be entreated,  
 As new-born power is ever pitiless.

**KRATOS**

Enough! Why palter? Why wast idle pity?  
 Why don't you hate a God who's the Gods' foe?  
 Traitor to man of thy prerogative?

**HEPHAESTUS**

Kindred and fellowship are dreaded names.

**KRATOS**

Questionless; but to slight the Father's word--  
 How sayest thou? Is not this fraught with more dread?

**HEPHAESTUS**

Thy heart was ever hard and overbold.

**KRATOS**

But wailing will not ease him! Waste no pains  
 Where thy endeavour nothing profiteth.

**HEPHAESTUS**

Oh execrable work! I handicraft!

**KRATOS**

Why curse thy trade? For what thou hast to do,  
 Truth, smithcraft is in no wise answerable.

**HEPHAESTUS**

Would that it were another's craft, not mine!

**KRATOS**

Why, all things are a burden save to rule  
Over the Gods; for none is free but Zeus.

**HEPHAESTUS**

To that I answer not, knowing it true.

**KRATOS**

Why, then, make haste to cast the chains about him,  
Lest glancing down on thee the Father's eye  
Behold a laggard and a loiterer.

**HEPHAESTUS**

Here are the iron bracelets for his arms.

**KRATOS**

Fasten them round his arms with all thy strength!  
Strike with thy hammer! Nail him to the rocks!

**HEPHAESTUS**

'Tis done! and would that it were done less well!

**KRATOS**

Harder-I say-strike harder-screw all tight  
And be not in the least particular  
Remiss, for unto one of his resource  
Bars are but instruments of liberty.

**HEPHAESTUS**

This forearm's fast: a shackle hard to shift.

**KRATOS**

Now buckle this! and handsomely! Let him learn  
Sharp though he be, he's a dull blade to Zeus.

**HEPHAESTUS**

None can find fault with this: -save him it tortures.

**KRATOS**

Now take thine iron spike and drive it in,  
Until it gnaw clean through the rebel's breast.

**HEPHAESTUS**

Woe's me, Prometheus, for thy weight of woe!

**KRATOS**

Still shirking? still a-groaning for the foes  
Of Zeus? Anon thou'lt wail thine own mishap.

**HEPHAESTUS**

Thou seest what eyes scarce bear to look upon!

**KRATOS**

I see this fellow getting his deserts!  
But strap him with a gelt about his ribs.

**HEPHAESTUS**

I do what I must do: for thee-less words!

**KRATOS**

"Words," quotha? Aye, and shout 'em if need be.  
Come down and cast a ring-bolt round his legs.

**HEPHAESTUS**

The thing is featly done; and 'twas quick work.

**KRATOS**

Now with a sound rap knock the bolt-pins home!  
For heavy-handed is thy task-master.

**HEPHAESTUS**

So villainous a form vile tongue befits.

**KRATOS**

Be thou the heart of wax, but chide not me  
That I am gruffish, stubborn and stiff-willed.

**HEPHAESTUS**

Oh, come away! The tackle holds him fast.

**KRATOS**

Now, where thou hang'st insult Plunder the Gods  
For creatures of a day! To thee what gift  
Will mortals tender to requite thy pains?  
The destinies were out miscalling the  
Designer: a designer thou wilt need  
From trap so well contrived to twist thee free.

*(Exeunt.)***PROMETHEUS.**

O divine air Breezes on swift bird-wings,  
Ye river fountains, and of ocean-waves  
The multitudinous laughter Mother Earth!  
And thou all-seeing circle of the sun,  
Behold what I, a God, from Gods endure!  
Look down upon my shame,  
The cruel wrong that racks my frame,  
The grinding anguish that shall waste my strength,  
Till time's ten thousand years have measured out their  
length!

He hath devised these chains,  
The new throned potentate who reigns,  
Chief of the chieftains of the Blest. Ah me!  
The woe which is and that which yet shall be  
I wail; and question make of these wide skies  
When shall the star of my deliverance rise.

And yet-and yet-exactly I foresee  
All that shall come to pass; no sharp surprise  
Of pain shall overtake me; what's determined  
Bear, as I can, I must, knowing the might  
Of strong Necessity is unconquerable.

But touching my fate silence and speech alike  
Are unsupportable. For boons bestowed  
On mortal men I am straitened in these bonds.

I sought the fount of fire in hollow reed  
Hid privily, a measureless resource  
For man, and mighty teacher of all arts.  
This is the crime that I must expiate  
Hung here in chains, nailed 'neath the open sky. Ha!  
Ha!

What echo, what odour floats by with no sound?  
God-wafted or mortal or mingled its strain?  
Comes there one to this world's end, this mountain-girt  
ground,

To have sight of my torment? Or of what is he fain?  
A God ye behold in bondage and pain,  
The foe of Zeus and one at feud with all  
The deities that find

Submissive entry to the tyrant's hall;  
 His fault, too great a love of humankind.  
 Ah me! Ah me! what wafture nigh at hand,  
 As of great birds of prey, is this I hear?  
 The bright air fanned  
 Whistles and shrills with rapid beat of wings.  
 There cometh nought but to my spirit brings  
 Horror and fear.

*(The DAUGHTERS OF OCEANUS draw near in mid-air in their winged chariot.)*

**CHORUS**

Put thou all fear away!  
 In kindness cometh this array  
 On wings of speed to mountain lone,  
 Our sire's consent not lightly won.  
 But a fresh breeze our convoy brought,  
 For loud the din of iron raught  
 Even to our sea-cave's cold recess,  
 And scared away the meek-eyed bashfulness.  
 I tarried not to tic my sandal shoe  
 But haste, post haste, through air my winged chariot  
 flew.

**PROMETHEUS**

Ah me! Ah me!  
 Fair progeny  
 That many-childed Tethys brought to birth,  
 Fathered of Ocean old  
 Whose sleepless stream is rolled  
 Round the vast shores of earth  
 Look on me! Look upon these chains  
 Wherein I hang fast held  
 On rocks high-pinnacled,  
 My dungeon and my tower of dole,  
 Where o'er the abyss my soul,  
 Sad warder, her unwearied watch sustains!

**CHORUS**

Prometheus, I am gazing on thee now!  
 With the cold breath of fear upon my brow,  
 Not without mist of dimming tears,  
 While to my sight thy giant stature rears  
 Its bulk forpined upon these savage rocks  
 In shameful bonds the linked adamant locks.  
 For now new steersmen take the helm  
 Olympian; now with little thought  
 Of right, on strange, new laws Zeus stablisheth his  
 realm,  
 Bringing the mighty ones of old to naught.

**PROMETHEUS**

Oh that he had conveyed me  
 'Neath earth, 'neath hell that swalloweth up the dead;  
 In Tartarus, illimitably vast  
 With adamantine fetters bound me fast-

There his fierce anger on me visited,  
 Where never mocking laughter could upbraid me  
 Of God or aught beside!  
 But now a wretch enskied,  
 A far-seen vane,  
 All they that hate me triumph in my pain.

**CHORUS**

Who of the Gods is there so pitiless  
 That he can triumph in thy sore distress?  
 Who doth not inly groan  
 With every pang of thine save Zeus alone?  
 But he is ever wroth, not to be bent  
 From his resolved intent  
 The sons of heaven to subjugate;  
 Nor shall he cease until his heart be satiate,  
 Or one a way devise  
 To hurl him from the throne where he doth monarchize.

**PROMETHEUS**

Yea, of a surety--though he do me wrong,  
 Loading my limbs with fetters strong--  
 The president  
 Of heaven's high parliament  
 Shall need me yet to show  
 What new conspiracy with privy blow  
 Attempts his sceptre and his kingly seat.  
 Neither shall words with all persuasion sweet,  
 Not though his tongue drop honey, cheat  
 Nor charm my knowledge from me; nor duress  
 Of menace dire, fear of more grievous pains,  
 Unseal my lips, till he have loosed these chains,  
 And granted for these injuries redress.

**CHORUS**

High is the heart of thee,  
 Thy will no whit by bitter woes unstrung,  
 And all too free  
 The licence of thy bold, unshackled tongue.  
 But fear hath roused my soul with piercing cry!  
 And for thy fate my heart misgives me! I  
 Tremble to know when through the breakers' roar  
 Thy keel shall touch again the friendly shore;  
 For not by prayer to Zeus is access won;  
 An unpersuadable heart hath Cronos' son.

**PROMETHEUS**

I know the heart of Zeus is hard, that he hath tied  
 Justice to his side;  
 But he shall be full gentle thus assuaged;  
 And, the implacable wrath wherewith he raged  
 Smoothed quite away, nor he nor I  
 Be loth to seal a bond of peace and amity.

**CHORUS**

All that thou hast to tell I pray unfold,  
 That we may hear at large upon what count  
 Zeus took thee and with bitter wrong affronts:  
 Instruct us, if the telling hurt thee not.

**PROMETHEUS**

These things are sorrowful for me to speak,  
 Yet silence too is sorrow: all ways woe!  
 When first the Blessed Ones were filled with wrath  
 And there arose division in their midst,  
 These instant to hurl Cronos from his throne  
 That Zeus might be their king, and these, adverse,  
 Contending that he ne'er should rule the Gods,  
 Then I, wise counsel urging to persuade  
 The Titans, sons of Ouranos and Chthon,  
 Prevailed not: but, all indirect essays  
 Despising, they by the strong hand, effortless,  
 Yet by main force-supposed that they might seize  
 Supremacy. But me my mother Themis  
 And Gaia, one form called by many names,  
 Not once alone with voice oracular  
 Had prophesied how power should be disposed-  
 That not by strength neither by violence  
 The mighty should be mastered, but by guile.  
 Which things by me set forth at large, they scorned,  
 Nor graced my motion with the least regard.  
 Then, of all ways that offered, I judged best,  
 Taking my mother with me, to support,  
 No backward friend, the not less cordial Zeus.  
 And by my politic counsel Tartarus,  
 The bottomless and black, old Cronos hides  
 With his confederates. So helped by me,  
 The tyrant of the Gods, such service rendered  
 With ignominious chastisement requites.  
 But 'tis a common malady of power  
 Tyrannical never to trust a friend.  
 And now, what ye inquired, for what arraigned  
 He shamefully entreats me, ye shall know.  
 When first upon his high, paternal throne  
 He took his seat, forthwith to divers Gods  
 Divers good gifts he gave, and parcelled out  
 His empire, but of miserable men  
 Recked not at all; rather it was his wish  
 To wipe out man and rear another race:  
 And these designs none contravened but me.  
 I risked the bold attempt, and saved mankind  
 From stark destruction and the road to hell.  
 Therefore with this sore penance am I bowed,  
 Grievous to suffer, pitiful to see.  
 But, for compassion shown to man, such fate  
 I no wise earned; rather in wrath's despite  
 Am I to be reformed, and made a show  
 Of infamy to Zeus.

**CHORUS**

He hath a heart  
 Of iron, hewn out of unfeeling rock  
 Is he, Prometheus, whom thy sufferings  
 Rouse not to wrath. Would I had ne'er beheld them,  
 For verily the sight hath wrung my heart.

**PROMETHEUS**

Yea, to my friends a woeful sight am I.

**CHORUS**

Hast not more boldly in aught else transgressed?

**PROMETHEUS**

I took from man expectancy of death.

**CHORUS**

What medicine found'st thou for this malady?

**PROMETHEUS**

I planted blind hope in the heart of him.

**CHORUS**

A mighty boon thou gavest there to man.

**PROMETHEUS**

Moreover, I conferred the gift of fire.

**CHORUS**

And have frail mortals now the flame-bright fire?

**PROMETHEUS**

Yea, and shall master many arts thereby.

**CHORUS**

And Zeus with such misfeasance charging thee-

**PROMETHEUS**

Torments me with extremity of woe.

**CHORUS**

And is no end in prospect of thy pains?

**PROMETHEUS**

None; save when he shall choose to make an end.

**CHORUS**

How should he choose? What hope is thine? Dost Thou  
 not see that thou hast erred? But how thou Erredst  
 small pleasure were to me to tell; to the  
 Exceeding sorrow. Let it go then: rather  
 Seek thou for some deliverance from thy woes.

**PROMETHEUS**

He who stands free with an untrammelled foot  
 Is quick to counsel and exhort a friend

In trouble. But all these things I know well.

Of my free will, my own free will, I erred,

And freely do I here acknowledge it.

Freeing mankind myself have durance found.

Natheless, I looked not for sentence so dread,

High on this precipice to droop and pine,

Having no neighbour but the desolate crags.

And now lament no more the ills I suffer,

But come to earth and an attentive ear

Lend to the things that shall befall hereafter.

Harken, oh harken, suffer as I suffer!

Who knows, who knows, but on some scatheless head,

Another's yet for the like woes reserved,

The wandering doom will presently alight?

**CHORUS**

Prometheus, we have heard thy call:

Not on deaf cars these awful accents fall.

Lo! lightly leaving at thy words

My flying car

And holy air, the pathway of great birds,  
I long to tread this land of peak and scar,  
And certify myself by tidings sure  
Of all thou hast endured and must endure.

*(While the winged chariot of the OCEANIDES comes to ground their father OCEANUS enters, riding on a griffin.)*

**OCEANUS**

Now have I traversed the unending plain  
And unto thee, Prometheus, am I come,  
Guiding this winged monster with no rein,  
Nor any bit, but mind's firm masterdom.  
And know that for thy grief my heart is sore;  
The bond of kind, methinks, constraineth me;  
Nor is there any I would honour more,  
Apart from kinship, than I reverence thee.  
And thou shalt learn that I speak verity:  
Mine is no smooth, false tongue; for do but show  
How I can serve thee, grieved and outraged thus,  
Thou ne'er shalt say thou hast, come weal, come  
[woe,  
A friend more faithful than Oceanus.

**PROMETHEUS**

How now? Who greets me? What! Art thou too  
[come  
To gaze upon my woes? How could'st thou leave  
The stream that bears thy name, thine antres arched  
With native rock, to visit earth that breeds  
The massy iron in her womb? Com'st thou  
To be spectator of my evil lot  
And fellow sympathizer with my woes?  
Behold, a thing indeed to gaze upon  
The friend of Zeus, co-stablisher of his rule,  
See, by this sentence with what pains I am bowed I

**OCEANUS**

Prometheus, all too plainly I behold:  
And for the best would counsel thee: albeit  
Thy brain is subtle. Learn to know thyself,  
And, as the times, so let thy manners change,  
For by the law of change a new God rules.  
But, if these bitter, savage, sharp-set words  
Thou ventest, it may be, though he sit throned  
Far off and high above thee, Zeus will hear;  
And then thy present multitude of ills  
Will seem the mild correction of a babe.  
Rather, O thou much chastened one, refrain  
Thine anger, and from suffering seek release.  
Stale, peradventure, seem these words of mine:  
Nevertheless, of a too haughty tongue  
Such punishment, Prometheus, is the wage.  
But thou, not yet brought low by suffering,  
To what thou hast of ill would'st add far worse.

Therefore, while thou hast me for schoolmaster,  
Thou shalt not kick against the pricks; the more  
That an arch-despot who no audit dreads  
Rules by his own rough will. And now I leave thee,  
To strive with what success I may command  
For thy deliv'rance. Keep a quiet mind  
And use not over-vehemence of speech-  
Knowest thou not, being exceeding wise,  
A wanton, idle tongue brings chastisement?

**PROMETHEUS**

I marvel that thou art not in my case,  
Seeing with me thou did'st adventure all.  
And now, I do entreat thee, spare thyself.  
Thou wilt not move him: he's not easy moved  
Take heed lest thou find trouble by the way.

**OCEANUS**

Thou are a better counsellor to others  
Than to thyself: I judge by deeds not words.  
Pluck me not back when I would fain set forth.  
My oath upon it, Zeus will grant my prayer  
And free thee from these pangs.

**PROMETHEUS**

I tender thee much thanks,  
For this my thanks and ever-during praise.  
Certes, no backward friend art thou; and yet  
Trouble not thyself; for at the best thy labour  
Will nothing serve me, if thou mean'st to serve.  
Being thyself untrammelled stand fast.  
For, not to mitigate my own mischance,  
Would I see others hap on evil days.  
The thought be far from me. I feel the weight  
Of Atlas' woes, my brother in the west  
Shouldering the pillar that props heaven and earth,  
No wieldy fardel for his arms to fold.  
The giant dweller in Cilician dens  
I saw and pitied-a terrific shape,  
A hundred-headed monster-when he fell,  
Resistless Typhon who withstood the Gods,  
With fearsome hiss of beak-mouth horrible,  
While lightning from his eyes with Gorgon-glare  
Flashed for the ravage of the realm of Zeus.  
But on him came the bolt that never sleeps,  
Down-crashing thunder, with emitted fire,  
Which shattered him and all his towering hopes  
Dashed into ruin; smitten through the breast,  
His strength as smoking cinder, lightning-charred.  
And now a heap, a helpless, sprawling hulk,  
He lies stretched out beside the narrow seas,  
Pounded and crushed deep under Etna's roots.  
But on the mountain-top Hephaestus sits  
Forging the molten iron, whence shall burst  
Rivers of fire, with red and ravening jaws  
To waste fair-fruited, smooth, Sicilian fields.  
Such bilious up-boiling of his ire

Shall Typho vent, with slingstone-showers red-hot,  
 And unapproachable surge of fiery spray,  
 Although combusted by the bolt of Zeus.  
 But thou art not unlearned, nor needest me  
 To be thy teacher: save thyself the way  
 Thou knowest and I will fortify my heart  
 Until the wrathfulness of Zeus abate.

**OCEANUS**

Nay then, Prometheus, art thou ignorant  
 Words are physicians to a wrath-sick soul?

**PROMETHEUS**

Yes, if with skill one soften the ripe core,  
 Not by rough measures make it obdurate.

**OCEANUS**

Seest thou in warm affection detriment  
 Or aught untoward in adventuring?

**PROMETHEUS**

A load of toil and a light mind withal.

**OCEANUS**

Then give me leave to call that sickness mine.  
 Wise men accounted fools attain their ends.

**PROMETHEUS**

But how if I am galled by thine offence?

**OCEANUS**

There very palpably thou thrustest home.

**PROMETHEUS**

Beware lest thou through pity come to broils.

**OCEANUS**

With one established in Omnipotence?

**PROMETHEUS**

Of him take heed lest thou find heaviness.

**OCEANUS**

I am schooled by thy calamity, Prometheus!

**PROMETHEUS**

Pack then! And, prithee, do not change thy mind!

**OCEANUS**

Thou criest "On" to one in haste to go.  
 For look, my dragon with impatient wings  
 Flaps at the broad, smooth road of level air.  
 Fain would he kneel him down in his own stall.

Exit **OCEANUS**.

**CHORUS** (after alighting)

I mourn for thee, Prometheus,  
 minished and brought low,  
 Watering my virgin cheeks with these sad drops, that  
 flow  
 From sorrow's rainy fount, to fill soft-lidded eyes  
 With pure libations for thy fortune's obsequies.  
 An evil portion that none coveteth hath Zeus  
 Prepared for thee; by self-made laws established for his  
 use  
 Disposing all, the elder Gods he purposeth to show

How strong is that right arm wherewith he smites a foe.  
 There hath gone up a cry from earth, a groaning for the  
 fall

Of things of old renown and shapes majestic,  
 And for thy passing an exceeding bitter groan;  
 For thee and for thy brother Gods whose honour was  
 thine own:

These things all they who dwell in Asia's holy seat,  
 Time's minions, mourn and with their groans thy  
 groans repeat.

Yea, and they mourn who dwell beside the Colchian  
 shore,

The hero maids unwedded that delight in war,  
 And Scythia's swarming myriads who their dwelling  
 make

Around the borders of the world, the salt Maeotian  
 lake.

Mourns Ares' stock, that flowers in desert Araby,  
 And the strong city mourns, the hill-fort planted high,  
 Near neighbour to huge Caucasus, dread mountaineers  
 That love the clash of arms, the counter of sharp spears.  
 Beforetime of all Gods one have I seen in pain,  
 One only Titan bound with adamantine chain,  
 Atlas in strength supreme, who groaning stoops,  
 downbent

Under the burthen of the earth and heaven's broad  
 firmament.

Bellows the main of waters, surge with foam-seethed  
 surge

Clashing tumultuous; for thee the deep seas chant their  
 dirge;

And Hell's dark under-world a hollow moaning fills;  
 Thee mourn the sacred streams with all their  
 fountain-rills.

**PROMETHEUS**

Think not that I for pride and stubbornness  
 Am silent: rather is my heart the prey  
 Of gnawing thoughts, both for the past, and now  
 Seeing myself by vengeance buffeted.  
 For to these younger Gods their precedence  
 Who severally determined if not I?  
 No more of that: I should but weary you  
 With things ye know; but listen to the tale  
 Of human sufferings, and how at first  
 Senseless as beasts I gave men sense, possessed them  
 Of mind. I speak not in contempt of man;  
 I do but tell of good gifts I conferred.  
 In the beginning, seeing they saw amiss,  
 And hearing heard not, but, like phantoms huddled  
 In dreams, the perplexed story of their days  
 Confounded; knowing neither timber-work  
 Nor brick-built dwellings basking in the light,  
 But dug for themselves holes, wherein like ants,  
 That hardly may contend against a breath,

They dwelt in burrows of their unsunned caves.  
 Neither of winter's cold had they fixed sign,  
 Nor of the spring when she comes decked with flowers,  
 Nor yet of summer's heat with melting fruits  
 Sure token: but utterly without knowledge  
 Moiled, until I the rising of the stars  
 Showed them, and when they set, though much  
 obscure.

Moreover, number, the most excellent  
 Of all inventions, I for them devised,  
 And gave them writing that retaineth all,  
 The serviceable mother of the Muse.  
 I was the first that yoked unmanaged beasts,  
 To serve as slaves with collar and with pack,  
 And take upon themselves, to man's relief,  
 The heaviest labour of his hands: and  
 Tamed to the rein and drove in wheeled cars  
 The horse, of sumptuous pride the ornament.  
 And those sea-wanderers with the wings of cloth,  
 The shipman's waggons, none but I contrived.  
 These manifold inventions for mankind  
 I perfected, who, out upon't, have none-  
 No, not one shift-to rid me of this shame.

**CHORUS**

Thy sufferings have been shameful, and thy mind  
 Strays at a loss: like to a bad physician  
 Fallen sick, thou'rt out of heart: nor cans't prescribe  
 For thine own case the draught to make thee sound.

**PROMETHEUS**

But hear the sequel and the more admire  
 What arts, what aids I cleverly evolved.  
 The chiefest that, if any man fell sick,  
 There was no help for him, comestible,  
 Lotion or potion; but for lack of drugs  
 They dwindled quite away; until I taught them  
 To compound draughts and mixtures sanative,  
 Wherewith they now are armed against disease.  
 I staked the winding path of divination  
 And was the first distinguisher of dreams,  
 The true from false; and voices ominous  
 Of meaning dark interpreted; and tokens  
 Seen when men take the road; and augury  
 By flight of all the greater crook-clawed birds  
 With nice discrimination I defined;  
 These by their nature fair and favourable,  
 Those, flattered with fair name. And of each sort  
 The habits I described; their mutual feuds  
 And friendships and the assemblages they hold.  
 And of the plumpness of the inward parts  
 What colour is acceptable to the Gods,  
 The well-streaked liver-lobe and gall-bladder.  
 Also by roasting limbs well wrapped in fat  
 And the long chine, I led men on the road  
 Of dark and riddling knowledge; and I purged

The glancing eye of fire, dim before,  
 And made its meaning plain. These are my works.  
 Then, things beneath the earth, aids hid from man,  
 Brass, iron, silver, gold, who dares to say  
 He was before me in discovering?  
 None, I wot well, unless he loves to babble.  
 And in a single word to sum the whole-  
 All manner of arts men from Prometheus learned.

**CHORUS**

Shoot not beyond the mark in succouring man  
 While thou thyself art comfortless: for  
 Am of good hope that from these bonds escaped  
 Thou shalt one day be mightier than Zeus.

**PROMETHEUS**

Fate, that brinks all things to an end, not thus  
 Apportioneth my lot: ten thousand pangs  
 Must bow, ten thousand miseries afflict me  
 Ere from these bonds I freedom find, for Art  
 Is by much weaker than Necessity.

**CHORUS**

Who is the pilot of Necessity?

**PROMETHEUS**

The Fates triform, and the unforgetting Furies.

**CHORUS**

So then Zeus is of lesser might than these?

**PROMETHEUS**

Surely he shall not shun the lot apportioned.

**CHORUS**

What lot for Zeus save world-without-end reign?

**PROMETHEUS**

Tax me no further with importunate questions.

**CHORUS**

O deep the mystery thou shroudest there

**PROMETHEUS**

Of aught but this freely thou may'st discourse;  
 But touching this I charge thee speak no word;  
 Nay, veil it utterly: for strictly kept  
 The secret from these bonds shall set me free.

**CHORUS**

May Zeus who all things swayeth  
 Ne'er wreak the might none stayeth  
 On wayward will of mine;  
 May I stint not nor waver  
 With offerings of sweet savour  
 And feasts of slaughtered kine;  
 The holy to the holy,  
 With frequent feet and lowly  
 At altar, fane and shrine,  
 Over the Ocean marches,  
 The deep that no drought parches,  
 Draw near to the divine.  
 My tongue the Gods estrange not;  
 My firm set purpose change not,  
 As wax melts in fire-shine.

Sweet is the life that lengthens,  
 While joyous hope still strengthens,  
 And glad, bright thoughts sustain;  
 But shuddering I behold thee,  
 The sorrows that enfold thee  
 And all thine endless pain.  
 For Zeus thou hast despised;  
 Thy fearless heart misprized  
 All that his vengeance can,  
 Thy wayward will obeying,  
 Excess of honour paying,  
 Prometheus, unto man.  
 And, oh, beloved, for this graceless grace  
 What thanks? What prowess for thy bold essay  
 Shall champion thee from men of mortal race,  
 The petty insects of a passing day?  
 Saw'st not how puny is the strength they spend?  
 With few, faint steps walking as dreams and blind,  
 Nor can the utmost of their lore transcend  
 The harmony of the Eternal Mind.  
 These things I learned seeing thy glory dimmed,  
 Prometheus. Ah, not thus on me was shed  
 The rapture of sweet music, when I hymned  
 The marriage-song round bath and bridal bed  
 At thine espousals, and of thy blood-kin,  
 A bride thou chosest, wooing her to thee  
 With all good gifts that may a Goddess win,  
 Thy father's child, divine Hesione.

*(Enter IO, crazed and horned).*

**IO**

What land is this? What people here abide?  
 And who is he,  
 The prisoner of this windswept mountain-side?  
 Speak, speak to me;  
 Tell me, poor caitiff, how did'st thou transgress,  
 Thus buffeted?  
 Whither am I, half-dead with weariness,  
 For-wandered?  
 Ha! Ha!  
 Again the prick, the stab of gadfly-sting!  
 O earth, earth, hide,  
 The hollow shape-Argus-that evil thing-  
 The hundred-eyed-  
 Earth-born-herdsman! I see him yet; he stalks  
 With stealthy pace  
 And crafty watch not all my poor wit baulks!  
 From the deep place  
 Of earth that hath his bones he breaketh bound,  
 And from the pale  
 Of Death, the Underworld, a hell-sent hound  
 On the blood-trail,  
 Fasting and faint he drives me on before,

With spectral hand,  
 Along the windings of the wasteful shore,  
 The salt sea-sand!  
 List! List! the pipe! how drowsily it shrills!  
 A cricket-cry!  
 See! See! the wax-webbed reeds! Oh, to these ills  
 Ye Gods on high,  
 Ye blessed Gods, what bourne? O wandering feet  
 When will ye rest?  
 O Cronian child, wherein by aught unmeet  
 Have I transgressed  
 To be yoke-fellow with Calamity?  
 My mind unstrung,  
 A crack-brained lack-wit, frantic mad am I,  
 By gad-fly stung,  
 Thy scourge, that tarres me on with buzzing wing!  
 Plunge me in fire,  
 Hide me in earth, to deep-sea monsters fling,  
 But my desire-  
 Kneeling I pray-grudge not to grant, O King!  
 Too long a race  
 Stripped for the course have I run to and fro;  
 And still I chase  
 The vanishing goal, the end of all my woe;  
 Enough have I mourned!  
 Hear'st thou the lowing of the maid cow-horned?

**PROMETHEUS**

How should I hear thee not? Thou art the child  
 Of Inachus, dazed with the dizzying fly.  
 The heart of Zeus thou hast made hot with love  
 And Hera's curse even as a runner stripped  
 Pursues thee ever on thine endless round.

**IO**

How dost thou know my father's name? Impart  
 To one like thee  
 A poor, distressful creature, who thou art.  
 Sorrow with me,  
 Sorrowful one! Tell me, whose voice proclaims  
 Things true and sad,  
 Naming by all their old, unhappy names,  
 What drove me mad-  
 Sick! Sick! ye Gods, with suffering ye have sent,  
 That clings and clings;  
 Wasting my lamp of life till it be spent!  
 Crazed with your stings!  
 Famished I come with trampling and with leaping,  
 Torment and shame,  
 To Hera's cruel wrath, her craft unsleeping,  
 Captive and tame  
 Of all wights woe-begone and fortune-crossed,  
 Oh, in the storm  
 Of the world's sorrow is there one so lost?  
 Speak, godlike form,  
 And be in this dark world my oracle I

Can'st thou not sift  
 The things to come? Hast thou no art to tell  
 What subtle shift,  
 Or sound of charming song shall make me well?  
 Hide naught of ill  
 But-if indeed thou knowest-prophecy-  
 In words that thrill  
 Clear-toned through air-what such a wretch as  
 Must yet abide-  
 The lost, lost maid that roams earth's kingdoms wide?

**PROMETHEUS**

What thou wouldst learn I will make clear to thee,  
 Not weaving subtleties, but simple sooth  
 Unfolding as the mouth should speak to friends.  
 I am Prometheus, giver of fire to mortals.

**IO**

Oh universal succour of mankind,  
 Sorrowful Prometheus, why art thou punished thus?

**PROMETHEUS**

I have but now ceased mourning for my griefs.

**IO**

Wilt thou not grant me then so small a boon?

**PROMETHEUS**

What is it thou dost ask? Thou shalt know all.

**IO**

Declare to me who chained thee in this gorge.

**PROMETHEUS**

The hest of Zeus, but 'twas Hephaestus' hand.

**IO**

But what transgression dost thou expiate?

**PROMETHEUS**

Let this suffice thee: thou shalt know no more.

**IO**

Nay, but the end of my long wandering  
 When shall it be? This too thou must declare.

**PROMETHEUS**

That it is better for thee not to know.

**IO**

Oh hide not from me what I have to suffer!

**PROMETHEUS**

Poor child! Poor child! I do not grudge the gift.

**IO**

Why then, art thou so slow to tell me all?

**PROMETHEUS**

It is not from unkindness; but I fear  
 'Twill break thy heart.

**IO**

Take thou no thought for me  
 Where thinking thwarteth heart's desire!

**PROMETHEUS**

So keen  
 To know thy sorrows! List I and thou shalt learn.

**CHORUS**

Not till thou hast indulged a wish of mine.

First let us hear the story of her grief  
 And she herself shall tell the woeful tale.  
 After, thy wisdom shall impart to her  
 The conflict yet to come.

**PROMETHEUS**

So be it, then.

And, Io, thus much courtesy thou owest  
 These maidens being thine own father's kin.  
 For with a moving story of our woes  
 To win a tear from weeping auditors  
 In nought demeans the teller.

**IO**

I know not

How fitly to refuse; and at your wish  
 All ye desire to know I will in plain,  
 Round terms set forth. And yet the telling of it  
 Harrows my soul; this winter's tale of wrong,  
 Of angry Gods and brute deformity,  
 And how and why on me these horrors swooped.  
 Always there were dreams visiting by night  
 The woman's chambers where I slept; and they  
 With flattering words admonished and cajoled me,  
 Saying, "O lucky one, so long a maid?  
 And what a match for thee if thou would'st wed  
 Why, pretty, here is Zeus as hot as hot-  
 Love-sick-to have thee! Such a bolt as thou  
 Hast shot clean through his heart And he won't rest  
 Till Cypris help him win thee! Lift not then,  
 My daughter, a proud foot to spurn the bed  
 Of Zeus: but get thee gone to meadow deep  
 By Lerna's marsh, where are thy father's flocks  
 And cattle-folds, that on the eye of Zeus  
 May fall the balm that shall assuage desire."  
 Such dreams oppressed me, troubling all my nights,  
 Woe's me! till I plucked courage up to tell  
 My father of these fears that walked in darkness.  
 And many times to Pytho and Dodona  
 He sent his sacred missionaries, to inquire  
 How, or by deed or word, he might conform  
 To the high will and pleasure of the Gods.  
 And they returned with slippery oracles,  
 Nought plain, but all to baffle and perplex-  
 And then at last to Inachus there raught  
 A saying that flashed clear; the drift, that  
 Must be put out from home and country, forced  
 To be a wanderer at the ends of the earth,  
 A thing devote and dedicate; and if  
 I would not, there should fall a thunderbolt  
 From Zeus, with blinding flash, and utterly  
 Destroy my race. So spake the oracle  
 Of Loxias. In sorrow he obeyed,  
 And from beneath his roof drove forth his child  
 Grieving as he grieved, and from house and home  
 Bolted and barred me out. But the high hand

Of Zeus bear hardly on the rein of fate.  
 And, instantly—even in a moment—mind  
 And body suffered strange distortion. Horned  
 Even as ye see me now, and with sharp bite  
 Of gadfly pricked, with high-flung skip, stark-mad,  
 I bounded, galloping headlong on, until  
 I came to the sweet and of the stream  
 Kerchneian, hard by Lerna's spring. And thither  
 Argus, the giant herdsman, fierce and fell  
 As a strong wine unmixed, with hateful cast  
 Of all his cunning eyes upon the trail,  
 Gave chase and tracked me down. And there he  
 [perished  
 By violent and sudden doom surprised.  
 But I with darting sting—the scorpion whip  
 Of angry Gods—am lashed from land to land.  
 Thou hast my story, and, if thou can'st tell  
 What I have still to suffer, speak; but do not,  
 Moved by compassion, with a lying tale  
 Warm my cold heart; no sickness of the soul  
 Is half so shameful as composed falsehoods.

**CHORUS**

Off! lost one! off! Horror, I cry!  
 Horror and misery  
 Was this the traveller's tale I craved to hear?  
 Oh, that mine eyes should see  
 A sight so ill to look upon! Ah me!  
 Sorrow, defilement, haunting fear,  
 Fan my blood cold,  
 Stabbed with a two-edged sting!  
 O Fate, Fate, Fate, tremblingly I behold  
 The plight of Io, thine apportioning!

**PROMETHEUS**

Thou dost lament too soon, and art as one  
 All fear. Refrain thyself till thou hast heard  
 What's yet to be.

**CHORUS**

Speak and be our instructor:  
 There is a kind of balm to the sick soul  
 In certain knowledge of the grief to come.

**PROMETHEUS**

Your former wish I lightly granted ye:  
 And ye have heard, even as ye desired,  
 From this maid's lips the story of her sorrow.  
 Now hear the sequel, the ensuing woes  
 The damsel must endure from Hera's hate.  
 And thou, O seed of Inachaeon loins,  
 Weigh well my words, that thou may'st understand  
 Thy journey's end. First towards the rising sun  
 Turn hence, and traverse fields that ne'er felt  
 [plough  
 Until thou reach the country of the Scyths,  
 A race of wanderers handling the long-bow  
 That shoots afar, and having their habitations

Under the open sky in wattled cotes  
 That move on wheels. Go not thou nigh to them,  
 But ever within sound of the breaking waver,  
 Pass through their land. And on the left of the  
 The Chalybes, workers in iron, dwell.  
 Beware of them, for they are savages,  
 Who suffer not a stranger to come near.  
 And thou shalt reach the river Hybristes,  
 Well named. Cross not, for it is ill to cross,  
 Until thou come even unto Caucasus,  
 Highest of mountains, where the foaming river  
 Blows all its volume from the summit ridge  
 That o'ertops all. And that star-neighbour'd ridge  
 Thy feet must climb; and, following the road  
 That runneth south, thou presently shall reach  
 The Amazonian hosts that loathe the male,  
 And shall one day remove from thence and found  
 Themiscyra hard by Thermodon's stream,  
 Where on the craggy Salmadessian coast  
 Waves gnash their teeth, the maw of mariners  
 And step-mother of ships. And they shall lead the  
 Upon thy way, and with a right good will.  
 Then shalt thou come to the Cimmerian Isthmus,  
 Even at the pass and portals of the sea,  
 And leaving it behind thee, stout of heart,  
 Cross o'er the channel of Maeotis' lake.  
 For ever famous among men shall be  
 The story of thy crossing, and the strait  
 Be called by a new name, the Bosphorus,  
 In memory of thee. Then having left  
 Europa's soil behind thee thou shalt come  
 To the main land of Asia. What think ye?  
 Is not the only ruler of the Gods  
 A complete tyrant, violent to all,  
 Respecting none? First, being himself a God,  
 He burneth to enjoy a mortal maid,  
 And then torments her with these wanderings.  
 A sorry suitor for thy love, poor girl,  
 A bitter wooing. Yet having heard so much  
 Thou art not even in the overture  
 And prelude of the song.

**IO**

Alas! Oh! Oh!

**PROMETHEUS**

Thou dost cry out, fetching again deep groans:  
 What wilt thou do when thou hast heard in full  
 The evils yet to come?

**CHORUS**

And wilt thou tell  
 The maiden something further: some fresh sorrow?

**PROMETHEUS**

A stormy sea of wrong and ruining.

**IO**

What does it profit me to live! Oh, why

Do I not throw myself from this rough crag  
 And in one leap rid me of all my pain?  
 Better to die at once than live, and all  
 My days be evil.

**PROMETHEUS**

Thou would'st find it hard  
 To bear what I must bear: for unto me  
 It is not given to die,-a dear release  
 From pain; but now of suffering there is  
 No end in sight till Zeus shall fall.

**IO**

And shall Zeus fall? His power be taken from him?  
 No matter when if true-

**PROMETHEUS**

'Twould make thee happy methinks,  
 If thou could'st see calamity whelm him.

**IO**

How should it not when all my woes  
 Are of his sending? learn how  
 These things shall be.  
 The tyrant's rod?  
 And fond imaginings.

**IO**

But how? Oh, speak,  
 If the declaring draw no evil down I

**PROMETHEUS**

A marriage he shall make shall vex him sore.

**IO**

A marriage? Whether of gods or mortals?  
 Speak! If this be utterable!

**PROMETHEUS**

Why dost thou ask  
 What I may not declare?

**IO**

And shall he quit  
 The throne of all the worlds, by a new spouse  
 Supplanted?

**PROMETHEUS**

She will bear to him a child,  
 And he shall be in might more excellent  
 Than his progenitor.

**IO**

And he will find  
 No way to parry this strong stroke of fate?

**PROMETHEUS**

None save my own self-when these bonds are loosed.

**IO**

And who shall loose them if Zeus wills not?  
 Of thine own seed.  
 How say'st thou? Shall a child  
 Of mine release thee?

**PROMETHEUS**

Son of thine, but son  
 The thirteenth generation shall beget.

**IO**

A prophecy oracularly dark.

**PROMETHEUS**

Then seek not thou to know thine own fate.

**IO**

Nay, tender me not a boon to snatch it from me.

**PROMETHEUS**

Of two gifts thou hast asked one shall be thine.

**IO**

What gifts? Pronounce and leave to me the choice.

**PROMETHEUS**

Nay, thou are free to choose. Say, therefore, Whether I  
 shall declare to thee thy future woes  
 Or him who shall be my deliverer.

**CHORUS**

Nay, but let both be granted! Unto her  
 That which she chooseth, unto me my choice,  
 That I, too, may have honour from thy lips.  
 First unto her declare her wanderings,  
 And unto me him who shall set thee free;  
 'Tis that I long to know.

**PROMETHEUS**

I will resist  
 No further, but to your importunacy  
 All things which ye-desire to learn reveal.  
 And, Io, first to thee I will declare  
 Thy far-driven wanderings; write thou my words  
 In the retentive tablets of thy heart.  
 When thou hast crossed the flood that flows between  
 And is the boundary of two continents,  
 Turn to the sun's uprising, where he treads  
 Printing with fiery steps the eastern sky,  
 And from the roaring of the Pontic surge  
 Do thou pass on, until before thee lies  
 The Gorgonean plain, Kisthene called,  
 Where dwell the gray-haired three, the Phorcides,  
 Old, mumbling maids, swan-shaped, having one Eye  
 betwixt the three, and but a single tooth.  
 On them the sun with his brightbeams ne'er glanceth  
 Nor moon that lamps the night. Not far from them  
 The sisters three, the Gorgons, have their haunt;  
 Winged forms, with snaky locks, hateful to man,  
 Whom nothing mortal looking on can live.  
 Thus much that thou may'st have a care of these.  
 Now of another portent thou shalt hear.  
 Beware the dogs of Zeus that ne'er give tongue,  
 The sharp-beaked gryphons, and the one-eyed horde Of  
 Arimaspians, riding upon horses,  
 Who dwell around the river rolling gold,  
 The ferry and the frith of Pluto's port.  
 Go not thou nigh them. After thou shalt come  
 To a far land, a dark-skinned race, that dwell  
 Beside the fountains of the sun, whence flows  
 The river Ethiops: follow its banks

Until thou comest to the steep-down slope  
 Where from the Bibline mountains Nilus old  
 Pours the sweet waters of his holy stream.  
 And thou, the river guiding thee, shalt come  
 To the three-sided, wedge-shaped land of Nile,  
 Where for thyself, Io, and for thy children  
 Long sojourn is appointed. If in aught  
 My story seems to stammer and to er  
 From indirectness, ask and ask again  
 Till all be manifest. I do not lack  
 For leisure, having more than well contents me

**CHORUS**

If there be aught that she must suffer yet,  
 Or aught omitted in the narrative  
 Of her long wanderings, I pray thee speak.  
 But if thou hast told all, then grant the boon  
 We asked and doubtless thou wilt call to mind.

**PROMETHEUS**

Nay, she has heard the last of her long journey.  
 But, as some warrant for her patient hearing  
 I will relate her former sufferings  
 Ere she came hither. Much I will omit  
 That had detained us else with long discourse  
 And touch at once her journey's thus far goal.  
 When thou wast come to the Molossian plain  
 That lies about the high top of Dodona,  
 Where is an oracle and shrine of Zeus  
 Thesprotian, and-potent past belief-  
 The talking oaks, the same from whom the word  
 Flashed clear and nothing questionably hailed the  
 The destined spouse-ah! do I touch old wounds?-  
 Of Zeus, honoured above thy sex; stung thence  
 In torment, where the road runs by the sea,  
 Thou cam'st to the broad gulf of Rhea, whence  
 Beat back by a strong wind, thou didst retrace  
 Most painfully thy course; and it shall be  
 That times to come in memory of thy passage  
 Shall call that inlet the Ionian Sea.  
 Thus much for thee in witness that my mind  
 Beholdeth more than that which leaps to light.  
 Now for the things to come; what I shall say  
 Concerns ye both alike. Return we then  
 And follow our old track. There is a city  
 Yclept Canobus, built at the land's end,  
 Even at the mouth and mounded silt of Nile,  
 And there shall Zeus restore to thee thy mind  
 With touch benign and laying on of hands.  
 And from that touch thou shalt conceive and bear  
 Swarth Epaphus, touch-born; and he shall reap  
 As much of earth as Nilus watereth  
 With his broad-flowing river. In descent  
 The fifth from him there shall come back to Argos,  
 Thine ancient home, but driven by hard hap,  
 Two score and ten maids, daughters of one house,

Fleeing pollution of unlawful marriage  
 With their next kin, who winged with wild desire,  
 As hawks that follow hard on cushat-doves,  
 Shall harry prey which they should not pursue  
 And hunt forbidden brides. But God shall be  
 Exceeding jealous for their chastity;  
 And old Pelasgia, for the mortal thrust  
 Of woman's hands and midnight murder done  
 Upon their new-wed lords, shall shelter them;  
 For every wife shall strike her husband down  
 Dipping a two-edged broadsword in his blood.  
 Oh, that mine enemies might wed such wives!  
 But of the fifty, one alone desire  
 Shall tame, as with the stroke of charming-wand,  
 So that she shall not lift her hands to slay  
 The partner of her bed; yea, melting love  
 Shall blunt her sharp-set will, and she shall choose  
 Rather to be called weak and womanly  
 Than the dark stain of blood; and she shall be  
 Mother of kings in Argos. 'Tis a tale  
 Were't told in full, would occupy us long.  
 For, of her sowing, there shall spring to fame  
 The lion's whelp, the archer bold, whose bow  
 Shall set me free. This is the oracle  
 Themis, my ancient Mother, Titan-born,  
 Disclosed to me; but how and in what wise  
 Were long to tell, nor would it profit thee.

**IO**

Again they come, again The fury and the pain!  
 The gangrened wound! The ache of pulses dinned  
 With raging throes  
 It beats upon my brain-the burning wind  
 That madness blows!  
 It pricks-the barb, the hook not forged with heat,  
 The gadfly dart!  
 Against my ribs with thud of trampling feet  
 Hammers my heart!  
 And like a bowling wheel mine eyeballs spin,  
 And I am flung  
 I am carried out of my course by a fierce blast of  
 madness; over my tongue I've lost all mastery; and a  
 stream of turbid words beats recklessly against the  
 billows of dark destruction.

*(Exit raving.)*

**CHORUS**

I hold him wise who first in his own mind  
 This canon fixed and taught it to mankind:  
 True marriage is the union that mates  
 Equal with equal; not where wealth emasculates,  
 Or mighty lineage is magnified,  
 Should he who earns his bread look for a bride.  
 Therefore, grave mistresses of fate, I pray

It pricks-the barb, the hook not forged with heat,  
The gadfly dart!  
Against my ribs with thud of trampling feet  
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Or mighty lineage is magnified,  
Should he who earns his bread look for a bride.  
Therefore, grave mistresses of fate, I pray  
That I may never live to see the day  
When Zeus takes me for his bedfellow; or  
Draw near in love to husband from on high.  
For I am full of fear when I behold  
Io, the maid no human love may fold,  
And her virginity disconsolate,  
Homeless and husbandless by Hera's hate.  
For me, when love is level, fear is far.  
May none of all the Gods that greater are  
Eve me with his unshunnable regard;  
Fir in that warfare victory is hard,  
And of that plenty cometh emptiness.  
What should befall me then I dare not guess;  
Nor whither I should flee that I might shun  
The craft and subtlety of Cronos' Son.

**PROMETHEUS**

I tell thee that the self-willed pride of Zeus  
Shall surely be abased; that even now  
He plots a marriage that shall hurl him forth  
Far out of sight of his imperial throne  
And kingly dignity. Then, in that hour,  
Shall be fulfilled, nor in one tittle fail,  
The curse wherewith his father Cronos cursed him,  
What time he fell from his majestic place  
Established from of old. And such a stroke  
None of the Gods save me could turn aside.  
I know these things shall be and on what wise.  
Therefore let him secure him in his seat,  
And put his trust in airy noise, and swing  
His bright, two-handed, blazing thunderbolt,  
For these shall nothing stead him, nor avert  
Fall insupportable and glory humbled.  
A wrestler of such might he maketh ready

For his own ruin; yea, a wonder, strong  
In strength unmatchable; and he shall find  
Fire that shall set at naught the burning bolt  
And blasts more dreadful that o'er-crow the thunder.  
The pestilence that scourgeth the deep seas  
And shaketh solid earth, the three-pronged mace,  
Poseidon's spear, a mightier shall scatter;  
And when he stumbleth striking there his foot,  
Fallen on evil days, the tyrant's pride  
Shall measure all the miserable length  
That parts rule absolute from servitude.

**CHORUS**

Methinks the wish is father to the thought  
And whets thy railing tongue.

**PROMETHEUS**

Not so: the wish And the accomplishment go hand in  
hand.

**CHORUS**

Then must we look for one who shall supplant  
And reign instead of Zeus?  
Far, far more grievous shall bow down his neck.

**CHORUS**

Hast thou no fear venting such blasphemy?

**PROMETHEUS**

What should I fear who have no part nor lot  
In doom of dying?

**CHORUS**

But he might afflict the  
With agony more dreadful, pain beyond  
These pains.

**PROMETHEUS**

Why let him if he will  
All evils I foreknow.

**CHORUS**

Ah, they are wise  
Who do obeisance, prostrate in the dust,  
To the implacable, eternal Will.

**PROMETHEUS**

Go thou and worship; fold thy hands in prayer,  
And be the dog that licks the foot of power!  
Nothing care I for Zeus; yea, less than naught!  
Let him do what he will, and sway the world  
His little hour; he has not long to lord it  
Among the Gods.  
Oh here here runner comes  
The upstart tyrant's lacquey! He'll bring news,  
A message, never doubt it, from his master.

*(Enter HERMES.)*

**HERMES**

You, the sophisticated rogue, the heart of gall,  
The renegade of heaven, to short-lived men  
Purveyor of prerogatives and titles,

The renegade of heaven, to short-lived men  
 Purveyor of prerogatives and titles,  
 Fire-thief! Dost hear me? I've a word for thee.  
 Thou'rt to declare-this is the Father's pleasure  
 These marriage-feasts of thine, whereof thy tongue  
 Rattles a-pace, and by the which his greatness  
 Shall take a fall. And look you rede no riddles,  
 But tell the truth, in each particular  
 Exact. I am not to sweat for thee, Prometheus,  
 Upon a double journey. And thou seest  
 Zeus by thy dark defiance is not moved.

**PROMETHEUS**

A very solemn piece of insolence  
 Spoken like an underling of the Gods! Ye are young!  
 Ye are young! New come to power And ye suppose  
 Your towered citadel Calamity  
 Can never enter! Ah, and have not  
 Seen from those pinnacles a two-fold fall  
 Of tyrants? And the third, who his brief "now"  
 Of lordship arrogates, I shall see yet  
 By lapse most swift' most ignominious,  
 Sink to perdition. And dost thou suppose  
 I crouch and cower in reverence and awe  
 To Gods of yesterday? I fail of that  
 So much, the total all of space and time  
 Bulks in between. Take thyself hence and count  
 Thy toiling steps back by the way thou camest,  
 In nothing wiser for thy questionings.

**HERMES**

This is that former stubbornness of thine  
 That brought thee hither to foul anchorage.

**PROMETHEUS**

Mistake me not; I would not, if I might,  
 Change my misfortunes for thy vassalage.

**HERMES**

Oh! better be the vassal of this rock  
 Than born the trusty messenger of Zeus

**PROMETHEUS**

I answer insolence, as it deserves,  
 With insolence. How else should it be answered?

**HERMES**

Surely; and, being in trouble, it is plain  
 You revel in your plight.

**PROMETHEUS**

Revel, forsooth!  
 I would my enemies might hold such revels  
 And thou amongst the first.

**HERMES**

Dost thou blame me  
 For thy misfortunes?

**PROMETHEUS**

I hate all the Gods,  
 Because, having received good at my hands,

They have rewarded me with evil.  
 Proves thee stark mad!

**HERMES**

This proves thee stark mad!

**PROMETHEUS**

Mad as you please, if hating  
 Your enemies is madness

**HERMES**

Were all well  
 With thee, thou'dst be insufferable!

**PROMETHEUS**

Alas!

**HERMES**

Alas, that Zeus knows not that word, Alas!

**PROMETHEUS**

But ageing Time teacheth all knowledge.

**HERMES**

Time  
 Hath not yet taught thy rash, imperious will  
 Over wild impulse to win mastery.

**PROMETHEUS**

Nay: had Time taught me that, I had not stooped  
 To bandy words with such a slave as thou.

**HERMES**

This, then, is all thine answer: thou'lt not  
 One syllable of what our Father asks.

**PROMETHEUS**

Oh, that I were a debtor to his kindness!  
 I would requite him to the uttermost!

**HERMES**

A cutting speech! You take me for a boy  
 Whom you may taunt and tease.

**PROMETHEUS**

Why art thou not  
 A boy-a very booby-to suppose  
 Thou wilt get aught from me? There is no wrong  
 However shameful, nor no shift of malice  
 Whereby Zeus shall persuade me to unlock  
 My lips until these shackles be cast loose.  
 Therefore let lightning leap with smoke and flame,  
 And all that is be beat and tossed together,  
 With whirl of feathery snowflakes and loud crack  
 Of subterranean thunder; none of these  
 Shall bend my will or force me to disclose  
 By whom 'tis fated he shall fall from power.

**HERMES**

What good can come of this? Think yet again!

**PROMETHEUS**

I long ago have thought and long ago  
 Determined.

**HERMES**

Patience! patience! thou rash fool  
 Have so much patience as to school thy mind

To a right judgment in thy present troubles.

**PROMETHEUS**

Lo, I am rockfast, and thy words are wave  
That weary me in vain. Let not the thought  
Enter thy mind, that I in awe of Zeus  
Shall change my nature for a girl's, or beg  
The Loathed beyond all loathing-with my hands  
Spread out in woman's fashion-to cast loose  
These bonds; from that I am utterly removed.

**HERMES**

I have talked much, yet further not my purpose;  
For thou art in no whit melted or moved  
By my prolonged entreaties: like a colt  
New to the harness thou dost back and Plunge.  
Snap at thy bit and fight against the rein.  
And yet thy confidence is in a straw;  
For stubbornness, if one be in the wrong,  
Is in itself weaker than naught at all.  
See now, if thou wilt not obey my words,  
What storm, what triple-crested wave of woe  
Unshunnable shall come upon thee. First,  
This rocky chasm shall the Father split  
With earthquake thunder and his burning bolt,  
And he shall hide thy form, and thou shalt hang  
Bolt upright, dangled in the rock's rude arms.  
Nor till thou hast completed thy long term  
Shalt thou come back into the light; and then  
The hound of Zeus, the tawny eagle,  
Shall violently fall upon thy flesh  
And rend it as 'twere rags; and every day  
And all day long shall thine unbidden guest  
Sit at thy table, feasting on thy liver  
Till he hath gnawn it black. Look for no term  
To such an agony till there stand forth  
Among the Gods one who shall take upon him  
Thy sufferings and consent to enter hell  
Far from the light of Sun, yea, the deep pit  
And mirk of Tartarus, for thee. Be advised;  
This is not stuffed speech framed to frighten the  
But woeful truth. For Zeus knows not to lie

**CHORUS**

To our mind  
The words of Hermes fail not of the mark.  
For he enjoins thee to let self-will go  
And follow after prudent counsels. Him  
Harken; for error in the wise is shame.

**PROMETHEUS**

These are stale tidings I foreknew;  
Therefore, since suffering is the due  
A foe must pay his foes,  
Let curled lightnings clasp and clash  
And close upon my limbs: loud crash  
The thunder, and fierce throes

Of savage winds convulse calm air:  
The embowelled blast earth's roots uprear  
And toss beyond its bars,  
The rough surge, till the roaring deep  
In one devouring deluge sweep  
The pathway of the stars  
Finally, let him fling my form  
Down whirling gulfs, the central storm  
Of being; let me lie  
Plunged in the black Tartarean gloom;  
Yet-yet-his sentence shall not doom  
This deathless self to die!

**HERMES**

These are the workings of a brain  
More than a little touched; the vein  
Of voluble ecstasy!  
Surely he wandereth from the way,  
His reason lost, who thus can pray  
A mouthing mad man he!  
Therefore, O ye who court his fate,  
Rash mourners-ere it be too late  
And ye indeed are sad  
For vengeance spurring hither fast-  
Hence! lest the bellowing thunderblast  
Like him should strike you mad I

**CHORUS**

Words which might work persuasion speak  
If thou must counsel me; nor seek  
Thus, like a stream in spate,  
To uproot mine honour. Dost thou dare  
Urge me to baseness! I will bear  
With him all blows of fate;  
For false forsakers I despise;  
At treachery my gorge doth rise:  
I spew it forth with hate!

**HERMES**

Only--with ruin on your track--  
Rail not at fortune; but look back  
And these my words recall;  
Neither blame Zeus that he hath sent  
Sorrow no warning word forewent!  
Ye labour for your fall  
With your own hands I Not by surprise  
Nor yet by stealth, but with clear eyes,  
Knowing the thing ye do,  
Ye walk into the yawning net  
That for the feet of is set  
And Ruin spreads for you.

(Exit.)

**PROMETHEUS**

The time is past for words; earth quakes



Man's evil and his virtue. Forth I sail'd  
 Into the deep illimitable main,  
 With but one bark, and the small faithful band  
 That yet cleav'd to me. As Iberia far,  
 Far as Morocco either shore I saw,  
 And the Sardinian and each isle beside  
 Which round that ocean bathes. Tardy with age  
 Were I and my companions, when we came  
 To the strait pass, where Hercules ordain'd 120  
 The bound'ries not to be o'erstepp'd by man.  
 The walls of Seville to my right I left,  
 On the' other hand already Ceuta past.  
 "O brothers!" I began, "who to the west  
 Through perils without number now have reach'd,  
 To this the short remaining watch, that yet  
 Our senses have to wake, refuse not proof  
 Of the unpeopled world, following the track  
 Of Phoebus. Call to mind from whence we sprang:  
 Ye were not form'd to live the life of brutes 130  
 But virtue to pursue and knowledge high.  
 With these few words I sharpen'd for the voyage  
 The mind of my associates, that I then  
 Could scarcely have withheld them. To the dawn  
 Our poop we turn'd, and for the witless flight  
 Made our oars wings, still gaining on the left.  
 Each star of the' other pole night now beheld,  
 And ours so low, that from the ocean-floor  
 It rose not. Five times re-illum'd, as oft  
 Vanish'd the light from underneath the moon 140  
 Since the deep way we enter'd, when from far  
 Appear'd a mountain dim, loftiest methought  
 Of all I e'er beheld. Joy seiz'd us straight,  
 But soon to mourning changed. From the new land  
 A whirlwind sprung, and at her foremost side  
 Did strike the vessel. Thrice it whirl'd her round  
 With all the waves, the fourth time lifted up  
 The poop, and sank the prow: so fate decreed:  
 And over us the booming billow clos'd." 149

420 BC  
**THE CLOUDS**  
by Aristophanes  
anonymous translator

**CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY**

**STREPSIADES**  
**PHIDIPIDES**  
**SERVANT OF STREPSIADES**  
**DISCIPLES OF SOCRATES**  
**SOCRATES**  
**JUST DISCOURSE**  
**UNJUST DISCOURSE**  
**PASIAS, a Money-lender**  
**AMNYIAS, another Money-lender**  
**CHORUS OF CLOUDS**

**THE CLOUDS**

(SCENE:-In the background are two houses, that of **STREPSIADES** and that of Socrates, the Thinkery. The latter is small and dingy; the interior of the former is shown and two beds are seen, each occupied.)

**STREPSIADES** (sitting up) GREAT gods! will these nights never end? will daylight never come? I heard the cock crow long ago and my slaves are snoring still! Ah! Ah! It wasn't like this formerly. Curses on the war! has it not done me ill enough? Now I may not even chastise my own slaves. Again there's this brave lad, who never wakes the whole long night, but, wrapped in his five coverlets, farts away to his heart's content. (He lies down) Come! let me nestle in well and snore too, if it be possible....oh! misery, it's vain to think of sleep with all these expenses, this stable, these debts, which are devouring me, thanks to this fine cavalier, who only knows how to look after his long locks, to show himself off in his chariot and to dream of horses! And I, I am nearly dead, when I see the moon bringing the third decade in her train and my liability falling due....Slave! light the lamp and bring me my tablets. (The slave obeys.) Who are all my creditors? Let me see and reckon up the interest. What is it I owe?....Twelve minae to Pasias....What! twelve minae to Pasias?....Why did I borrow these? Ah! I know! It was to buy that thoroughbred, which cost me so much. How I should have prized the stone that had blinded him!

**PHIDIPIDES** (in his sleep) That's not fair, Philo! Drive your chariot straight, I say.

**STREPSIADES** This is what is destroying me. He raves about horses, even in his sleep.

**PHIDIPIDES** (still sleeping) How many times round the track is the race for the chariots of war?

**STREPSIADES** It's your own father you are driving to death....to ruin. Come! what debt comes next, after that of Pasias?....Three minae to Amynias for a chariot and its two wheels.

**PHIDIPIDES** (still asleep) Give the horse a good roll in the dust and lead him home.

**STREPSIADES** Ah! wretched boy! it's my money that you are making roll. My creditors have distrained on my goods, and here are others again, who demand security for their interest.

**PHIDIPIDES** (awaking) What is the matter with you, father, that you groan and turn about the whole night through?

**STREPSIADES** I have a bum-bailiff in the bedclothes biting me.

**PHIDIPIDES** For pity's sake, let me have a little sleep. (He turns over.)

**STREPSIADES** Very well, sleep on! but remember that all these debts will fall back on your shoulders. Oh! curses on the go-between who made me marry your mother! I lived so happily in the country, a commonplace, everyday

life, but a good and easy one-had not a trouble, not a care, was rich in bees, in sheep and in olives. Then indeed I had to marry the niece of Megacles, the son of Megacles; I belonged to the country, she was from the town; she was a haughty, extravagant woman, a true Coesyra. On the nuptial day, when I lay beside her, I was reeking of the dregs of the wine-cup, of cheese and of wool; she was redolent with essences, saffron, voluptuous kisses, the love of spending, of good cheer and of wanton delights. I will not say she did nothing; no, she worked hard...to ruin me, and pretending all the while merely to be showing her the cloak she had woven for me, I said, "Wife you go too fast about your work, your threads are too closely woven and you use far too much wool." (A slave enters with a lamp.)

SLAVE There is no more oil in the lamp.

STREPSIADES Why then did you light such a thirsty lamp? Come here, I am going to beat you.

SLAVE What for?

STREPSIADES Because you have put in too thick a wick...Later, when we had this boy, what was to be his name? It was the cause of much quarrelling with my loving wife. She insisted on having some reference to a horse in his name, that he should be called Xanthippus, Charippus or Callippides. I wanted to name him Phidonides after his grandfather. We disputed long, and finally agreed to style him **PHIDIPIDES**...She used to fondle and coax him, saying, "Oh! what a joy it will be to me when you have grown up, to see you, like my father, Megacles, clothed in purple and standing up straight in your chariot driving your steeds toward the town." And I would say to him, "When, like your father, you will go, dressed in a skin, to fetch back your goats from Phelleus." Alas! he never listened to me and his madness for horses has shattered my fortune. (He gets out of bed.) But by dint of thinking the livelong night, I have discovered a road to salvation, both miraculous and divine. If he will but follow it, I shall be out of my trouble! First, however, he must be awakened, but it must be done as gently as possible. How shall I manage it? **PHIDIPIDES!** my little **PHIDIPIDES!**

**PHIDIPIDES** (awaking again) What is it, father?

STREPSIADES Kiss me and give me your hand.

**PHIDIPIDES** (getting up and doing as his father requests) There! What's it all about?

STREPSIADES Tell me! do you love me?

**PHIDIPIDES** By Posidon, the equestrian Posidon! yes, I swear I do.

STREPSIADES Oh, do not, I pray you, invoke this god of horses; he is the one who is the cause of all my cares. But if you really love me, and with your whole heart, my boy, believe me.

**PHIDIPIDES** Believe you? about what?

STREPSIADES Alter your habits forthwith and go and learn what I tell you.

**PHIDIPIDES** Say on, what are your orders?

STREPSIADES Will you obey me ever so little?

**PHIDIPIDES** By Bacchus, I will obey you.

STREPSIADES Very well then! Look this way. Do you see that little door and that little house?

**PHIDIPIDES** Yes, father. But what are you driving at?

STREPSIADES That is the Thinkery of wise souls. There they prove that we are coals enclosed on all sides under a vast snuffer, which is the sky. If well paid, these men also teach one how to gain law-suits, whether they be just or not.

**PHIDIPIDES** What do they call themselves?

STREPSIADES I do not know exactly, but they are deep thinkers and most admirable people.

**PHIDIPIDES** Bah! the wretches! I know them; you mean those quacks with pale faces, those barefoot fellows, such as that miserable Socrates and Chaerephon?

STREPSIADES Silence! say nothing foolish! If you desire your father not to die of hunger, join their company and let your horses go.

**PHIDIPIDES** No, by Bacchus! even though you gave me the pheasants that Leogoras raises.

STREPSIADES Oh! my beloved son, I beseech you, go and follow their teachings.

**PHIDIPIDES** And what is it I should learn?

STREPSIADES It seems they have two courses of reasoning, the true and the false, and that, thanks to the false, the worst law-suits can be gained. If then you learn this science, which is false, I shall not have to pay an obolus of all the debts I have contracted on your account.

**PHIDIPPIDES** No, I will not do it. I should no longer dare to look at our gallant horsemen, when I had so ruined my tan.

**STREPSIADES** Well then, by Demeter! I will no longer support you, neither you, nor your team, nor your saddle-horse. Go and hang yourself, I turn you out of house and home.

**PHIDIPPIDES** My uncle Megacles will not leave me without horses; I shall go to him and laugh at your anger.  
(He departs.)

**STREPSIADES** goes over to **SOCRATES'** house.)

**STREPSIADES** One rebuff shall not dishearten me. With the help of the gods I will enter the Thinkery and learn myself. (He hesitates.) But at my age, memory has gone and the mind is slow to grasp things. How can all these fine distinctions, these subtleties be learned? (Making up his mind) Bah! why should I dally thus instead of rapping at the door? Slave, slave! (He knocks and calls.) A

**DISCIPLE** (from within) A plague on you! Who are you?

**STREPSIADES** **STREPSIADES**, the son of Phido, of the deme of Cicynna.

**DISCIPLE** (coming out of the door) You are nothing but an ignorant and illiterate fellow to let fly at the door with such kicks. You have brought on a miscarriage-of an idea!

**STREPSIADES** Pardon me, please; for I live far away from here in the country. But tell me, what was the idea that miscarried?

**DISCIPLE** I may not tell it to any but a disciple.

**STREPSIADES** Then tell me without fear, for I have come to study among you.

**DISCIPLE** Very well then, but reflect, that these are mysteries. Lately, a flea bit Chaerephon on the brow and then from there sprang on to the head of Socrates. Socrates asked Chaerephon, "How many times the length of its legs does a flea jump?"

**STREPSIADES** And how ever did he go about measuring it?

**DISCIPLE** Oh! it was most ingenious! He melted some wax, seized the flea and dipped its two feet in the wax, which, when cooled, left them shod with true Persian slippers. These he took off and with them measured the distance.

**STREPSIADES** Ah! great Zeus! what a brain! what subtlety!

**DISCIPLE** I wonder what then would you say, if you knew another of Socrates' contrivances?

**STREPSIADES** What is it? Pray tell me.

**DISCIPLE** Chaerephon of the deme of Sphettia asked him whether he thought a gnat buzzed through its proboscis or through its anus.

**STREPSIADES** And what did he say about the gnat?

**DISCIPLE** He said that the gut of the gnat was narrow, and that, in passing through this tiny passage, the air is driven with force towards the breech; then after this slender channel, it encountered the rump, which was distended like a trumpet, and there it resounded sonorously.

**STREPSIADES** So the arse of a gnat is a trumpet. Oh! what a splendid arsevation! Thrice happy Socrates! It would not be difficult to succeed in a law-suit, knowing so much about a gnat's guts!

**DISCIPLE** Not long ago a lizard caused him the loss of a sublime thought.

**STREPSIADES** In what way, please?

**DISCIPLE** One night, when he was studying the course of the moon and its revolutions and was gazing open-mouthed at the heavens, a lizard crapped upon him from the top of the roof.

**STREPSIADES** A lizard crapping on Socrates! That's rich!

**DISCIPLE** Last night we had nothing to eat.

**STREPSIADES** Well, what did he contrive, to secure you some supper?

**DISCIPLE** He spread over the table a light layer of cinders, bending an iron rod the while; then he took up a pair of compasses and at the same moment unhooked a piece of the victim which was hanging in the palaestra.

**STREPSIADES** And we still dare to admire Thales! Open, open this home of knowledge to me quickly! Haste, haste to show me Socrates; I long to become his disciple. But do please open the door. (The door opens, revealing the interior of the Thinkery, in which the

**DISCIPLES OF SOCRATES** are seen in various postures of meditation and study; they are pale and emaciated creatures.) Ah! by Heracles! what country are those animals from?

**DISCIPLE** Why, what are you astonished at? What do you think they resemble?

**STREPSIADES** The captives of Pylos. But why do they look so fixedly on the ground?

**DISCIPLE** They are seeking for what is below the ground.

**STREPSIADES** Ah! they're looking for onions. Do not give yourselves so much trouble; I know where there are some, fine big ones. But what are those fellows doing, bent all double?

**DISCIPLE** They are sounding the abysses of Tartarus.

**STREPSIADES** And what are their arses looking at in the heavens?

**DISCIPLE** They are studying astronomy on their own account. But come in so that the master may not find us here.

**STREPSIADES** Not yet; not yet; let them not change their position. I want to tell them my own little matter.

**DISCIPLE** But they may not stay too long in the open air and away from school.

**STREPSIADES** (pointing to a celestial globe) In the name of all the gods, what is that? Tell me.

**DISCIPLE** That is astronomy.

**STREPSIADES** (pointing to a map) And that?

**DISCIPLE** Geometry.

**STREPSIADES** What is that used for?

**DISCIPLE** To measure the land.

**STREPSIADES** But that is apportioned by lot.

**DISCIPLE** No, no, I mean the entire earth.

**STREPSIADES** Ah! what a funny thing! How generally useful indeed is this invention!

**DISCIPLE** There is the whole surface of the earth. Look! Here is Athens.

**STREPSIADES** Athens! you are mistaken; I see no courts in session.

**DISCIPLE** Nevertheless it is really and truly the Attic territory.

**STREPSIADES** And where are my neighbours of Cicynna?

**DISCIPLE** They live here. This is Euboea; you see this island, that is so long and narrow.

**STREPSIADES** I know. Because we and Pericles have stretched it by dint of squeezing it. And where is Lacedaemon?

**DISCIPLE** Lacedaemon? Why, here it is, look.

**STREPSIADES** How near it is to us! Think it well over, it must be removed to a greater distance.

**DISCIPLE** But, by Zeus, that is not possible.

**STREPSIADES** Then, woe to you! and who is this man suspended up in a basket?

**DISCIPLE** That's himself.

**STREPSIADES** Who's himself?

**DISCIPLE** Socrates.

**STREPSIADES** Socrates! Oh! I pray you, call him right loudly for me.

**DISCIPLE** Call him yourself; I have no time to waste. (He departs. The machine swings in **SOCRATES** in a basket.)

**STREPSIADES** Socrates! my little Socrates!

**SOCRATES** (loftily) Mortal, what do you want with me?

**STREPSIADES** First, what are you doing up there? Tell me, I beseech you.

**SOCRATES** (POMPOUSLY) I walk on air and contemplate the sun.

**STREPSIADES** Thus it's not on the solid ground, but from the height of this basket, that you slight the gods, if indeed...

**SOCRATES** I have to suspend my brain and mingle the subtle essence of my mind with this air, which is of the like nature, in order clearly to penetrate the things of heaven. I should have discovered nothing, had I remained on the ground to consider from below the things that are above; for the earth by its force attracts the sap of the mind to itself. It's just the same with the watercress.

**STREPSIADES** What? Does the mind attract the sap of the watercress? Ah! my dear little Socrates, come down to me! I have come to ask you for lessons.

**SOCRATES** (descending) And for what lessons?

**STREPSIADES** I want to learn how to speak. I have borrowed money, and my merciless creditors do not leave me a

moment's peace; all my goods are at stake.

**SOCRATES** And how was it you did not see that you were getting so much into debt?

**STREPSIADES** My ruin has been the madness for horses, a most rapacious evil; but teach me one of your two methods of reasoning, the one whose object is not to repay anything, and, may the gods bear witness, that I am ready to pay any fee you may name.

**SOCRATES** By which gods will you swear? To begin with, the gods are not a coin current with us.

**STREPSIADES** But what do you swear by then? By the iron money of Byzantium?

**SOCRATES** Do you really wish to know the truth of celestial matters?

**STREPSIADES** Why, yes, if it's possible.

**SOCRATES** ....and to converse with the clouds, who are our genii?

**STREPSIADES** Without a doubt.

**SOCRATES** Then be seated on this sacred couch.

**STREPSIADES** (sitting down) I am seated.

**SOCRATES** Now take this chaplet.

**STREPSIADES** Why a chaplet? Alas! Socrates, would you sacrifice me, like Athamas?

**SOCRATES** No, these are the rites of initiation.

**STREPSIADES** And what is it I am to gain?

**SOCRATES** You will become a thorough rattle-pate, a hardened old stager, the fine flour of the talkers....But come, keep quiet.

**STREPSIADES** By Zeus! That's no lie! Soon I shall be nothing but wheat-flour, if you powder me in that fashion.

**SOCRATES** Silence, old man, give heed to the prayers. (In an hierophantic tone) Oh! most mighty king, the boundless air, that keepest the earth suspended in space, thou bright Aether and ye venerable goddesses, the Clouds, who carry in your loins the thunder and the lightning, arise, ye sovereign powers and manifest yourselves in the celestial spheres to the eyes of your sage.

**STREPSIADES** Not yet! Wait a bit, till I fold my mantle double, so as not to get wet. And to think that I did not even bring my travelling cap! What a misfortune!

**SOCRATES** (ignoring this) Come, oh! Clouds, whom I adore, come and show yourselves to this man, whether you be resting on the sacred summits of Olympus, crowned with hoar-frost, or tarrying in the gardens of Ocean, your father, forming sacred choruses with the Nymphs; whether you be gathering the waves of the Nile in golden vases or dwelling in the Maeotic marsh or on the snowy rocks of Mimas, hearken to my prayer and accept my offering. May these sacrifices be pleasing to you. (Amidst rumblings of thunder the **CHORUS OF CLOUDS** appears.)

**CHORUS** (singing) Eternal Clouds, let us appear; let us arise from the roaring depths of Ocean, our father; let us fly towards the lofty mountains, spread our damp wings over their forest-laden summits, whence we will dominate the distant valleys, the harvest fed by the sacred earth, the murmur of the divine streams and the resounding waves of the sea, which the unwearying orb lights up with its glittering beams. But let us shake off the rainy fogs, which hide our immortal beauty and sweep the earth from afar with our gaze.

**SOCRATES** Oh, venerated goddesses, yes, you are answering my call! (To

**STREPSIADES**.) Did you hear their voices mingling with the awful growling of the thunder?

**STREPSIADES** Oh! adorable Clouds, I revere you and I too am going to let off my thunder, so greatly has your own affrighted me. (He farts.) Faith! whether permitted or not, I must, I must crap!

**SOCRATES** No scoffing; do not copy those damned comic poets. Come, silence! a numerouw host of goddesses approaches with songs.

**CHORUS** (singing) Virgins, who pour forth the rains, let us move toward Attica, the rich country of Pallas, the home of the brave; let us visit the dear land of Cecrops, where the secret rites are celebrated, where the mysterious sanctuary flies open to the initiate.... What victims are offered there to the deities of heaven! What glorious temples! What statues! What holy prayers to the rulers of Olympus! At every season nothing but sacred festivals, garlanded victims, is to be seen. Then Spring brings round again the joyous feasts of Dionysus, the harmonious contests of the choruses and the serious melodies of the flute.

**STREPSIADES** By Zeus! Tell me, Socrates, I pray you, who are these women, whose language is so solemn; can they be demi-goddesses?

**SOCRATES** Not at all. They are the Clouds of heaven, great goddesses for the lazy; to them we owe all, thoughts,

speeches, trickery, roguery, boasting, lies, sagacity.

**STREPSIADES** Ah! that was why, as I listened to them, my mind spread out its wings; it burns to babble about trifles, to maintain worthless arguments, to voice its petty reasons, to contradict, to tease some opponent. But are they not going to show themselves? I should like to see them, were it possible.

**SOCRATES** Well, look this way in the direction of Parnes; I already see those who are slowly descending.

**STREPSIADES** But where, where? Show them to me.

**SOCRATES** They are advancing in a throng, following an oblique path across the dales and thickets.

**STREPSIADES** Strange! I can see nothing.

**SOCRATES** There, close to the entrance.

**STREPSIADES** Hardly, if at all, can I distinguish them.

**SOCRATES** You must see them clearly now, unless your eyes are filled with gum as thick as pumpkins.

**STREPSIADES** Aye, undoubtedly! Oh! the venerable goddesses! Why, they fill up the entire stage.

**SOCRATES** And you did not know, you never suspected, that they were goddesses?

**STREPSIADES** No, indeed; I thought the Clouds were only fog, dew and vapour.

**SOCRATES** But what you certainly do not know is that they are the support of a crowd of quacks, the diviners, who were sent to Thurium, the notorious physicians, the well-combed fops, who load their fingers with rings down to the nails, and the braggarts, who write dithyrambic verses, all these are idlers whom the Clouds provide a living for, because they sing them in their verses.

**STREPSIADES** It is then for this that they praise "the rapid flight of the moist clouds, which veil the brightness of day" and "the waving locks of the hundred-headed Typho" and "the impetuous tempests, which float through the heavens, like birds of prey with aerial wings loaded with mists" and "the rains, the dew, which the clouds outpour." As a reward for these fine phrases they bolt well-grown, tasty mullet and delicate thrushes.

**SOCRATES** Yes, thanks to these. And is it not right and meet?

**STREPSIADES** Tell me then why, if these really are the Clouds, they so very much resemble mortals. This is not their usual form.

**SOCRATES** What are they like then?

**STREPSIADES** I don't know exactly; well, they are like great packs of wool, but not like women-no, not in the least....And these have noses.

**SOCRATES** Answer my questions.

**STREPSIADES** Willingly! Go on, I am listening.

**SOCRATES** Have you not sometimes seen clouds in the sky like a centaur, a leopard, a wolf or a bull?

**STREPSIADES** Why, certainly I have, but what of that?

**SOCRATES** They take what metamorphosis they like. If they see a debauchee with long flowing locks and hairy as a beast, like the son of Xenophantes, they take the form of a Centaur in derision of his shameful passion.

**STREPSIADES** And when they see Simon, that thief of public money, what do they do then?

**SOCRATES** To picture him to the life, they turn at once into wolves.

**STREPSIADES** So that was why yesterday, when they saw Cleonymus, who cast away his buckler because he is the veriest poltroon amongst men, they changed into deer.

**SOCRATES** And to-day they have seen Clisthenes; you see....they are women

**STREPSIADES** Hail, sovereign goddesses, and if ever you have let your celestial voice be heard by mortal ears, speak to me, oh! speak to me, ye all-powerful queens.

**CHORUS-LEADER** Hail! veteran of the ancient times, you who burn to instruct yourself in fine language. And you, great high-priest of subtle nonsense, tell us; your desire. To you and Prodicus alone of all the hollow orationers of to-day have we lent an ear-to Prodicus, because of his knowledge and his great wisdom, and to you, because you walk with head erect, a confident look, barefooted, resigned to everything and proud of our protection.

**STREPSIADES** Oh! Earth! What august utterances! how sacred! how wondrous!

**SOCRATES** That is because these are the only goddesses; all the rest are pure myth.

**STREPSIADES** But by the Earth! is our father, Zeus, the Olympian, not a god?

**SOCRATES** Zeus! what Zeus! Are you mad? There is no Zeus.

**STREPSIADES** What are you saying now? Who causes the rain to fall? Answer me that!

**SOCRATES** Why, these, and I will prove it. Have you ever seen it raining without clouds? Let Zeus then cause

rain with a clear sky and without their presence!

**STREPSIADES** By Apollo! that is powerfully argued! For my own part, I always thought it was Zeus pissing into a sieve. But tell me, who is it makes the thunder, which I so much dread?

**SOCRATES** These, when they roll one over the other.

**STREPSIADES** But how can that be? you most daring among men!

**SOCRATES** Being full of water, and forced to move along, they are of necessity precipitated in rain, being fully distended with moisture from the regions where they have been floating; hence they bump each other heavily and burst with great noise.

**STREPSIADES** But is it not Zeus who forces them to move?

**SOCRATES** Not at all; it's the aerial Whirlwind.

**STREPSIADES** The Whirlwind! ah! I did not know that. So Zeus, it seems, has no existence, and it's the Whirlwind that reigns in his stead? But you have not yet told me what makes the roll of the thunder?

**SOCRATES** Have you not understood me then? I tell you, that the Clouds, when full of rain, bump against one another, and that, being inordinately swollen out, they burst with a great noise.

**STREPSIADES** How can you make me credit that?

**SOCRATES** Take yourself as an example. When you have heartily gorged on stew at the Panathenaea, you get throes of stomach-ache and then suddenly your belly resounds with prolonged rumbling.

**STREPSIADES** Yes, yes, by Apollo I suffer, I get colic, then the stew sets to rumbling like thunder and finally bursts forth with a terrific noise. At first, it's but a little gurgling pappax, pappax! then it increases, papapappax! and when I take my crap, why, it's thunder indeed, papapappax! pappax!! papapappax!!! just like the clouds.

**SOCRATES** Well then, reflect what a noise is produced by your belly, which is but small. Shall not the air, which is boundless, produce these mighty claps of thunder?

**STREPSIADES** And this is why the names are so much alike: crap and clap. But tell me this. Whence comes the lightning, the dazzling flame, which at times consumes the man it strikes, at others hardly sings him. Is it not plain, that Zeus is hurling it at the perjurers?

**SOCRATES** Out upon the fool! the driveller! he still savours of the golden age! If Zeus strikes at the perjurers, why has he not blasted Simon, Cleonymus and Theorus? Of a surety, greater perjurers cannot exist. No, he strikes his own temple, and Sunium, the promontory of Athens, and the towering oaks. Now, why should he do that? An oak is no perjurer.

**STREPSIADES** I cannot tell, but it seems to me well argued. What is the lightning then?

**SOCRATES** When a dry wind ascends to the Clouds and gets shut into them, it blows them out like a bladder; finally, being too confined, it bursts them, escapes with fierce violence and a roar to flash into flame by reason of its own impetuosity.

**STREPSIADES** Ah, that's just what happened to me one day. It was at the feast of Zeus! I was cooking a sow's belly for my family and I had forgotten to slit it open. It swelled out and, suddenly bursting, discharged itself right into my eyes and burnt my face.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** Oh, mortal, you who desire to instruct yourself in our great wisdom, the Athenians, the Greeks will envy you your good fortune. Only you must have the memory and ardour for study, you must know how to stand the tests, hold your own, go forward without feeling fatigue, caring but little for food, abstaining from wine, gymnastic exercises and other similar follies, in fact, you must believe as every man of intellect should, that the greatest of all blessings is to live and think more clearly than the vulgar herd, to shine in the contests of words.

**STREPSIADES** If it be a question of hardiness for labour, of spending whole nights at work, of living sparingly, of fighting my stomach and only eating chickpease, rest assured, I am as hard as an anvil.

**SOCRATES** Henceforward, following our example, you will recognize no other gods but Chaos, the Clouds and the Tongue, these three alone.

**STREPSIADES** I would not speak to the others, even if I met them in the street; not a single sacrifice, not a libation, not a grain of incense for them!

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** Tell us boldly then what you want of us; you cannot fail to succeed. If you honour and revere us and if you are resolved to become a clever man.

**STREPSIADES** Oh, sovereign goddesses, it is only a very small favour that I ask of you; grant that I may outdistance all the Greeks by a hundred stadia in the art of speaking.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** We grant you this, and henceforward no eloquence shall more often succeed with the people than your own.

**STREPSIADES** May the gods shield me from possessing great eloquence! That's not what I want. I want to be able to turn bad law-suits to my own advantage and to slip through the fingers of my creditors.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** It shall be as you wish, for your ambitions are modest. Commit yourself fearlessly to our ministers, the sophists.

**STREPSIADES** This I will do, for I trust in you. Moreover there is no drawing back, what with these cursed horses and this marriage, which has eaten up my vitals. (More and more volubly from here to the end of speech) So let them do with me as they will; I yield my body to them. Come blows, come hunger, thirst, heat or cold, little matters it to me; they may flay me, if I only escape my debts, if only I win the reputation of being a bold rascal, a fine speaker, impudent, shameless, a braggart, and adept at stringing lies, an old stager at quibbles, a complete table of laws, a thorough rattle, a fox to slip through any hole; supple as a leathern strap, slippery as an eel, an artful fellow, a blusterer, a villain; a knave with a hundred faces, cunning, intolerable, a gluttonous dog. With such epithets do I seek to be greeted; on these terms they can treat me as they choose, and, if they wish, by Demeter! they can turn me into sausages and serve me up to the philosophers.

**CHORUS (singing)** Here have we a bold and well-disposed pupil indeed. When we have taught you, your glory among the mortals will reach even to the skies.

**STREPSIADES (singing)** Wherein will that profit me?

**CHORUS (singing)** You will pass your whole life among us and will be the most envied of men.

**STREPSIADES (singing)** Shall I really ever see such happiness?

**CHORUS (singing)** Clients will be everlastingly besieging your door in crowds, burning to get at you, to explain their business to you and to consult you about their suits, which, in return for your ability, will bring you in great sums.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** But, Socrates, begin the lessons you want to teach this old man; rouse his mind, try the strength of his intelligence.

**SOCRATES** Come, tell me the kind of mind you have; it's important that I know this, that I may order my batteries against you in the right fashion.

**STREPSIADES** Eh, what! in the name of the gods, are you purposing to assault me then?

**SOCRATES** No. I only wish to ask you some questions. Have you any memory?

**STREPSIADES** That depends: if anything is owed me, my memory is excellent, but if I owe, alas! I have none whatever.

**SOCRATES** Have you a natural gift for speaking?

**STREPSIADES** For speaking, no; for cheating, yes.

**SOCRATES** How will you be able to learn then?

**STREPSIADES** Very easily, have no fear.

**SOCRATES** Thus, when I throw forth some philosophical thought anent things celestial., you will seize it in its very flight?

**STREPSIADES** Then I am to snap up wisdom much as a dog snaps up a morsel?

**SOCRATES (aside)** Oh! the ignoramus! the barbarian! (to

**STREPSIADES)** I greatly fear, old man, it will be necessary for me to have recourse to blows. Now, let me hear what you do when you are beaten.

**STREPSIADES** I receive the blow, then wait a moment, take my witnesses and finally summon my assailant at law.

**SOCRATES** Come, take off your cloak.

**STREPSIADES** Have I robbed you of anything?

**SOCRATES** No. but the usual thing is to enter the school without your cloak.

**STREPSIADES** But I have not come here to look for stolen goods.

**SOCRATES** Off with it, fool!

**STREPSIADES (He obeys.)** Tell me, if I prove thoroughly attentive and learn with zeal, which O; your disciples shall I resemble, do you think?

**SOCRATES** You will be the image of Chaerephon.

**STREPSIADES** Ah! unhappy me! Shall I then be only half alive?

**SOCRATES** A truce to this chatter! follow me and no more of it.

**STREPSIADES** First give me a honey-cake, for to descend down there sets me all a-tremble; it looks like the cave of Trophonius.

**SOCRATES** But get in with you! What reason have you for thus dallying at the door?

(They go into the Thinkery.)

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** Good luck! you have courage; may you succeed, you, who, though already so advanced in years, wish to instruct your mind with new studies and practise it in wisdom! (The **CHORUS** turns and faces the Audience.) Spectators! By Bacchus, whose servant I am, I will frankly tell you the truth. May I secure both victory and renown as certainly as I hold you for adept critics and as I regard this comedy as my best. I wished to give you the first view of a work, which had cost me much trouble, but which I withdrew, unjustly beaten by unskilful rivals. It is you, oh, enlightened public, for whom I have prepared my piece, that I reproach with this. Nevertheless I shall never willingly cease to seek the approval of the discerning. I have not forgotten the day, when men, whom one is happy to have for an audience, received my Virtuous Young Man and my Paederast with so much favour in this very place. Then as yet virgin, my Muse had not attained the age for maternity; she had to expose her first-born for another to adopt, and it has since grown up under your generous patronage. Ever since you have as good as sworn me your faithful alliance. Thus, like the Electra of the poets, my comedy has come to seek you to-day, hoping again to encounter such enlightened spectators. As far away as she can discern her Orestes, she will be able to recognize him by his curly head. And note her modest demeanour! She has not sewn on a piece of hanging leather, thick and reddened at the end, to cause laughter among the children; she does not rail at the bald, neither does she dance the cordax; no old man is seen, who, while uttering his lines, batters his questioner with a stick to make his poor jests pass muster. She does not rush upon the scene carrying a torch and screaming, 'Iou! Iou!' No, she relies upon herself and her verses....My value is so well known, that I take no further pride in it. I do not seek to deceive you, by reproducing the same subjects two or three times; I always invent fresh themes to present before you, themes that have no relation to each other and that are all clever. I attacked Cleon to his face and when he was all-powerful; but he has fallen, and now I have no desire to kick him when he is down. My rivals, on the contrary, now that this wretched Hyperbolus has given them the cue, have never ceased setting upon both him and his mother. First Eupolis presented his 'Maricas'; this was simply my 'Knights,' whom this plagiarist had clumsily furbished up again by adding to the piece an old drunken woman, so that she might dance the cordax. It was an old idea, taken from Phrynichus, who caused his old hag to be devoured by a monster of the deep. Then Hermippus fell foul of Hyperbolus and now all the others fall upon him and repeat my comparison of the eels. May those who find amusement in their pieces not be pleased with mine, but as for you, who love and applaud my inventions, why, posterity will praise your good taste.

**FIRST SEMI-CHORUS** (singing) Oh, ruler of Olympus, all-powerful king of the gods, great Zeus, it is thou whom I first invoke; protect this chorus; and thou too, Posidon, whose dread trident upheaves at the will of thy anger both the bowels of the earth and the salty waves of the ocean. I invoke my illustrious father, the divine Aether, the universal sustainer of life, and Phoebus, who, from the summit of his chariot, sets the world aflame with his dazzling rays, Phoebus, a mighty deity amongst the gods and adored amongst mortals.

**LEADER OF FIRST SEMI-CHORUS** Most wise spectators, lend us all your attention. Give heed to our just reproaches. There exist no gods to whom this city owes more than it does to us, whom alone you forget. Not a sacrifice, not a libation is there for those who protect you! Have you decreed some mad expedition? Well! we thunder or we fall down in rain. When you chose that enemy of heaven, the Paphlagonian tanner, for a general, we knitted our brow, we caused our wrath to break out; the lightning shot forth, the thunder pealed, the moon deserted her course and the sun at once veiled his beam threatening, no longer to give you light, if Cleon became general. Nevertheless you elected him; it is said, Athens never resolves upon some fatal step but the gods turn these errors into her greatest gain. Do you wish that his election should even now be a success for you? It is a very simple thing to do; condemn this rapacious gull named Cleon for bribery and extortion, fit a wooden collar tight round his neck, and your error will be rectified and the commonweal will at once regain its old prosperity.

**SECOND SEMI-CHORUS** (singing) Aid me also, Phoebus, god of Delos, who reignest on the cragged peaks of Cynthia; and thou, happy virgin, to whom the Lydian damsels offer pompous sacrifice in a temple; of gold; and thou, goddess of our country, Athene, armed with the aegis, the protectress of Athens; and thou, who, surrounded

by the bacchants of Delphi; roamest over the rocks of Parnassus shaking the flame of thy resinous torch, thou, Bacchus, the god of revel and joy.

**LEADER OF SECOND SEMI-CHORUS** As we were preparing to come here, we were hailed by the Moon and were charged to wish joy and happiness both to the Athenians and to their allies; further, she said that she was enraged and that you treated her very shamefully, her, who does not pay you in words alone, but who renders you all real benefits. Firstly, thanks to her, you save at least a drachma each month for lights, for each, as he is leaving home at night, says, "Slave, buy no torches, for the moonlight is beautiful,"-not to name a thousand other benefits. Nevertheless you do not reckon the days correctly and your calendar is naught but confusion. Consequently the gods load her with threats each time they get home and are disappointed of their meal, because the festival has not been kept in the regular order of time. When you should be sacrificing, you are putting to the torture or administering justice. And often, we others, the gods, are fasting in token of mourning for the death of Memnon or Sarpedon, while you are devoting yourselves to joyous libations. It is for this, that last year, when the lot would have invested Hyperbolus with the duty of Amphictyon, we took his crown from him, to teach him that time must be divided according to the phases of the moon.

**SOCRATES** (coming out) By Respiration, the Breath of Life! By Chaos! By the Air! I have never seen a man so gross, so inept, so stupid, so forgetful. All the little quibbles, which I teach him, he forgets even before he has learnt them. Yet I will not give it up, I will make him come out here into the open air. Where are you, **STREPSIADES**? Come, bring your couch out here.

**STREPSIADES** (from within) But the bugs will not allow me to bring it.

**SOCRATES** Have done with such nonsense! place it there and pay attention.

**STREPSIADES** (coming out, with the bed) Well, here I am.

**SOCRATES** Good! Which science of all those you have never been taught, do you wish to learn first? The measures, the rhythms or the verses?

**STREPSIADES** Why, the measures; the flour dealer cheated me out of two choenixes the other day.

**SOCRATES** It's not about that I ask you, but which, according to you, is the best measure, the trimeter or the tetrameter?

**STREPSIADES** The one I prefer is the semisextarius.

**SOCRATES** You talk nonsense, my good fellow.

**STREPSIADES** I will wager your tetrameter is the semisextarius.

**SOCRATES** Plague seize the dunce and the fool! Come, perchance you will learn the rhythms quicker.

**STREPSIADES** Will the rhythms supply me with food?

**SOCRATES** First they will help you to be pleasant in company, then to know what is meant by enhoplitan rhythm and what by the dactylic.

**STREPSIADES** Of the dactyl? I know that quite well.

**SOCRATES** What is it then, other than this finger here?

**STREPSIADES** Formerly, when a child, I used this one.

**SOCRATES** You are as low-minded as you are stupid.

**STREPSIADES** But, wretched man, I do not want to learn all this.

**SOCRATES** Then what do you want to know?

**STREPSIADES** Not that, not that, but the art of false reasoning.

**SOCRATES** But you must first learn other things. Come, what are the male quadrupeds?

**STREPSIADES** Oh! I know the males thoroughly. Do you take me for a fool then? The ram, the buck, the bull, the dog, the pigeon.

**SOCRATES** Do you see what you are doing; is not the female pigeon called the same as the male?

**STREPSIADES** How else? Come now!

**SOCRATES** How else? With you then it's pigeon and pigeon!

**STREPSIADES** That's right, by Posidon! but what names do you want me to give them?

**SOCRATES** Term the female pigeonette and the male pigeon.

**STREPSIADES** Pigeonette! hah! by the Air! That's splendid! for that lesson bring out your kneading-trough and I will fill him with flour to the brim.

**SOCRATES** There you are wrong again; you make trough masculine and it should be feminine.

STREPSIADES What? if I say, him, do I make the trough masculine?

SOCRATES Assuredly! would you not say him for Cleonymus?

STREPSIADES Well?

SOCRATES Then trough is of the same gender as Cleonymus?

STREPSIADES My good man! Cleonymus never had a kneading-trough; he used a round mortar for the purpose. But come, tell me what I should say!

SOCRATES For trough you should say her as you would for Sostrate.

STREPSIADES Her?

SOCRATES In this manner you make it truly female.

STREPSIADES That's it! Her for trough and her for Cleonymus. SOCRATE," Now I must teach you to distinguish the masculine proper names from those that are feminine.

STREPSIADES Ah! I know the female names well.

SOCRATES Name some then.

STREPSIADES Lysilla, Philinna, Clitagora, Demetria.

SOCRATES And what are masculine names?

STREPSIADES They are are countless-Philoxenus, Melesias, Amynias.

SOCRATES But, wretched man, the last two are not masculine.

STREPSIADES You do not count them as masculine?

SOCRATES Not at all. If you met Amynias, how would you hail him?

STREPSIADES How? Why, I should shout, "Hi, there, Amynia!

SOCRATES Do you see? it's a female name that you give him.

STREPSIADES And is it not rightly done, since he refuses military service? But what use is there in learning what we all know?

SOCRATES You know nothing about it. Come, lie down there.

STREPSIADES What for?

SOCRATES Ponder awhile over matters that interest you.

STREPSIADES Oh! I pray you, not there but, if I must lie down and ponder, let me lie on the ground.

SOCRATES That's out of the question. Come! on the couch!

STREPSIADES (as he lies down) What cruel fate! What a torture the bugs will this day put me to!

(Socrates turns aside.)

CHORUS (singing) Ponder and examine closely, gather your thoughts together, let your mind turn to every side of things; if you meet with a difficulty, spring quickly to some other idea; above all, keep your eyes away from all gentle sleep.

STREPSIADES (singing) Ow, Wow, Wow, Wow is me!

CHORUS (singing) What ails you? why do you cry so?

STREPSIADES Oh! I am a dead man! Here are these cursed Corinthians advancing upon me from all corners of the couch; they are biting me, they are gnawing at my sides, they are drinking all my blood, they are yanking of my balls, they are digging into my arse, they are killing me!

LEADER OF THE CHORUS Not so much wailing and clamour, if you please.

STREPSIADES How can I obey? I have lost my money and my complexion, my blood and my slippers, and to cap my misery, I must keep awake on this couch, when scarce a breath of life is left in me. (A brief interval of silence ensues.)

SOCRATES Well now! what are you doing? are you reflecting?

STREPSIADES Yes, by Posidon!

SOCRATES What about?

STREPSIADES Whether the bugs will entirely devour me.

SOCRATES May death seize you, accursed man!

(He turns aside again.)

STREPSIADES Ah it has already.

SOCRATES Come, no giving way! Cover up your head; the thing to do is to find an ingenious alternative.

STREPSIADES An alternative! ah! I only wish one would come to me from within these coverlets!

(Another interval of silence ensues.)

SOCRATES Wait! let us see what our fellow is doing! Ho! are you asleep?

STREPSIADES No, by Apollo!

SOCRATES Have you got hold of anything?

STREPSIADES No, nothing whatever.

SOCRATES Nothing at all?

STREPSIADES No, nothing except my tool, which I've got in my hand.

SOCRATES Aren't you going to cover your head immediately and ponder?

STREPSIADES On what? Come, Socrates, tell me.

SOCRATES Think first what you want, and then tell me.

STREPSIADES But I have told you a thousand times what I want. Not to pay any of my creditors.

SOCRATES Come, wrap yourself up; concentrate your mind, which wanders to lightly; study every detail, scheme and examine thoroughly.

STREPSIADES Alas! Alas!

SOCRATES Keep still, and if any notion troubles you, put it quickly aside, then resume it and think over it again.

STREPSIADES My dear little Socrates!

SOCRATES What is it, old greybeard?

STREPSIADES I have a scheme for not paying my debts.

SOCRATES Let us hear it.

STREPSIADES Tell me, if I purchased a Thessalian witch, I could make the moon descend during the night and shut it, like a mirror, into a round box and there keep it carefully....

SOCRATES How would you gain by that?

STREPSIADES How? why, if the moon did not rise, I would have no interest to pay.

SOCRATES Why so?

STREPSIADES Because money is lent by the month.

SOCRATES Good! but I am going to propose another trick to you. If you were condemned to pay five talents, how would you manage to quash that verdict? Tell me.

STREPSIADES How? how? I don't know, I must think.

SOCRATES Do you always shut your thoughts within yourself? Let your ideas fly in the air, like a may-bug, tied by the foot with a thread.

STREPSIADES I have found a very clever way to annul that conviction; you will admit that much yourself.

SOCRATES What is it?

STREPSIADES Have you ever seen a beautiful, transparent stone at the druggists', with which you may kindle fire?

SOCRATES You mean a crystal lens.

STREPSIADES That's right. Well, now if I placed myself with this stone in the sun and a long way off from the clerk, while he was writing out the conviction, I could make all the wax, upon which the words were written, melt.

SOCRATES Well thought out, by the Graces!

STREPSIADES Ah! I am delighted to have annulled the decree that was to cost me five talents.

SOCRATES Come, take up this next question quickly.

STREPSIADES Which?

SOCRATES If, when summoned to court, you were in danger of losing your case for want of witnesses, how would you make the conviction fall upon your opponent?

STREPSIADES That's very simple and easy.

SOCRATES Let me hear.

STREPSIADES This way. If another case had to be pleaded before mine was called, I should run and hang myself.

SOCRATES You talk rubbish!

STREPSIADES Not so, by the gods! if I were dead, no action could lie against me.

SOCRATES You are merely beating the air. Get out! I will give you no more lessons.

STREPSIADES (imploringly) Why not? Oh! Socrates! in the name of the gods!

SOCRATES But you forget as fast as you learn. Come, what was the thing I taught you first? Tell me.

STREPSIADES Ah let me see. What was the first thing? What was it then? Ah! that thing in which we knead the

bread, oh! my god! what do you call it?

**SOCRATES** Plague take the most forgetful and silliest of old addelepates!

**STREPSIADES** Alas! what a calamity! what will become of me? I am undone if I do not learn how to ply my tongue. Oh! Clouds! give me good advice.

**CHORUS-LEADER** Old man, we counsel you, if you have brought up a son, to send him to learn in your stead.

**STREPSIADES** Undoubtedly I have a son, as well endowed as the best, but he is unwilling to learn. What will become of me?

**CHORUS-LEADER** And you don't make him obey you?

**STREPSIADES** You see, he is big and strong; moreover, through his mother he is a descendant of those fine birds, the race of Coesyra. Nevertheless, I will go and find him, and if he refuses, I will turn him out of the house. Go in, Socrates, and wait for me awhile.

(**SOCRATES** goes into the Thinkery, **STREPSIADES** into his own house.)

**CHORUS** (singing) Do you understand, Socrates, that thanks to us you will be loaded with benefits? Here is a man, ready to obey you in all things. You see how he is carried away with admiration and enthusiasm. Profit by it to clip him as short as possible; fine chances are all too quickly gone.

**STREPSIADES** (coming out of his house and pushing his son in front of him) No, by the Clouds! you stay here no longer; go and devour the ruins of your uncle Megacles' fortune.

**PHIDIPIDES** Oh! my poor father! what has happened to you? By the Olympian Zeus! You are no longer in your senses!

**STREPSIADES** Look! "the Olympian Zeus." Oh! you fool! to believe in Zeus at your age!

**PHIDIPIDES** What is there in that to make you laugh?

**STREPSIADES** You are then a tiny little child, if you credit such antiquated rubbish! But come here, that I may teach you; I will tell you something very necessary to know to be a man; but do not repeat it to anybody.

**PHIDIPIDES** Tell me, what is it?

**STREPSIADES** Just now you swore by Zeus.

**PHIDIPIDES** Sure I did.

**STREPSIADES** Do you see how good it is to learn? **PHIDIPIDES**, there is no Zeus.

**PHIDIPIDES** What is there then?

**STREPSIADES** The Whirlwind has driven out Zeus and is King now.

**PHIDIPIDES** What drivell!

**STREPSIADES** You must realize that it is true.

**PHIDIPIDES** And who says so?

**STREPSIADES** Socrates, the Melian, and Chaerephon, who knows how to measure the jump of a flea.

**PHIDIPIDES** Have you reached such a pitch of madness that you believe those bilious fellows?

**STREPSIADES** Use better language, and do not insult men who are clever and full of wisdom, who, to economize, never shave, shun the gymnasia and never go to the baths, while you, you only await my death to eat up my wealth. But come, come as quickly as you can to learn in my stead.

**PHIDIPIDES** And what good can be learnt of them?

**STREPSIADES** What good indeed? Why, all human knowledge. Firstly, you will know yourself grossly ignorant. But await me here awhile. (He goes back into his house.)

**PHIDIPIDES** Alas! what is to be done? Father has lost his wits. Must I have him certificated for lunacy, or must I order his coffin?

**STREPSIADES** (returning with a bird in each hand) Come! what kind of bird is this? Tell me.

**PHIDIPIDES** A pigeon.

**STREPSIADES** Good! And this female?

**PHIDIPIDES** A pigeon.

**STREPSIADES** The same for both? You make me laugh! In the future you must call this one a pigeonnette and the other a pigeon.

**PHIDIPIDES** A pigeonnette! These then are the fine things you have just learnt at the school of these sons of

Earth!

**STREPSIADES** And many others; but what I learnt I forgot at once, because I am to old.

**PHIDIPPIDES** So this is why you have lost your cloak?

**STREPSIADES** I have not lost it, I have consecrated it to Philosophy.

**PHIDIPPIDES** And what have you done with your sandals, you poor fool?

**STREPSIADES** If I have lost them, it is for what was necessary, just as Pericles did. But come, move yourself, let us go in; if necessary, do wrong to obey your father. When you were six years old and still lisped, I was the one who obeyed you. I remember at the feasts of Zeus you had a consuming wish for a little chariot and I bought it for you with the first obolus which I received as a juryman in the courts.

**PHIDIPPIDES** You will soon repent of what you ask me to do.

**STREPSIADES** Oh! now I am happy! He obeys. (loudly) Come, Socrates, come! Come out quick! Here I am bringing you my son; he refused, but I have persuaded him.

**SOCRATES** Why, he is but a child yet. He is not used to these baskets, in which we suspend our minds.

**PHIDIPPIDES** To make you better used to them, I would you were hung.

**STREPSIADES** A curse upon you! you insult your master!

**SOCRATES** "I would you were hung!" What a stupid speech! and so emphatically spoken! How can one ever get out of an accusation with such a tone, summon witnesses or touch or convince? And yet when we think, Hyperbolus learnt all this for one talent!

**STREPSIADES** Rest undisturbed and teach him. He has a most intelligent nature. Even when quite little he amused himself at home with making houses, carving boats, constructing little chariots of leather, and understood wonderfully how to make frogs out of pomegranate rinds. Teach him both methods of reasoning, the strong and also the weak, which by false arguments triumphs over the strong; if not the two, at least the false, and that in every possible way.

**SOCRATES** The Just and Unjust Discourse themselves shall instruct him. I shall leave you.

**STREPSIADES** But forget it not, he must always, always be able to confound the true.

(Socrates enters the Thinkery; a moment later the **JUST** and the **UNJUST DISCOURSE** come out; they are quarrelling violently.)

**JUST DISCOURSE** Come here! Shameless as you may be, will you dare to show your face to the spectators?

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Take me where you will. I seek a throng, so that I may the better annihilate you.

**JUST DISCOURSE** Annihilate me! Do you forget who you are?

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** I am Reasoning.

**JUST DISCOURSE** Yes, the weaker Reasoning."

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** But I triumph over you, who claim to be the stronger.

**JUST DISCOURSE** By what cunning shifts, pray?

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** By the invention of new maxims.

**JUST DISCOURSE** .... which are received with favour by these fools.

(He points to the audience.)

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Say rather, by these wise men.

**JUST DISCOURSE** I am going to destroy you mercilessly.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** How pray? Let us see you do it.

**JUST DISCOURSE** By saying what is true.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** I shall retort and shall very soon have the better of you. First, maintain that justice has no existence.

**JUST DISCOURSE** Has no existence?

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** No existence! Why, where is it?

**JUST DISCOURSE** With the gods.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** How then, if justice exists, was Zeus not put to death for having put his father in chains?

**JUST DISCOURSE** Bah! this is enough to turn my stomach! A basin, quick!

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** You are an old driveller and stupid withal.

**JUST DISCOURSE** And you a degenerate and shameless fellow.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Hah! What sweet expressions!

**JUST DISCOURSE** An impious buffoon.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** You crown me with roses and with lilies.

**JUST DISCOURSE** A parricide.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Why, you shower gold upon me.

**JUST DISCOURSE** Formerly it was a hailstorm of blows.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** I deck myself with your abuse.

**JUST DISCOURSE** What impudence!

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** What tomfoolery!

**JUST DISCOURSE** It is because of you that the youth no longer attends the schools. The Athenians will soon recognize what lessons you teach those who are fools enough to believe you.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** You are overwhelmed with wretchedness.

**JUST DISCOURSE** And you, you prosper. Yet you were poor when you said, "I am the Mysian Telephus," and used to stuff your wallet with maxims of Pandeletus to nibble at.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Oh! the beautiful wisdom, of which you are now boasting!

**JUST DISCOURSE** Madman! But yet madder the city that keeps you, you, the corrupter of its youth!

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** It is not you who will teach this young man; you are as old and out of date at Cronus.

**JUST DISCOURSE** Nay, it will certainly be I, if he does not wish to be lost and to practise verbosity only.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** (to

**PHIDIPIDES**) Come here and leave him to beat the air.

**JUST DISCOURSE** You'll regret it, if you touch him.

**CHORUS-LEADER** (stepping between them as they are about to come to blows) A truce to your quarrellings and abuse! But you expound what you taught us formerly, and you, your new doctrine. Thus, after hearing each of you argue, he will be able to choose betwixt the two schools.

**JUST DISCOURSE** I am quite agreeable.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** And I too.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** Who is to speak first?

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Let it be my opponent, he has my full consent; then I shall follow upon the very ground he shall have chosen and shall shatter him with a hail of new ideas and subtle fancies; if after that he dares to breathe another word, I shall sting him in the face and in the eyes with our maxims, which are as keen as the sting of a wasp, and he will die.

**CHORUS** (singing) Here are two rivals confident in their powers of oratory and in the thoughts over which they have pondered so long. Let us see which will come triumphant out of the contest. This wisdom, for which my friends maintain such a persistent fight, is in great danger.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** Come then, you, who crowned men of other days with so many virtues, plead the cause dear to you, make yourself known to us.

**JUST DISCOURSE** Very well, I will tell you what was the old education, when I used to teach justice with so much success and when modesty was held in veneration. Firstly, it was required of a child, that it should not utter a word. In the street, when they went to the music-school, all the youths of the same district marched lightly clad and ranged in good order, even when the snow was falling in great flakes. At the master's house they had to stand with their legs apart and they were taught to sing either, "Pallas, the Terrible, who overturneth cities," or "A noise resounded from afar" in the solemn tones of the ancient harmony. If anyone indulged in buffoonery or lent his voice any of the soft inflexions, like those which to-day the disciples of Phrynus take so much pains to form, he was treated as an enemy of the Muses and belaboured with blows. In the wrestling school they would sit with outstretched legs and without display of any indecency to the curious. When they rose, they would smooth over the sand, so as to leave no trace to excite obscene thoughts. Never was a child rubbed with oil below the belt; the rest of their bodies thus retained its fresh bloom and down, like a velvety peach. They were not to be seen approaching a lover and themselves rousing his passion by soft modulation of the voice and lustful gaze. At table, they would not have dared, before those older than themselves, to have taken a radish, an aniseed or a leaf of parsley, and much less eat fish or thrushes or cross their legs.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** What antiquated rubbish! Have we got back to the days of the festivals of Zeus Polieus, to the Buphonia, to the time of the poet Cecides and the golden cicadas?

**JUST DISCOURSE** Nevertheless by suchlike teaching I built up the men of Marathon-But you, you teach the children of to-day to bundle themselves quickly into their clothes, and I am enraged when I see them at the Panathenaea forgetting Athene while they dance, and covering their tools with their bucklers. Hence, young man, dare to range yourself beside me, who follow justice and truth; you will then be able to shun the public place, to refrain from the baths, to blush at all that is shameful, to fire up if your virtue is mocked at, to give place to your elders, to honour your parents, in short, to avoid all that is evil. Be modesty itself, and do not run to applaud the dancing girls; if you delight in such scenes, some courtesan will cast you her apple and your reputation will be done for. Do not bandy words with your father, nor treat him as a dotard, nor reproach the old man, who has cherished you, with his age.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** If you listen to him, by Bacchus! you will be the image of the sons of Hippocrates and will be called mother's big ninny.

**JUST DISCOURSE** No, but you will pass your days at the gymnasia, glowing with strength and health; you will not go to the public place to cackle and wrangle as is done nowadays; you will not live in fear that you may be dragged before the courts for some trifle exaggerated by quibbling. But you will go down to the Academy to run beneath the sacred olives with some virtuous friend of your own age, your head encircled with the white reed, enjoying your ease and breathing the perfume of the yew and of the fresh sprouts of the poplar, rejoicing in the return of springtide and gladly listening to the gentle rustle of the plane tree and the elm. (With greater warmth from here on) If you devote yourself to practising my precepts, your chest will be stout, your colour glowing, your shoulders broad, your tongue short, your hips muscular, but your tool small. But if you follow the fashions of the day, you will be pallid in hue, have narrow shoulders, a narrow chest, a long tongue, small hips and a big thing; you will know how to spin forth long-winded arguments on law. You will be persuaded also to regard as splendid everything that is shameful and as shameful everything that is honourable; in a word, you will wallow in degeneracy like Antimachus.

**CHORUS (singing)** How beautiful, high-souled, brilliant is this wisdom that you practise! What a sweet odour of honesty is emitted by your discourse! Happy were those men of other days who lived when you were honoured! And you, seductive talker, come, find some fresh arguments, for your rival has done wonders.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** You will have to bring out against him all the battery of your wit, if you desire to beat him and not to be laughed out of court.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** At last! I was choking with impatience, I was burning to upset his arguments! If I am called the Weaker Reasoning in the schools, it is just because I was the first to discover the means to confute the laws and the decrees of justice. To invoke solely the weaker arguments and yet triumph is an art worth more than a hundred thousand drachmae. But see how I shall batter down the sort of education of which he is so proud. Firstly, he forbids you to bathe in hot water. What grounds have you for condemning hot baths?

**JUST DISCOURSE** Because they are baneful and enervate men.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Enough said! Oh! you poor wrestler! From the very outset I have seized you and hold you round the middle; you cannot escape me. Tell me, of all the sons of Zeus, who had the stoutest heart, who performed the most doughty deeds?

**JUST DISCOURSE** None, in my opinion, surpassed Heracles.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Where have you ever seen cold baths called 'Bath of Heracles'? And yet who was braver than he?

**JUST DISCOURSE** It is because of such quibbles, that the baths are seen crowded with young folk, who chatter there the livelong day while the gymnasia remain empty.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Next you condemn the habit of frequenting the market-place, while I approve this. If it were wrong Homer would never have made Nestor speak in public as well as all his wise heroes. As for the art of speaking, he tells you, young men should not practise it; I hold the contrary. Furthermore he preaches chastity to them. Both precepts are equally harmful. Have you ever seen chastity of any use to anyone? Answer and try to confute me.

**JUST DISCOURSE** To many; for instance, Peleus won a sword thereby.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** A sword! Ah! what a fine present to make him! Poor wretch! Hyperbolus, the lamp-seller, thanks to his villainy, has gained more than....do not know how many talents, but certainly no sword.

**JUST DISCOURSE** Peleus owed it to his chastity that he became the husband of Thetis.



**UNJUST DISCOURSE** .... who left him in the lurch, for he was not the most ardent; in those nocturnal sports between the sheets, which so please women, he possessed but little merit. Get you gone, you are but an old fool. But you, young man, just consider a little what this temperance means and the delights of which it deprives you-young fellows, women, play, dainty dishes, wine, boisterous laughter. And what is life worth without these? Then, if you happen to commit one of these faults inherent in human weakness, some seduction or adultery, and you are caught in the act, you are lost, if you cannot speak. But follow my teaching and you will be able to satisfy your passions, to dance, to laugh, to blush at nothing. Suppose you are caught in the act of adultery. Then up and tell the husband you are not guilty, and recall to him the example of Zeus, who allowed himself to be conquered by love and by women. Being but a mortal, can you be stronger than a god?

**JUST DISCOURSE** Suppose your pupil, following your advice, gets the radish rammed up his arse and then is depilated with a hot coal; how are you going to prove to him that he is not a broad-arse?

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** What's the matter with being a broad-arse?

**JUST DISCOURSE** Is there anything worse than that?

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Now what will you say, if I beat you even on this point?

**JUST DISCOURSE** I should certainly have to be silent then.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Well then, reply! Our advocates, what are they?

**JUST DISCOURSE** Sons of broad-arses.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Nothing is more true. And our tragic poets?

**JUST DISCOURSE** Sons of broad-arses.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Well said again. And our demagogues?

**JUST DISCOURSE** Sons of broad-arses.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** You admit that you have spoken nonsense. And the spectators, what are they for the most part? Look at them.

**JUST DISCOURSE** I am looking at them.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Well! What do you see?

**JUST DISCOURSE** By the gods, they are nearly all broad-arses. (pointing) See, this one I know to be such and that one and that other with the long hair.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** What have you to say, then?

**JUST DISCOURSE** I am beaten. Debauchees! in the name of the gods, receive my cloak; I pass over to your ranks. (He goes back into the Thinkery.)

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Well then! Are you going to take away your son or do you wish me to teach him how to speak?

**STREPSIADES** Teach him, chastise him and do not fail to sharpen his tongue well, on one side for petty law-suits and on the other for important cases.

**UNJUST DISCOURSE** Don't worry, I shall return him to you an accomplished sophist.

**PHIDIPIDES** Very pale then and thoroughly hang-dog-looking.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** Take him with you. (The **UNJUST DISCOURSE** and **PHIDIPIDES** go into the **THOUGHTERY**. To **STREPSIADES**, who is just going into his own house.)

I think you will regret this.

(The **CHORUS** turns and faces the audience.) judges, we are all about to tell you what you will gain by awarding us the crown as equity requires of you. In spring, when you wish to give your fields the first dressing, we will rain upon you first; the others shall wait. Then we will watch over your corn and over your vinestocks; they will have no excess to fear, neither of heat nor of wet. But if a mortal dares to insult the goddesses of the Clouds, let him think of the ills we shall pour upon him. For him neither wine nor any harvest at all! Our terrible slings will mow down his young olive plants and his vines. If he is making bricks, it will rain, and our round hailstones will break the tiles of his roof. If he himself marries or any of his relations or friends, we shall cause rain to fall the whole night long. Verily, he would prefer to live in Egypt than to have given this iniquitous verdict.

**STREPSIADES** (coming out again) Another four, three, two days, then the eve, then the day, the fatal day of payment! I tremble, I quake, I shudder, for it's the day of the old moon and the new. Then all my creditors take the oath, pay their deposits, I swear my downfall and my ruin. As for me, I beseech them to be reasonable, to be just, "My friend, do not demand this sum, wait a little for this other and give me time for this third one." Then they will

pretend that at this rate they will never be repaid, will accuse me of bad faith and will threaten me with the law. Well then, let them sue me! I care nothing for that, if only **PHIDIPIDES** has learnt to speak fluently. I am going to find out; I'll knock at the door of the school. (He knocks.)... Ho! slave, slave!

**SOCRATES** (coming out) Welcome! **STREPSIADES**!

**STREPSIADES** Welcome! Socrates! But first take this sack (offers him a sack of flour); it is right to reward the master with some present. And my son, whom you took off lately, has he learnt this famous reasoning? Tell me.

**SOCRATES** He has learnt it.

**STREPSIADES** Wonderful! Oh! divine Knavery!

**SOCRATES** You will win just as many causes as you choose.

**STREPSIADES** Even if I have borrowed before witnesses?

**SOCRATES** So much the better, even if there are a thousand of them!

**STREPSIADES** (bursting into song) Then I am going to shout with all my might. "Woe to the usurers, woe to their capital and their interest and their compound interest! You shall play me no more bad turns. My son is being taught there, his tongue is being sharpened into a double-edged weapon; he is my defender, the saviour of my house, the ruin of my foes! His poor father was crushed down with misfortune and he delivers him." Go and call him to me quickly. Oh! my child! my dear little one! run forward to your father's voice!

**SOCRATES** (singing) Lo, the man himself!

**STREPSIADES** (singing) Oh, my friend, my dearest friend!

**SOCRATES** (singing) Take your son, and get you gone.

**STREPSIADES** (as **PHIDIPIDES** appears) Oh, my son! oh! oh! what a pleasure to see your pallor! You are ready first to deny and then to contradict; it's as clear as noon. What a child of your country you are! How your lips quiver with the famous, "What have you to say now?" How well you know, I am certain, to put on the look of a victim, when it is you who are making both victims and dupes! And what a truly Attic glance! Come, it's for you to save me, seeing it is you who have ruined me.

**PHIDIPIDES** What is it you fear then?

**STREPSIADES** The day of the old and the new.

**PHIDIPIDES** Is there then a day of the old and the new?

**STREPSIADES** The day on which they threaten to pay deposit against me.

**PHIDIPIDES** Then so much the worse for those who have deposited! for it's not possible for one day to be two.

**STREPSIADES** What?

**PHIDIPIDES** Why, undoubtedly, unless a woman can be both old and young at the same time.

**STREPSIADES** But so runs the law.

**PHIDIPIDES** I think the meaning of the law is quite misunderstood.

**STREPSIADES** What does it mean?

**PHIDIPIDES** Old Solon loved the people.

**STREPSIADES** What has that to do with the old day and the new?

**PHIDIPIDES** He has fixed two days for the summons, the last day of the old moon and the first day of the new; but the deposits must only be paid on the first day of the new moon.

**STREPSIADES** And why did he also name the last day of the old?

**PHIDIPIDES** So, my dear sir, that the debtors, being there the day before, might free themselves by mutual agreement, or that else, if not, the creditor might begin his action on the morning of the new moon.

**STREPSIADES** Why then do the magistrates have the deposits paid on the last of the month and not the next day?

**PHIDIPIDES** I think they do as the gluttons do, who are the first to pounce upon the dishes. Being eager to carry off these deposits, they have them paid in a day too soon.

**STREPSIADES** Splendid! (to the audience) Ah! you poor brutes, who serve for food to us clever folk! You are only down here to swell the number, true blockheads, sheep for shearing, heap of empty pots! Hence I will sing a song of victory for my son and myself. "Oh! happy, **STREPSIADES**! what cleverness is thine! and what a son thou hast here!" Thus my friends and my neighbours will say, jealous at seeing me gain all my suits. But come in, I wish to regale you first. (They both go in. A moment later a creditor arrives, with his witness.)

**PASIAS** (to the **WITNESS**) A man should never lend a single obolus. It would be better to put on a brazen face at the outset than to get entangled in such matters. I want to see my money again and I bring you here to-day to attest

the loan. I am going to make a foe of a neighbour; but, as long as I live, I do not wish my country to have to blush for me. Come, I am going to summon **STREPSIADES**....

**STREPSIADES** (coming out of his house) Who is this?

**PASIAS** ....for the old day and the new.

**STREPSIADES** (to the WITNESS) I call you to witness, that he has named two days. What do you want of me?

**PASIAS** I claim of you the twelve minae, which you borrowed from me to buy the dapple-grey horse.

**STREPSIADES** A horse! do you hear him? I, who detest horses, as is well known.

**PASIAS** I call Zeus to witness, that you swore by the gods to return them to me.

**STREPSIADES** Because at that time, by Zeus! **PHIDIPIDES** did not yet know the irrefutable argument.

**PASIAS** Would you deny the debt on that account?

**STREPSIADES** If not, what use is his science to me?

**PASIAS** Will you dare to swear by the gods that you owe me nothing?

**STREPSIADES** By which gods?

**PASIAS** By Zeus, Hermes and Posidon!

**STREPSIADES** Why, I would give three obols for the pleasure of swearing by them.

**PASIAS** Woe upon you, impudent knave!

**STREPSIADES** Oh! what a fine wine-skin you would make if flayed!

**PASIAS** Heaven! he jeers at me!

**STREPSIADES** It would hold six gallons easily.

**PASIAS** By great Zeus! by all the gods! you shall not scoff at me with impunity,

**STREPSIADES** Ah! how you amuse me with your gods! how ridiculous it seems to a sage to hear Zeus invoked.

**PASIAS** Your blasphemies will one day meet their reward. But, come, will you repay me my money, yes or no? Answer me, that I may go.

**STREPSIADES** Wait a moment, I am going to give you a distinct answer. (He goes indoors and returns immediately with a kneading-trough.)

**PASIAS** (to the WITNESS) What do you think he will do? Do you think he will pay?

**STREPSIADES** Where is the man who demands money? Tell me, what is this?

**PASIAS** Him? Why, he is your kneading-trough.

**STREPSIADES** And you dare to demand money of me, when you are so ignorant? I will not return an obolus to anyone who says him instead of her for a kneading-trough.

**PASIAS** You will not repay?

**STREPSIADES** Not if I know it. Come, an end to this, pack off as quick as you can.

**PASIAS** I go, but, may I die, if it be not to pay my deposit for a summons.

(Exit)

**STREPSIADES** Very well! It will be so much more loss to add to the twelve minae. But truly it makes me sad, for I do pity a poor simpleton who says him for a kneading-trough (Another creditor arrives.)

**AMNYIAS** Woe! ah woe is me!

**STREPSIADES** Wait! who is this whining fellow? Can it be one of the gods of Carcinus?

**AMNYIAS** Do you want to know who I am? I am a man of misfortune!

**STREPSIADES** Get on your way then.

**AMNYIAS** (in tragic style) Oh! cruel god! Oh Fate, who hast broken the wheels of my chariot! Oh, Pallas, thou hast undone me!

**STREPSIADES** What ill has Tlepolemus done you?

**AMNYIAS** Instead of jeering me, friend, make your son return me the money he has had of me; I am already unfortunate enough.

**STREPSIADES** What money?

**AMNYIAS** The money he borrowed of me.

**STREPSIADES** You have indeed had misfortune, it seems to me.

**AMNYIAS** Yes, by the gods! I have been thrown from a chariot.

**STREPSIADES** Why then drivell as if you had fallen off an ass?

**AMNYIAS** Am I drivelling because I demand my money?

**STREPSIADES** No, no, you cannot be in your right senses.

**AMNYIAS** Why?

**STREPSIADES** No doubt your poor wits have had a shake.

**AMNYIAS** But by Hermes! I will sue you at law, if you do not pay me.

**STREPSIADES** Just tell me; do you think it is always fresh water that Zeus lets fall every time it rains, or is ill always the same water that the sun pumps over the earth?

**AMNYIAS** I neither know, nor care.

**STREPSIADES** And actually you would claim the right to demand your money, when you know not an iota of these celestial phenomena?

**AMNYIAS** If you are short, pay me the interest anyway.

**STREPSIADES** What kind of animal is interest?

**AMNYIAS** What? Does not the sum borrowed go on growing, growing every month, each day as the time slips by?

**STREPSIADES** Well put. But do you believe there is more water in the sea now than there was formerly?

**AMNYIAS** No, it's just the same quantity. It cannot increase.

**STREPSIADES** Thus, poor fool, the sea, that receives the rivers, never grows, and yet you would have your money grow? Get you gone, away with you, quick! Slave! bring me the ox-goad!

**AMNYIAS** I have witnesses to this.

**STREPSIADES** Come, what are you waiting for? Will you not budge, old nag!

**AMNYIAS** What an insult!

**STREPSIADES** Unless you start trotting, I shall catch you and stick this in your arse, you sorry packhorse!

(**AMNYIAS** runs off.) Ah! you start, do you? I was about to drive you pretty fast, I tell you-you and your wheels and your chariot!  
(He enters his house.)

**CHORUS** (singing) Whither does the passion of evil lead! here is a perverse old man, who wants to cheat his creditors; but some mishap, which will speedily punish this rogue for his shameful schemings, cannot fail to overtake him from to-day. For a long time he has been burning to have his son know how to fight against all justice and right and to gain even the most iniquitous causes against his adversaries every one. I think this wish is going to be fulfilled. But mayhap, mayhap, will he soon wish his son were dumb rather!

**STREPSIADES** (rushing out With **PHIDIPIDES** after him) Oh! oh! neighbours, kinsmen, fellow-citizens, help! help! to the rescue, I am being beaten! Oh! my head! oh! my jaw! Scoundrel! Do you beat your own father?

**PHIDIPIDES** (calmly) Yes, father, I do.

**STREPSIADES** See! he admits he is beating me.

**PHIDIPIDES** Of course I do.

**STREPSIADES** You villain, you parricide, you gallows-bird!

**PHIDIPIDES** Go on, repeat your epithets, call me a thousand other names, if it please you. The more you curse, the greater my amusement!

**STREPSIADES** Oh! you ditch-arsed cynic!

**PHIDIPIDES** How fragrant the perfume breathed forth in your words.

**STREPSIADES** Do you beat your own father?

**PHIDIPIDES** Yes, by Zeus! and I am going to show you that I do right in beating you.

**STREPSIADES** Oh, wretch! can it be right to beat a father?

**PHIDIPIDES** I will prove it to you, and you shall own yourself vanquished.

**STREPSIADES** Own myself vanquished on a point like this?

**PHIDIPIDES** It's the easiest thing in the world. Choose whichever of the two reasonings you like.

**STREPSIADES** Of which reasonings?

**PHIDIPIDES** The Stronger and the Weaker.

**STREPSIADES** Miserable fellow! Why, I am the one who had you taught how to refute what is right. and now you would persuade me it is right a son should beat his father.

**PHIDIPIDES** I think I shall convince you so thoroughly that, when you have heard me, you will not have a word to say.

**STREPSIADES** Well, I am curious to hear what you have to say.

**CHORUS** (singing) Consider well, old man, how you can best triumph over him. His brazenness shows me that he thinks himself sure of his case; he has some argument which gives him nerve. Note the confidence in his look!

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** But how did the fight begin? tell the Chorus; you cannot help doing that much.

**STREPSIADES** I will tell you what was the start of the quarrel. At the end of the meal, as you know, I bade him take his lyre and sing me the air of Simonides, which tells of the fleece of the ram. He replied bluntly, that it was stupid, while drinking, to play the lyre and sing, like a woman when she is grinding barley.

**PHIDIPPIDES** Why, by rights I ought to have beaten and kicked you the very moment you told me to sing I

**STREPSIADES** That is just how he spoke to me in the house, furthermore he added, that Simonides was a detestable poet. However, I mastered myself and for a while said nothing. Then I said to him, 'At least, take a myrtle branch and recite a passage from Aeschylus to me.'-'For my own part,' he at once replied, 'I look upon Aeschylus as the first of poets, for his verses roll superbly; they're nothing but incoherence, bombast and turgidity.' Yet still I smothered my wrath and said, 'Then recite one of the famous pieces from the modern poets.' Then he commenced a piece in which Euripides shows, oh! horror! a brother, who violates his own uterine sister. Then I could not longer restrain myself, and attacked him with the most injurious abuse; naturally he retorted; hard words were hurled on both sides, and finally he sprang at me, broke my bones, bore me to earth, strangled and started killing me!

**PHIDIPPIDES** I was right. What! not praise Euripides, the greatest of our poets?

**STREPSIADES** He the greatest of our poets? Ah! if I but dared to speak! but the blows would rain upon me harder than ever.

**PHIDIPPIDES** Undoubtedly and rightly too.

**STREPSIADES** Rightly! Oh! what impudence! to me, who brought you up! when you could hardly lisp, I guessed what you wanted. If you said broo, broo, well, I brought you your milk; if you asked for mam mam, I gave you bread; and you had no sooner said, caca, than I took you outside and held you out. And just now, when you were strangling me, I shouted, I bellowed that I was about to crap; and you, you scoundrel, had not the heart to take me outside, so that, though almost choking, I was compelled to do my crapping right there.

**CHORUS** (singing) Young men, your hearts must be panting with impatience. What is **PHIDIPPIDES** going to say? If, after such conduct, he proves he has done well, I would not give an obolus for the hide of old men.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** Come, you, who know how to brandish and hurl the keen shafts of the new science, find a way to convince us, give your language an appearance of truth.

**PHIDIPPIDES** How pleasant it is to know these clever new inventions and to be able to defy the established laws! When I thought only about horses, I was not able to string three words together without a mistake, but now that the master has altered and improved me and that I live in this world of subtle thought, of reasoning and of meditation, I count on being able to prove satisfactorily that I have done well to thrash my father.

**STREPSIADES** Mount your horse! By Zeus! I would rather defray the keep of a four-in-hand team than be battered with blows.

**PHIDIPPIDES** I revert to what I was saying when you interrupted me. And first, answer me, did you beat me in my childhood?

**STREPSIADES** Why, assuredly, for your good and in your own best interest.

**PHIDIPPIDES** Tell me, is it not right, that in turn I should beat you for your good, since it is for a man's own best interest to be beaten? What! must your body be free of blows, and not mine? am I not free-born too? the children are to weep and the fathers go free? You will tell me, that according to the law, it is the lot of children to be beaten. But I reply that the old men are children twice over and that it is far more fitting to chastise them than the young, for there is less excuse for their faults.

**STREPSIADES** But the law nowhere admits that fathers should be treated thus.

**PHIDIPPIDES** Was not the legislator who carried this law a man like you and me? In those days he got men to believe him; then why should not I too have the right to establish for the future a new law, allowing children to beat their fathers in turn? We make you a present of all the blows which were received before his law, and admit that you thrashed us with impunity. But look how the cocks and other animals fight with their fathers; and yet what difference is there betwixt them and ourselves, unless it be that they do not propose decrees?

**STREPSIADES** But if you imitate the cocks in all things, why don't you scratch up the dunghill, why don't you sleep on a perch?

**PHIDIPPIDES** That has no bearing on the case, good sir; Socrates would find no connection, I assure you.

**STREPSIADES** Then do not beat at all, for otherwise you have only yourself to blame afterwards.

**PHIDIPPIDES** What for?

**STREPSIADES** I have the right to chastise you, and you to chastise your son, if you have one.

**PHIDIPPIDES** And if I have not, I shall have cried in vain, and you will die laughing in my face.

**STREPSIADES** What say you, all here present? It seems to me that he is right, and I am of opinion that they should be accorded their right. If we think wrongly, it is but just we should be beaten.

**PHIDIPPIDES** Again, consider this other point.

**STREPSIADES** It will be the death of me.

**PHIDIPPIDES** But you will certainly feel no more anger because of the blows I have given you.

**STREPSIADES** Come, show me what profit I shall gain from it.

**PHIDIPPIDES** I shall beat my mother just as I have you.

**STREPSIADES** What do you say? what's that you say? Hah! this is far worse still.

**PHIDIPPIDES** And what if I prove to you by our school reasoning, that one ought to beat one's mother?

**STREPSIADES** Ah! if you do that, then you will only have to throw yourself, along with Socrates and his reasoning, into the Barathrum. Oh! Clouds! all our troubles emanate from you, from you, to whom I entrusted myself, body and soul.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** No, you alone are the cause, because you have pursued the path of evil.

**STREPSIADES** Why did you not say so then, instead of egging on a poor ignorant old man?

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** We always act thus, when we see a man conceive a passion for what is evil; we strike him with some terrible disgrace, so that he may learn to fear the gods.

**STREPSIADES** Alas! oh Clouds! that's hard indeed, but it's just! I ought not to have cheated my creditors....But come, my dear son, come with me to take vengeance on this wretched Chaerephon and on Socrates, who have deceived us both.

**PHIDIPPIDES** I shall do nothing against our masters.

**STREPSIADES** Oh show some reverence for ancestral Zeus!

**PHIDIPPIDES** Mark him and his ancestral Zeus! What a fool you are! Does any such being as Zeus exist?

**STREPSIADES** Why, assuredly.

**PHIDIPPIDES** No, a thousand times no! The ruler of the world is the Whirlwind, that has unseated Zeus.

**STREPSIADES** He has not dethroned him. I believed it, because of this whirligig here. Unhappy wretch that I am! I have taken a piece of clay to be a god.

**PHIDIPPIDES** Very well! Keep your stupid nonsense for your own consumption.  
(He goes back into **STREPSIADES'** house.)

**STREPSIADES** Oh! what madness! I had lost my reason when I threw over the gods through Socrates' seductive phrases. (Addressing the statue of Hermes) Oh! good Hermes, do not destroy me in your wrath. Forgive me; their babbling had driven me crazy. Be my counselor. Shall I pursue them at law or shall I....? Order and I obey.-You are right, no law-suit; but up! let us burn down the home of those praters. Here, Xanthias, here! take a ladder, come forth and arm yourself with an axe; now mount upon the Thinkery, demolish the roof, if you love your master, and may the house fall in upon them. Ho! bring me a blazing torch! There is more than one of them, arch-impostors as they are, on whom I am determined to have vengeance.

**A DISCIPLE** (from within) Oh! oh!

**STREPSIADES** Come, torch, do your duty! Burst into full flame!

**DISCIPLE** What are you up to?

**STREPSIADES** What am I up to? Why, I am entering upon a subtle argument with the beams of the house.

**SECOND DISCIPLE** (from within) Hullo! hullo who is burning down our house?

**STREPSIADES** The man whose cloak you have appropriated.

**SECOND DISCIPLE** You are killing us!

**STREPSIADES** That is just exactly what I hope, unless my axe plays me false, or I fall and break my neck.

**SOCRATES** (appearing at the window) Hi! you fellow on the roof, what are you doing up there?

**STREPSIADES** (mocking

**SOCRATES'** manner) I am traversing the air and contemplating the sun.

**SOCRATES** Ah! ah! woe is upon me! I am suffocating!

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**SECOND DISCIPLE** And I, alas, shall be burnt up!

**STREPSIADES** Ah! you insulted the gods! You studied the face of the moon! Chase them, strike and beat them down! Forward! they have richly deserved their fate-above all, by reason of their blasphemies.

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** So let the Chorus file off the stage. Its part is played.

THE END

## "My Sweetest Lesbia" by Thomas Campion

My sweetest Lesbia, let us live and love,  
And though the sager sort our deeds reprove,  
Let us not weigh them : Heaven's great lamps do dive  
Into their west, and straight again revive,  
But soon as once set is our little light,  
Then must we sleep one ever-during night.

If all would lead their lives in love like me,  
Then bloody swords and armor should not be,  
No drum nor trumpet peaceful sleeps should move,  
Unless alarm came from the camp of love.  
But fools do live, and waste their little light,  
And seek with pain their ever-during night.

When timely death my life and fortune ends,  
Let not my hearse be vexed with mourning friends,  
But let all lovers, rich in triumph, come  
And with sweet pastimes grace my happy tomb;  
And, Lesbia, close up thou my little light,  
And crown with love my ever-during night.  
(1601)

### "Vivamus, mea Lesbia" Catullus 5

<p>Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus, rumoresque senum severiorum, omnes unius aestimemus assis. soles occidere et redire possunt: nobis, cum semel occidit brevis lux, nox est perpetua una dormienda. da mi basia mille, deinde centum, dein mille altera, dein secunda centum, deinde usque altera mille, deinde centum dein, cum milia multa fecerimus, conturbabimus illa, ne sciamus, aut nequis malus invidere possit, cum tantum sciat esse basiorum. (63 b.c.)</p>	<p>Let us live, my Lesbia, and let us love, and value at one cent all the talk of crabbed old men. Suns may set and rise again. For us, when the short light has once set, remains to be slept the sleep of one unbroken night. Give me a thousand kisses, then a hundred, then another thousand, then a second hundred, then yet another thousand, then a hundred. Then, when we have made up many thousands, we will confuse our counting, that we may not know the reckoning, nor any malicious person blight them with evil eye, when he knows that our kisses are so many.</p>
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The question students usually ask about this poem is why a man was writing to a woman named Lesbia. To get the answer, we must go back a bit.

Campion's poem starts with a translation from Catullus 5. Catullus (84-54 b.c.) was a poet writing in Rome during the time of Julius Caesar in the 1<sup>st</sup> century b.c. "Lesbia," who was in many of his poems, was Catullus' nickname for Clodia, wife of Q. Metellus Celer. Catullus had grown up in Verona & moved to Rome when he was 21 years old in 61 b.c. Clodia spotted him about a year later. Powerful and beautiful, she had affairs with several young men, but Catullus was surprised when she dumped him and moved on to her next boy toy. Catullus 5 reflects the time when they were happy together.

So then, why would CATULLUS pick "Lesbia" as the nickname for Claudia?

1. The names had the same number of syllables and length of syllables--long, short, short. They would fit into a line interchangeably, so he could read the poems to her with her name, then give it to his friends using the name Lesbia.

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2. There is a Greek island called Lesbos. The most famous person from Lesbos was the Greek poet Sappho, who wrote in the 6<sup>th</sup> cen b.c. She was probably the first poet to be known as much for her lifestyle as for her poetry. Sappho was bisexual & supposedly killed herself because she fell in love with a man who didn't return her affections. At the time of Catullus, the term lesbian (*Lesbous*) indicated a woman who was sexually experienced and adventurous. The modern meaning came along later.

1-6 "My Sweetest Lesbia" - the theme of the poem is *carpe diem* - "seize the day." This is the traditional theme that we must live now because we don't have forever. The sun & moon set & rise daily, but when our day (life) is over, we won't have another one.

After line 6, Campion parts company with Catullus, whose poem reminds me of the one Roger Rabbit wrote to Jessica:

Dear Jessica.  
How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
1-1000, 2-1000, 3-1000, 4-1000...

Instead of following Catullus and Roger Rabbit, Campion in stanza 2 says people should be like him - a lover, not a fighter. Make love, not war. But people seek to die painfully and prematurely in vain battle.

Campion concludes by looking ahead to his own death, which will be happy if he has known Lesbia's love during his life.

## I The Scope and Meaning of the Treatise

(Once), when Zhong Ni<sup>1</sup> was unoccupied, and his disciple Zeng<sup>2</sup> was sitting by in attendance on him, the Master said, "The ancient kings had a perfect virtue and all-embracing rule of conduct, through which they were in accord with all under heaven. By the practice of it the people were brought to live in peace and harmony, and there was no ill-will between superiors and inferiors. Do you know what it was?"

Zeng rose from his mat and said, "How should I, Shen, who am so devoid of intelligence, be able to know this?"

The Master said, "(It was filial piety.) Now filial piety is the root of (all) virtue,<sup>3</sup> and (the stem) out of which grows (all moral) teaching. Sit down again, and I will explain the subject to you. Our bodies —to every hair and bit of skin—are received by us from our parents, and we must not presume to injure or wound them. This is the beginning of filial piety. When we have established our character by the practice of the (filial) course, so as to make our name famous in future ages and thereby glorify our parents, this is the end of filial piety. It commences with the service of parents; it proceeds to the service of the ruler; it is completed by the establishment of character.

"It is said in the Major Odes of the Kingdom:

Ever think of your ancestor,  
Cultivating your virtue."<sup>4</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>This is the zi or "style" of Confucius.

<sup>2</sup>Zeng Zi speaks in fourteen sayings in the *Analects*, e.g., 1.4. He names himself a bit later by his ming or "given name," Shen. His name is traditionally associated with the virtue of filial piety; see, for example, *Analects* 1.9 & 19.17 & 18.

<sup>3</sup>"All virtue" means the **five virtuous principles**, the constituents of humanity: **benevolence, righteousness, propriety, knowledge, and fidelity**.

<sup>4</sup>Shi III, i, ode 1, stanza 6, p. 431. Mao 235.

## II Filial Piety in the Son of Heaven

The Master said, "He who loves his parents will not dare (to incur the risk of) being hated by any man, and he who reveres his parents will not dare (to incur the risk of) being contemned by any man.<sup>1</sup> When the love and reverence (of the Son of Heaven) are thus carried to the utmost in the service of his parents, the lessons of his virtue affect all the people, and he becomes a pattern to (all within) the four seas. This is the filial piety of the Son of Heaven.

"It is said in (the Marquis of) Fu on Punishments:

The One man will have felicity,  
and the millions of the people will depend on (what ensures his happiness)."<sup>2</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Many translators have missed the passive force of this construction.

<sup>2</sup>Shu Jing, vol III of *The Chinese Classics*, p. 600.

## III Filial Piety in the Princes of States

"Above others, and yet free from pride, they dwell on high, without peril. Adhering to economy and carefully observant of the rules and laws, they are full, without overflowing. To dwell on high without peril is the way long to preserve nobility; to be full without

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overflowing is the way long to preserve riches. When their riches and nobility do not leave their persons, then they are able to preserve the altars of their land and grain, and to secure the harmony of their people and men in office. <sup>1</sup> This is the filial piety of the princes of states.

"It is said in the *Book of Poetry*:

Be apprehensive, be cautious,  
As if on the brink of a deep abyss,  
As if treading on thin ice." <sup>2</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The king had a great altar to the spirit (or spirits) presiding over the land. The color of the earth in the center of it was yellow; that on each of its four sides differed according to the colors assigned to the four quarters of the sky. A portion of this earth was cut away and formed the nucleus of a corresponding altar in each feudal state, according to their position relative to the capital. The prince of the state had the prerogative of sacrificing there. A similar rule prevailed for the altars to the spirits presiding over the grain. So long as a family ruled in a state, so long its chief offered those sacrifices; and the extinction of the sacrifices was an emphatic way of describing the ruin and extinction of the ruling house.

<sup>2</sup>Shi, II, v, ode 1, stanza 6, p. 333. Mao 195. This passage is cited by Zeng Zi in *Analects* 8.3.

## IV Filial Piety in High Ministers and Great Officers

"They do not presume to wear robes other than those appointed by the laws of the ancient kings, nor to speak words other than those sanctioned by their speech, nor to exhibit conduct other than that exemplified by their virtuous ways. Thus none of their words being contrary to those sanctions, and none of their actions contrary to the

(right) way, from their mouths there comes no exceptionable speech, and in their conduct there are found no exceptionable actions. Their words may fill all under heaven, and no error of speech will be found in them. Their actions may fill all under heaven, and no dissatisfaction or dislike will be awakened by them. When these three things—(their robes, their words, and their conduct)—are all complete as they should be, they can then preserve their ancestral temples. <sup>1</sup> This is the filial piety of high ministers and great officers.

"It is said in the *Book of Poetry*:

He is never idle, day or night,  
In the service of the One man."

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Their ancestral temples were to the ministers and grand officers what the altars of their land and grain were to the feudal lords. Every great officer had three temples or shrines, in which he sacrificed to the first chief of his family or clan, to his grandfather, and to his father. While these remained, the family remained, and its honors were perpetuated.

<sup>2</sup>Shi, III, iii, ode 6, stanza 4, p. 543. Mao 260.

## V Filial Piety in Inferior Officers

"As they serve their fathers, so they serve their mothers, and they love them equally. As they serve their fathers, so they serve their rulers, and they reverence them equally. Hence love is what is chiefly rendered to the mother, and reverence is what is chiefly rendered to the ruler, while both of these things are given to the father. Therefore when they serve their ruler with filial piety, they are loyal; when they serve their superiors with reverence, they are obedient. Not failing in this loyalty and obedience in serving those above them, they are then able to preserve their emoluments and

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positions, and to maintain their sacrifices. <sup>1</sup> This is the filial piety of inferior officers. <sup>2</sup>

"It is said in the Book of Poetry:

Rising early and going to sleep late,

Do not disgrace those who gave you birth." <sup>3</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>These officers had their 'positions' or places, and their pay. They had also their sacrifices, but such as were private or personal to themselves.

<sup>2</sup>not 'scholar,' a more modern meaning of shi. The shi of feudal China were the younger sons of the higher classes, and men that by their ability were rising out of the lower, and who were all in inferior situations and looking forward to offices of trust in the service of the royal court or of their several states. When the feudal system had passed away, the class of 'scholars' gradually took their place.

<sup>3</sup>Shi, II, v, ode 2, stanza 4, p. 335. Mao 196.

## VI Filial Piety in the Common People

"They follow the course of heaven (in the revolving seasons); they distinguish the advantages afforded by (different) soils; they are careful of their conduct and economical in their expenditure —in order to nourish their parents. This is the filial piety of the common people.

"Therefore from the Son of Heaven down to the common people, there never has been one whose filial piety was without its beginning and end on whom calamity did not come." <sup>1</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>This chapter is the end of what Zhu Xi regarded as the only portion of the Xiao that came directly from Confucius. The chapters that follow lack the sequence of the foregoing.

## VII Filial Piety in Relation to the Three Powers <sup>1</sup>

The disciple Zeng said, "Immense indeed is the greatness of filial piety!"

The Master replied, <sup>2</sup> "Yes, filial piety is the constant (method) of Heaven, the righteousness of Earth, and the practical duty of Man. Heaven and earth invariably pursue the course (that may be thus described), and the people take it as their pattern. (The ancient kings) imitated the brilliant luminaries of heaven and acted in accordance with the (varying) advantages afforded by earth, so that they were in accord with all under heaven, and in consequence their teachings, without being severe, were successful, and their government, without being rigorous, secured perfect order.

"The ancient kings, seeing how their teachings could transform the people, set before them therefore an example of the most extended love, and none of the people neglected their parents. They set forth to them (the nature of) virtue and righteousness, and the people roused themselves to the practice of them. They went before them with reverence and yielding courtesy, and the people had no contentions. They led them on by the rules of propriety and by music, and the people were harmonious and benignant. They showed them what they loved and what they disliked, and the people understood their prohibitions.

"It is said in the Book of Poetry:

Awe-inspiring are you, O Grand-Master Yin,  
And the people all look up to you." <sup>3</sup>

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup>i.e., Heaven, Earth, Man

<sup>2</sup>The first part of Confucius' reply is found in the *Zuo Zhuan* (Legge, vol. V, p. 708)

<sup>3</sup>Shi, II, iv, ode 7, stanza 1, p. 309. Mao 191.

### VIII Filial Piety in Government

The Master said, "Anciently, when the intelligent kings by means of filial piety ruled all under heaven, they did not dare to receive with disrespect the ministers of small states. How much less would they do so to the dukes, marquises, counts, and barons! Thus it was that they got (the princes of) the myriad states with joyful hearts (to assist them) in the (sacrificial) services to their royal predecessors.

"The rulers of states did not dare to slight wifeless men and widows. How much less would they slight their officers and the people! Thus it was that they got all their people with joyful hearts (to assist them) in serving the rulers, their predecessors.

"The heads of clans did not dare to slight their servants and concubines. How much less would they slight their wives and sons! Thus it was that they got their men with joyful hearts (to assist them) in the service of their parents.

"In such a state of things, while alive, parents reposed in (the glory of) their sons, and, when sacrificed to, their disembodied spirits enjoyed their offerings. Therefore for all under heaven peace and harmony prevailed; disasters and calamities did not occur; misfortunes and rebellions did not arise.

"It is said in the Book of Poetry:

To an upright, virtuous conduct

All in the four quarters of the state render obedient homage."

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Shi Jing, III, iii, ode 2, stanza 2, p. 511. Mao 256.

### IX The Government of the Sages<sup>1</sup>

The disciple Zeng said, "I venture to ask whether in the virtue of the sages there was not something greater than filial piety."

The Master replied, "Of all (creatures with their different) natures produced by Heaven and Earth, man is the noblest. Of all the actions of man there is none greater than filial piety. In

filial piety there is nothing greater than the reverential awe of one's father. In the reverential awe shown to one's father there is nothing greater than the making him the correlate of Heaven. <sup>2</sup> The duke of Zhou was the man who (first) did this.

"Formerly the duke of Zhou at the border altar sacrificed to Hou Ji as the correlate of Heaven, and in the Brilliant Hall he honored King Wen and sacrificed to him as the correlate of God. The consequence was that from (all the states) within the four seas, every (prince) came in the discharge of his duty to (assist in those) sacrifices. In the virtue of the sages what besides was there greater than filial piety?

"Now the feeling of affection grows up at the parents' knees, and as (the duty of) nourishing those parents is exercised, the affection daily merges in awe. The sages proceeded from the (feeling of) awe to teach (the duties of) reverence, and from (that of) affection to teach (those of) love. The teachings of the sages, without being severe, were successful, and their government, without being rigorous, was effective. What they proceeded from was the root (of filial piety implanted by Heaven).

"The relation and duties between father and son, (thus belonging to) the Heaven-conferred nature, (contain in them the principle of) righteousness between ruler and subject. The son derives his life from his parents, and no greater gift could possibly be transmitted. His ruler and parent (in one), his father deals with him accordingly,

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and no generosity could be greater than this. Hence, he who does not love his parents, but loves other men, is called a rebel against virtue, and he who does not revere his parents, but reveres other men, is called a rebel against propriety. When (the ruler) himself thus acts contrary to (the principles) which should place him in accord (with all men), he presents nothing for the people to imitate. He has nothing to do with what is good, but entirely and only with what is injurious to virtue. Though he may get (his will, and be above others), the superior man does not give him his approval.

"It is not so with the superior man. He speaks, having thought whether the words should be spoken; he acts, having thought whether his actions are sure to give pleasure. His virtue and righteousness are such as will be honored; what he initiates and does is fit to be imitated; his deportment is worthy of contemplation; his movements in advancing or retiring are all according to the proper rule. In this way does he present himself to the people, who both revere and love him, imitate and become like him. Thus he is able to make his teaching of virtue successful, and his government and orders to be carried into effect."<sup>3</sup>

"It is said in the Book of Poetry:

The virtuous man, the princely one,  
Has nothing wrong in his deportment."

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>i.e., the sovereigns of antiquity

<sup>2</sup>pei tian. The phrase is used with reference to the virtue of a sovereign, making him as it were the mate of God, ruling on earth as God rules above, and with reference to the honors paid to a departed sovereign, when he is associated with God in the great sacrificial services. In the next paragraph, 'correlate of God' renders pei shang di. Legge has a long discussion of his rendering of the terms tian and shang di in his preface, pp. xxiii-xxix. In addition, in his note, Legge explains that "Heaven" and "God" have the same reference; the former expresses honor, the

latter affection.

<sup>3</sup>This paragraph is a mosaic of passages from the *Zuo Zhuan*.

<sup>4</sup>Shi, I, xiv, ode 3, stanza 3, p. 223. Mao 152.

## X An Orderly Description of the Acts of Filial Piety

The Master said, "The service which a filial son does to his parents is as follows: In his general conduct to them, he manifests the utmost reverence. In his nourishing of them, his endeavor is to give them the utmost pleasure. When they are ill, he feels the greatest anxiety. In mourning for them (dead), he exhibits every demonstration of grief. In sacrificing to them, he displays the utmost solemnity. When a son is complete in these five things, (he may be pronounced) able to serve his parents.

"He who (thus) serves his parents, in a high situation will be free from pride, in a low situation will be free from insubordination, and among his equals will not be quarrelsome. In a high situation pride leads to ruin; in a low situation insubordination leads to punishment; among equals quarrelsomeness leads to the wielding of weapons. If those three things be not put away, though a son every day contribute beef, mutton, and pork to nourish his parents, he is not filial."<sup>1</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Cf. *Analects* 2.7.

## XI Filial Piety in Relation to the Five Punishments

The Master said, "There are three thousand offenses against which the five punishments are directed,<sup>1</sup> and there is not one of them greater than being unfilial.

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"When constraint is put upon a ruler, that is the disowning of his superiority. When the authority of the sages is disallowed, that is the disowning of (all) law. When filial piety is put aside, that is the disowning of the principle of affection. These (three things) pave the way to anarchy."

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Shu, Legge, vol. III, p. 44-45 and esp. p. 388-390.

## XII Amplification of "The All-embracing Rule of Conduct" in Chapter I

The Master said, "For teaching the people to be affectionate and loving, there is nothing better than filial piety. For teaching them (the observance of) propriety and submissiveness, there is nothing better than fraternal duty. For changing their manners and altering their customs, there is nothing better than music. For securing the repose of superiors and the good order of the people, there is nothing better than the rules of propriety.

"The rules of propriety are simply (the development of) the principle of reverence. Therefore the reverence paid to a father makes (all) sons pleased. The reverence paid to an elder brother makes (all) younger brothers pleased. The reverence paid to a ruler makes (all) subjects pleased. The reverence paid to the One man makes thousands and myriads of men pleased. The reverence is paid to a few, and the pleasure extends to many. This is what is meant by an 'All-embracing Rule of Conduct.'"

## XIII Amplification of 'the Perfect Virtue' in Chapter I

The Master said, "The teaching of filial piety by the superior man <sup>1</sup> does not require that he should go to family after family and daily see the members of each. His teaching of filial piety is a tribute of

reverence to all the fathers under heaven. His teaching of fraternal submission is a tribute of reverence to all the elder brothers under heaven. His teaching of the duty of a subject is a tribute of reverence to all the rulers under heaven.

"It is said in the Book of Poetry:

The happy and courteous sovereign  
Is the parent of the people. <sup>2</sup>

"If it were not a perfect virtue, how could it be recognized as in accordance with their nature by the people so extensively as this?"

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The jun zi here must be taken to mean the sovereign.

<sup>2</sup>Shi, III, ii, ode 7, stanza 1, p. 489. Mao 251.

## XIV Amplification of "Making our Name Famous" in Chapter I

The Master said, "The filial piety with which the superior man serves his parents may be transferred as loyalty to the ruler. The fraternal duty with which he serves his elder brother may be transferred as submissive deference to elders. His regulation of his family may be transferred as good government in any official position. Therefore, when his conduct is thus successful in his inner (private) circle, his name will be established (and transmitted) to future generations."

## XV Filial Piety in Relation to Reproof and Remonstrance

The disciple Zeng said, "I have heard your instructions on the

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affection of love, on respect and reverence, on giving repose to (the minds of) our parents, and on making our names famous. I would venture to ask if (simple) obedience to the orders of one's father can be pronounced filial piety."

The Master replied, "What words are these! What words are these! Anciently, if the Son of Heaven had seven ministers who would remonstrate with him, although he had not right methods of government, he would not lose his possession of the kingdom. If the prince of a state had five such ministers, though his measures might be equally wrong, he would not lose his state. If a great officer had three, he would not, in a similar case, lose (the headship of) his clan. If an inferior officer had a friend who would remonstrate with him, a good name would not cease to be connected with his character. And the father who had a son that would remonstrate with him would not sink into the gulf of unrighteous deeds. Therefore when a case of unrighteous conduct is concerned, a son must by no means keep from remonstrating with his father, nor a minister from remonstrating with his ruler. Hence, since remonstrance is required in the case of unrighteous conduct, how can (simple) obedience to the orders of a father be accounted filial piety?"<sup>1</sup>

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Cf. *Analects* 4.18 and Li Ji, X, i, 15.

### XVI The Influence of Filial Piety and the Response to It

The Master said, "Anciently, the intelligent kings served their fathers with filial piety, and therefore they served Heaven with intelligence. They served their mothers with filial piety, and therefore they served Earth with discrimination. They pursued the right course with reference to their (own) seniors and juniors, and therefore they secured the regulation of the relations between superiors and inferiors (throughout the kingdom). When Heaven and Earth were served with intelligence and discrimination, the spiritual intelligences

displayed (their retributive power).<sup>1</sup>

"Therefore even the Son of Heaven must have some whom he honors; that is, he has his uncles of his surname. He must have some to whom he concedes the precedence; that is, he has his cousins, who bear the same surname and are older than himself. In the ancestral temple he manifests the utmost reverence, showing that he does not forget his parents. He cultivates his person and is careful of his conduct, fearing lest he should disgrace his predecessors. When in the ancestral temple he exhibits the utmost reverence, the spirits of the departed manifest themselves. Perfect filial piety and fraternal duty reach to (and move) the spiritual intelligences and diffuse their light on all within the four seas. They penetrate everywhere.

"It is said in the Book of Poetry:

From the west to the east,  
From the south to the north,  
There was not a thought but did him homage."

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The "spiritual intelligences" here are Heaven and Earth conceived of as spiritual beings.

<sup>2</sup>Shi, III, i, ode 10, stanza 6, p. 463. Mao 244.

### XVII The Service of the Ruler

The Master said, "The superior man<sup>1</sup> serves his ruler in such a way that, when at court in his presence, his thought is how to discharge his loyal duty to the utmost, and when he retires from it, his thought is how to amend his errors. He carries out with deference the measures springing from his excellent qualities and rectifies him (only) to save him from what are evil. Hence, as the superior and inferior, they are able to have an affection for each other.

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"It is said in the Book of Poetry:

In my heart I love him,  
 And why should I not say so?  
 In the core of my heart I keep him,  
 And never will forget him."

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Jun zi here can only be the good and intelligent officer in the royal domain or at a feudal court.

<sup>2</sup>Shi, II, viii, ode 4, stanza 4, p. 415. Mao 228.

## XVIII Filial Piety in Mourning for Parents

The Master said, "When a filial son is mourning for a parent, he wails, but not with a prolonged sobbing. In the movements of ceremony he pays no attention to his appearance. His words are without elegance of phrase. He cannot bear to wear fine clothes. When he hears music, he feels no delight. When he eats a delicacy, he is not conscious of its flavor. Such is the nature of grief and sorrow.

"After three days he may partake of food, for thus the people are taught that the living should not be injured on account of the dead, and that emaciation must not be carried to the extinction of life. Such is the rule of the sages. The period of mourning does not go beyond three years, to show the people that it must have an end.

"An inner and outer coffin are made; the grave-clothes also are put on, and the shroud; and (the body) is lifted (into the coffin). The sacrificial vessels, round and square, are (regularly) set forth, and (the sight of them) fills (the mourners) with (fresh) distress. The women beat their breasts, and the men stamp with their feet, wailing and weeping, while they sorrowfully escort the coffin to the grave. They consult the tortoise-shell to determine the grave and the ground about it, and there they lay the body in peace. They prepare the ancestral temple (to receive the tablet of the departed),

and there they present offerings to the disembodied spirit. In spring and autumn they offer sacrifices, thinking of the deceased as the seasons come round.

"The services of love and reverence to parents when alive, and those of grief and sorrow to them when dead: these completely discharge the fundamental duty of living men. The righteous claims of life and death are all satisfied, and the filial son's service of his parents is completed."<sup>1</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The above is the *Classic of Filial Piety*, as published by the emperor Xuan in A.D. 722, with the headings then prefixed to the eighteen chapters. Subsequently, in the eleventh century, Si Ma Guang (A.D. 1009-1086), a famous statesman and historian, published what he thought was the more ancient text of the classic in twenty-two chapters, with "Explanations" by himself, without chapter numbering or headings. The differences between his text and that of the Tang emperor are insignificant.

from: *The Sacred Books of the East: The Texts of Confucianism*, vol. III, part I: The Shu King, The Religious Portions of the Shih King. The Hsiao King

translated by James Legge,

2nd edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899, p. 465-488.

The text is that of James Legge, with only very minor changes. Legge used parentheses to indicate words he added in the interest of clarity. The notes given here are a summarized selection of Legge's more numerous and more ample observations. References to the *Shi King* are by ode number and page number in vol. IV of the five-volume set, *The Chinese Classics*, translated by Legge (various dates and reprints). For ease of reference to other renderings of the *Shi*, the Mao number has been included for each citation.

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## Benjamin Franklin, "Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America" (1784)

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Savages we call them, because their manners differ from ours, which we think the perfection of civility; they think the same of theirs.

Perhaps, if we could examine the manners of different nations with impartiality, we should find no people so rude, as to be without any rules of politeness; nor any so polite, as not to have some remains of rudeness. The Indian men, when young, are hunters and warriors, when old, counselors; for all their government is by counsel of the sages; there is no force, there are no prisons, no officers to compel obedience, or inflict punishment. Hence they generally study oratory, the best speaker having the most influence. The Indian women till the ground, dress the food, nurse and bring up the children, and preserve and hand down to posterity the memory of public transactions. These employments of men and women are accounted natural and honorable. Having few artificial wants, they have abundance of leisure for improvement by conversation. Our laborious manner of life, compared with theirs, they esteem slavish and base; and the learning, on which we value ourselves, they regard as frivolous and useless. An instance of this occurred at the Treaty of Lancaster, in Pennsylvania, *anno* 1744, between the government of Virginia and the Six Nations (1. A confederation of Iroquois tribes: Seneca, Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga, Mohawk, and Tuscarora.)

After the principal business was settled, the commissioners from Virginia acquainted the Indians by a speech, that there was at Williamsburg a college, with a fund for educating Indian youth; and that, if the Six Nations would send down half a dozen of their young lads to that college, the government would take care that they should be well provided for, and instructed in all the learning of the white people. It is one of the Indian rules of politeness not to answer a public proposition the same day that it is made; they think it would be treating it as a light matter, and that they show it respect by taking time to consider it, as of a matter important. They therefore deferred their answer till the day following; when their speaker began, by expressing their deep sense of the kindness of the Virginia government, in making them that offer; "for we know," says he, "that you highly esteem the kind of learning taught in those Colleges, and that the maintenance of our young men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinced, therefore, that you mean to do us good by your proposal; and we thank you heartily. But you, who are wise, must know that different nations have different conceptions of things; and you will therefore not take it amiss, if our ideas of this kind of education happen not to be the same with yours. We have had some experience of it; several of our young people were formerly brought up at the colleges of the northern provinces; they were instructed in all your sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were bad runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods, unable to bear either cold or hunger, knew neither how to build a cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy, spoke our language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for hunters, warriors, nor counselors; they were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less obliged by your kind offer, though we decline accepting it; and, to show our grateful sense of it, if the gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we will take great care of their education, instruct them in all we know, and make *men* of them. "

Having frequent occasions to hold public councils, they have acquired great order and decency in conducting them. The old men sit in the foremost ranks that warriors in the next, and the women and children in the hindmost. The business of the women is to take exact notice of what passes, imprint it in their memories (for they have no writing), and communicate it to their children. They are the records of the council, and they preserve traditions of the stipulations in treaties 100 years back; which, when we compare with our writings we always find exact. He that would speak, rises. The rest observe a profound silence. When he has finished

and sits down, they leave him 5 or 6 minutes to recollect, that, if he has omitted anything he intended to say, or has anything to add, he may rise again and deliver it. To interrupt another, even in common conversation, is reckoned highly indecent. How different this from the conduct of a polite British House of Commons, where scarce a day passes without some confusion, that makes the speaker hoarse in calling to *order*; and how different from the mode of conversation in many polite companies of Europe, where, if you do not deliver your sentence with great rapidity, you are cut off in the middle of it by the impatient loquacity of those you converse with, and never suffered to finish it!

The politeness of these savages in conversation is indeed carried to excess, since it does not permit them to contradict or deny the truth of what is asserted in their presence. By this means they indeed avoid disputes; but then it becomes difficult to know their minds, or what impression you make upon them. The missionaries who have attempted to convert them to Christianity all complain of this as one of the great difficulties of their mission. The Indians hear with patience the truths of the Gospel explained to them, and give their usual tokens of assent and approbation; you would think they were convinced. No such matter. It is mere civility. A Swedish minister, having assembled the chiefs of the Susquehanah Indians, made a sermon to them, acquainting them with the principal historical facts on which our religion is founded; such as the fall of our first parents by eating an apple, the coming of Christ to repair the mischief, His miracles and suffering, etc. When he had finished, an Indian orator stood up to thank him. "What you have told us," he says, "is all very good. It is indeed bad to eat apples. It is better to make them all into cider. We are much obliged by your kindness in coming so far, to tell us these things which you have heard from your mothers. In return, I will tell you some of those we have heard from ours. In the beginning, our fathers had only the flesh of animals to subsist on; and if their hunting was unsuccessful, they were starving. Two of our young hunters, having killed a deer, made a fire in the woods to broil some part of it.

When they were about to satisfy their hunger, they beheld a beautiful young woman descend from the clouds, and seat herself on that hill, which you see yonder among the blue mountains. They said to each other, it is a spirit that has smelled our broiling venison, and wishes to eat of it; let us offer some to her. They presented her with the tongue; she was pleased with the taste of it and said, 'Your kindness shall be rewarded; come to this place after thirteen moons, and you shall find something that will be of great benefit in nourishing you and your children to the latest generations.' They did so, and, to their surprise, found plants they had never seen before; but which, from that ancient time, have been constantly cultivated among us, to our great advantage. Where her right hand had touched the ground, they found maize; where her left hand had touched it, they found kidney beans; and where her backside had sat on it, they found tobacco." The good missionary, disgusted with this idle tale, said, "What I delivered to you were sacred truths, but what you tell me is mere fable, fiction, and falsehood." The Indian, offended, replied, "My brother, it seems your friends have not done you justice in your education; they have not well instructed you in the rules of common civility. You saw that we, who understand and practice those rules, believed all your stories; why do you refuse to believe ours?"

When any of them come into our towns, our people are apt to crowd round them, gaze upon them, and incommode them, where they desire to be private this they esteem great rudeness, and the effect of the want of instruction in the rules of civility and good manners. "We have," say they, "as much curiosity as you, and when you come into our towns, we wish for opportunities of looking at you, but for this purpose we hide ourselves behind bushes, where you are to pass, and never intrude ourselves into your company."

Their manner of entering one another's village has likewise its rules. It is reckoned uncivil in traveling strangers to enter a village abruptly, without giving notice of their approach. Therefore, as soon as they arrive within hearing, they stop and holler, ("holler": cry out) remaining there till invited to enter. Two old men usually come out to them, and lead them in. There is in every village a vacant dwelling, called *the stranger's house*. Here they are placed while the old men go round from hut to hut, acquainting the inhabitants that

strangers are arrived, who are probably hungry and weary; and every one sends them what he can spare of victuals, and skins to repose on. When the strangers are refreshed, pipes and tobacco are brought; and then, but not before, conversation begins, with inquiries who they are, whither bound, what news, etc.; and it usually ends with offers of service, if the strangers have occasion of guides, or any necessaries for continuing their journey; and nothing is exacted for the entertainment.

The same hospitality, esteemed among them as a principal virtue, is practiced by private persons; of which Conrad Weiser, our interpreter, gave me the following instances. He had been naturalized among the Six Nations, and spoke well the Mohawk language. In going through the Indian country, to carry a message from our Governor to the Council at Onondaga, he called at the habitation of Canassatego, an old acquaintance, who embraced him, spread furs for him to sit on, placed before him some boiled beans and venison, and mixed some rum and water for his drink. When he was well refreshed, and had lit his pipe, Canassatego began to converse with him; asked how he had fared the many years since they had seen each other; whence he then came; what occasioned the journey, etc. Conrad answered all his questions; and when the discourse began to flag, the Indian, to continue it, said, "Conrad, you have lived long among the white people, and know something of their customs; I have been sometimes at Albany, and have observed, that once in seven days they shut up their shops, and assemble all in the great house; tell me what it is for? What do they do there?" "They meet there," says Conrad, "to hear and learn *good things*." "I do not doubt," says the Indian, "that they tell you so; they have told me the same; but I doubt the truth of what they say, and I will tell you my reasons. I went lately to Albany to sell my skins and buy blankets, knives, powder, rum, etc. You know I used generally to deal with Hans Hanson; but I was a little inclined this time to try some other merchant. However, I called first upon Hans, and asked him what he would give for beaver. He said he could not give any more than four shillings a pound; 'but,' says he, 'I cannot talk on business now; this is the day when we meet together to learn *good things*, and I am going to the meeting.' So I thought to myself, 'Since we cannot do any business today, I may as well go to the meeting too,' and I went with him. There stood up a man in black, and began to talk to the people very angrily. I did not understand what he said; but, perceiving that he looked much at me and at Hanson, I imagined he was angry at seeing me there; so I went out, sat down near the house, struck fire, and lit my pipe, waiting till the meeting should break up. I thought too, that the man had mentioned something of beaver, and I suspected it might be the subject of their meeting. So, when they came out, I accosted my merchant. 'Well, Hans,' says I, 'I hope you have agreed to give more than four shillings a pound.' 'No,' says he, 'I cannot give so much; I cannot give more than three shillings and sixpence.' I then spoke to several other dealers, but they all sung the same song, -three and sixpence, -three and sixpence. This made it clear to me, that my suspicion was right; and, that whatever they pretended of meeting to learn *good things*, the real purpose was to consult how to cheat Indians in the price of beaver. Consider but a little, Conrad, and you must be of my opinion. If they met so often to learn *good things*, they would certainly have learned some before this time. But they are still ignorant. You know our practice. If a white man, in traveling through our country, enters one of our cabins, we all treat him as I treat you; we dry him if he is wet, we warm him if he is cold, we give him meat and drink, that he may allay his thirst and hunger; and we spread soft furs for him to rest and sleep on; we demand nothing in return. But, if I go into a white man's house at Albany, and ask for victuals and drink, they say, 'Where is your money?' and if I have none, they say, 'Get out, you Indian dog.' You see they have not yet learned those little *good things*, that we need no meetings to be instructed in, because our mothers taught them to us when we were children; and therefore it is impossible their meetings should be, as they say, for any such purpose, or have any such effect; they are only to contrive *the cheating of Indians in the price of beaver*.

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## Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns and Homerica

### THE THEOGONY (1,041 lines)

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(ll. 1-25) From the Heliconian Muses let us begin to sing, who hold the great and holy mount of Helicon, and dance on soft feet about the deep-blue spring and the altar of the almighty son of Cronos, and, when they have washed their tender bodies in Permessus or in the Horse's Spring or Olmeius, make their fair, lovely dances upon highest Helicon and move with vigorous feet. Thence they arise and go abroad by night, veiled in thick mist, and utter their song with lovely voice, praising Zeus the aegis-holder and queenly Hera of Argos who walks on golden sandals and the daughter of Zeus the aegis-holder bright-eyed Athene, and Phoebus Apollo, and Artemis who delights in arrows, and Poseidon the earth-holder who shakes the earth, and reverend Themis and quick-glancing <sup>(1)</sup> Aphrodite, and Hebe with the crown of gold, and fair Dione, Leto, Iapetus, and Cronos the crafty counsellor, Eos and great Helios and bright Selene, Earth too, and great Oceanus, and dark Night, and the holy race of all the other deathless ones that are for ever. And one day they taught Hesiod glorious song while he was shepherding his lambs under holy Helicon, and this word first the goddesses said to me -- the Muses of Olympus, daughters of Zeus who holds the aegis:

(ll. 26-28) 'Shepherds of the wilderness, wretched things of shame, mere bellies, we know how to speak many false things as though they were true; but we know, when we will, to utter true things.'

(ll. 29-35) So said the ready-voiced daughters of great Zeus, and they plucked and gave me a rod, a shoot of sturdy laurel, a marvellous thing, and breathed into me a divine voice to celebrate things that shall be and things there were aforetime; and they bade me sing of the race of the blessed gods that are eternally, but ever to sing of themselves both first and last. But why all this about oak or stone? <sup>(2)</sup>

(ll. 36-52) Come thou, let us begin with the Muses who gladden the great spirit of their father Zeus in Olympus with their songs, telling of things that are and that shall be and that were aforetime with consenting voice. Unwearying flows the sweet sound from their lips, and the house of their father Zeus the loud-thunderer is glad at the lily-like voice of the goddesses as it spread abroad, and the peaks of snowy Olympus resound, and the homes of the immortals. And they uttering their immortal voice, celebrate in song first of all the reverend race of the gods from the beginning, those whom Earth and wide Heaven begot, and the gods sprung of these, givers of good things. Then, next, the goddesses sing of Zeus, the father of gods and men, as they begin and end their strain, how much he is the most excellent among the gods and supreme in power. And again, they chant the race of men and strong giants, and gladden the heart of Zeus within Olympus, -- the Olympian Muses, daughters of Zeus the aegis-holder.

(ll. 53-74) Them in Pieria did Mnemosyne (Memory), who reigns over the hills of Eleuther, bear of union with the father, the son of Cronos, a forgetting of ills and a rest from sorrow. For nine nights did wise Zeus lie with her, entering her holy bed remote from the immortals. And when a year was passed and the seasons came round as the months waned, and many days were accomplished, she bare nine daughters, all of one mind, whose hearts are set upon song and their spirit free from care, a little way from the topmost peak of snowy Olympus. There are their bright dancing-places and beautiful homes, and beside them the Graces and Himerus (Desire) live in delight. And they, uttering through their lips a lovely voice, sing the laws of all and the goodly ways of the immortals, uttering their lovely voice. Then went they to Olympus, delighting in their sweet voice, with heavenly song, and the dark earth resounded about them as they chanted, and a lovely sound rose up

beneath their feet as they went to their father. And he was reigning in heaven, himself holding the lightning and glowing thunderbolt, when he had overcome by might his father Cronos; and he distributed fairly to the immortals their portions and declared their privileges.

(Il. 75-103) These things, then, the Muses sang who dwell on Olympus, nine daughters begotten by great Zeus, Cleio and Euterpe, Thaleia, Melpomene and Terpsichore, and Erato and Polyhymnia and Urania and Calliope<sup>(3)</sup>, who is the chiefest of them all, for she attends on worshipful princes: whomsoever of heaven-nourished princes the daughters of great Zeus honour, and behold him at his birth, they pour sweet dew upon his tongue, and from his lips flow gracious words. All the people look towards him while he settles causes with true judgements: and he, speaking surely, would soon make wise end even of a great quarrel; for therefore are there princes wise in heart, because when the people are being misguided in their assembly, they set right the matter again with ease, persuading them with gentle words. And when he passes through a gathering, they greet him as a god with gentle reverence, and he is conspicuous amongst the assembled: such is the holy gift of the Muses to men. For it is through the Muses and far-shooting Apollo that there are singers and harpers upon the earth; but princes are of Zeus, and happy is he whom the Muses love: sweet flows speech from his mouth. For though a man have sorrow and grief in his newly-troubled soul and live in dread because his heart is distressed, yet, when a singer, the servant of the Muses, chants the glorious deeds of men of old and the blessed gods who inhabit Olympus, at once he forgets his heaviness and remembers not his sorrows at all; but the gifts of the goddesses soon turn him away from these.

(Il. 104-115) Hail, children of Zeus! Grant lovely song and celebrate the holy race of the deathless gods who are for ever, those that were born of Earth and starry Heaven and gloomy Night and them that briny Sea did rear. Tell how at the first gods and earth came to be, and rivers, and the boundless sea with its raging swell, and the gleaming stars, and the wide heaven above, and the gods who were born of them, givers of good things, and how they divided their wealth, and how they shared their honours amongst them, and also how at the first they took many-folded Olympus. These things declare to me from the beginning, ye Muses who dwell in the house of Olympus, and tell me which of them first came to be.

(Il. 116-138) Verily at the first Chaos came to be, but next wide-bosomed Earth, the ever-sure foundations of all<sup>(4)</sup> the deathless ones who hold the peaks of snowy Olympus, and dim Tartarus in the depth of the wide-pathed Earth, and Eros (Love), fairest among the deathless gods, who unnerves the limbs and overcomes the mind and wise counsels of all gods and all men within them. From Chaos came forth Erebus and black Night; but of Night were born Aether<sup>(5)</sup> and Day, whom she conceived and bare from union in love with Erebus. And Earth first bare starry Heaven, equal to herself, to cover her on every side, and to be an ever-sure abiding-place for the blessed gods. And she brought forth long Hills, graceful haunts of the goddess-Nymphs who dwell amongst the glens of the hills. She bare also the fruitless deep with his raging swell, Pontus, without sweet union of love. But afterwards she lay with Heaven and bare deep-swirling Oceanus, Coeus and Crius and Hyperion and Iapetus, Theia and Rhea, Themis and Mnemosyne and gold-crowned Phoebe and lovely Tethys. After them was born Cronos the wily, youngest and most terrible of her children, and he hated his lusty sire.

(Il. 139-146) And again, she bare the Cyclopes, overbearing in spirit, Brontes, and Steropes and stubborn-hearted Arges<sup>(6)</sup>, who gave Zeus the thunder and made the thunderbolt: in all else they were like the gods, but one eye only was set in the midst of their fore-heads. And they were surnamed Cyclopes (Orb-eyed) because one orbed eye was set in their foreheads. Strength and might and craft were in their works.

(Il. 147-163) And again, three other sons were born of Earth and Heaven, great and doughty beyond telling, Cottus and Briareos and Gyes, presumptuous children. From their shoulders sprang an hundred arms, not to be approached, and each had fifty heads upon his shoulders on their strong limbs, and irresistible was the

stubborn strength that was in their great forms. For of all the children that were born of Earth and Heaven, these were the most terrible, and they were hated by their own father from the first.

And he used to hide them all away in a secret place of Earth so soon as each was born, and would not suffer them to come up into the light: and Heaven rejoiced in his evil doing. But vast Earth groaned within, being straitened, and she made the element of grey flint and shaped a great sickle, and told her plan to her dear sons. And she spoke, cheering them, while she was vexed in her dear heart:

(Il. 164-166) 'My children, gotten of a sinful father, if you will obey me, we should punish the vile outrage of your father; for he first thought of doing shameful things.'

(Il. 167-169) So she said; but fear seized them all, and none of them uttered a word. But great Cronos the wily took courage and answered his dear mother:

(Il. 170-172) 'Mother, I will undertake to do this deed, for I reverence not our father of evil name, for he first thought of doing shameful things.'

(Il. 173-175) So he said: and vast Earth rejoiced greatly in spirit, and set and hid him in an ambush, and put in his hands a jagged sickle, and revealed to him the whole plot.

(Il. 176-206) And Heaven came, bringing on night and longing for love, and he lay about Earth spreading himself full upon her <sup>(7)</sup>.

Then the son from his ambush stretched forth his left hand and in his right took the great long sickle with jagged teeth, and swiftly lopped off his own father's members and cast them away to fall behind him. And not vainly did they fall from his hand; for all the bloody drops that gushed forth Earth received, and as the seasons moved round she bare the strong Erinyes and the great Giants with gleaming armour, holding long spears in their hands and the Nymphs whom they call Meliae <sup>(8)</sup> all over the boundless earth. And so soon as he had cut off the members with flint and cast them from the land into the surging sea, they were swept away over the main a long time: and a white foam spread around them from the immortal flesh, and in it there grew a maiden. First she drew near holy Cythera, and from there, afterwards, she came to sea-girt Cyprus, and came forth an awful and lovely goddess, and grass grew up about her beneath her shapely feet. Her gods and men call Aphrodite, and the foam-born goddess and rich-crowned Cytherea, because she grew amid the foam, and Cytherea because she reached Cythera, and Cyprogenes because she was born in billowy Cyprus, and Philomedes <sup>(9)</sup> because sprang from the members. And with her went Eros, and comely Desire followed her at her birth at the first and as she went into the assembly of the gods. This honour she has from the beginning, and this is the portion allotted to her amongst men and undying gods, -- the whisperings of maidens and smiles and deceits with sweet delight and love and graciousness.

(Il. 207-210) But these sons whom he begot himself great Heaven used to call Titans (Strainers) in reproach, for he said that they strained and did presumptuously a fearful deed, and that vengeance for it would come afterwards.

(Il. 211-225) And Night bare hateful Doom and black Fate and Death, and she bare Sleep and the tribe of Dreams. And again the goddess murky Night, though she lay with none, bare Blame and painful Woe, and the Hesperides who guard the rich, golden apples and the trees bearing fruit beyond glorious Ocean. Also she bare the Destinies and ruthless avenging Fates, Clotho and Lachesis and Atropos <sup>(10)</sup>, who give men at their birth both evil and good to have, and they pursue the transgressions of men and of gods: and these goddesses never cease from their dread anger until they punish the sinner with a sore penalty. Also deadly Night bare Nemesis (Indignation) to afflict mortal men, and after her, Deceit and Friendship and hateful Age and hard-hearted Strife.

(ll. 226-232) But abhorred Strife bare painful Toil and Forgetfulness and Famine and tearful Sorrows, Fightings also, Battles, Murders, Manslaughters, Quarrels, Lying Words, Disputes, Lawlessness and Ruin, all of one nature, and Oath who most troubles men upon earth when anyone wilfully swears a false oath.

(ll. 233-239) And Sea begat Nereus, the eldest of his children, who is true and lies not: and men call him the Old Man because he is trusty and gentle and does not forget the laws of righteousness, but thinks just and kindly thoughts. And yet again he got great Thaumases and proud Phoreys, being mated with Earth, and fair-cheeked Ceto and Eurybia who has a heart of flint within her.

(ll. 240-264) And of Nereus and rich-haired Doris, daughter of Ocean the perfect river, were born children<sup>(11)</sup>, passing lovely amongst goddesses, Ploto, Eucrante, Sao, and Amphitrite, and Eudora, and Thetis, Galene and Glauce, Cymothoe, Speo, Thoe and lovely Halie, and Pasithea, and Erato, and rosy-armed Eunice, and gracious Melite, and Eulimene, and Agaue, Doto, Proto, Pherusa, and Dynamene, and Nisaea, and Actaea, and Protomedea, Doris, Panopea, and comely Galatea, and lovely Hippothoe, and rosy-armed Hipponoe, and Cymodoce who with Cymatolege<sup>(12)</sup> and Amphitrite easily calms the waves upon the misty sea and the blasts of raging winds, and Cymo, and Eione, and rich-crowned Alimede, and Glauconome, fond of laughter, and Pontoporea, Leagore, Euagore, and Laomedea, and Polynoe, and Autonoe, and Lysianassa, and Euarne, lovely of shape and without blemish of form, and Psamathe of charming figure and divine Menippe, Neso, Eupompe, Themisto, Pronoe, and Nemertes<sup>(13)</sup> who has the nature of her deathless father. These fifty daughters sprang from blameless Nereus, skilled in excellent crafts.

(ll. 265-269) And Thaumases wedded Electra the daughter of deep-flowing Ocean, and she bare him swift Iris and the long-haired Harpies, Aello (Storm-swift) and Ocypetes (Swift-flier) who on their swift wings keep pace with the blasts of the winds and the birds; for quick as time they dart along.

(ll. 270-294) And again, Ceto bare to Phoreys the fair-cheeked Graiaes, sisters grey from their birth: and both deathless gods and men who walk on earth call them Graiaes, Pemphredo well-clad, and saffron-robed Enyo, and the Gorgons who dwell beyond glorious Ocean in the frontier land towards Night where are the clear-voiced Hesperides, Sthenno, and Euryale, and Medusa who suffered a woeful fate: she was mortal, but the two were undying and grew not old. With her lay the Dark-haired One<sup>(14)</sup> in a soft meadow amid spring flowers. And when Perseus cut off her head, there sprang forth great Chrysaor and the horse Pegasus who is so called because he was born near the springs (pegae) of Ocean; and that other, because he held a golden blade (aor) in his hands. Now Pegasus flew away and left the earth, the mother of flocks, and came to the deathless gods: and he dwells in the house of Zeus and brings to wise Zeus the thunder and lightning. But Chrysaor was joined in love to Callirrhoe, the daughter of glorious Ocean, and begot three-headed Geryones. Him mighty Heracles slew in sea-girt Erythea by his shambling oxen on that day when he drove the wide-browed oxen to holy Tiryns, and had crossed the ford of Ocean and killed Orthus and Eurytion the herdsman in the dim stead out beyond glorious Ocean.

(ll. 295-305) And in a hollow cave she bare another monster, irresistible, in no wise like either to mortal men or to the undying gods, even the goddess fierce Echidna who is half a nymph with glancing eyes and fair cheeks, and half again a huge snake, great and awful, with speckled skin, eating raw flesh beneath the secret parts of the holy earth. And there she has a cave deep down under a hollow rock far from the deathless gods and mortal men. There, then, did the gods appoint her a glorious house to dwell in: and she keeps guard in Arima beneath the earth, grim Echidna, a nymph who dies not nor grows old all her days.

(ll. 306-332) Men say that Typhaon the terrible, outrageous and lawless, was joined in love to her, the maid with glancing eyes. So she conceived and brought forth fierce offspring; first she bare Orthus the hound of Geryones, and then again she bare a second, a monster not to be overcome and that may not be described, Cerberus who eats raw flesh, the brazen-voiced hound of Hades, fifty-headed, relentless and strong. And again

she bore a third, the evil-minded Hydra of Lerna, whom the goddess, white-armed Hera nourished, being angry beyond measure with the mighty Heracles. And her Heracles, the son of Zeus, of the house of Amphitryon, together with warlike Iolaus, destroyed with the unpitying sword through the plans of Athene the spoil-driver. She was the mother of Chimaera who breathed raging fire, a creature fearful, great, swift-footed and strong, who had three heads, one of a grim-eyed lion; in her hinderpart, a dragon; and in her middle, a goat, breathing forth a fearful blast of blazing fire. Her did Pegasus and noble Bellerophon slay; but Echidna was subject in love to Orthus and brought forth the deadly Sphinx which destroyed the Cadmeans, and the Nemean lion, which Hera, the good wife of Zeus, brought up and made to haunt the hills of Nemea, a plague to men. There he preyed upon the tribes of her own people and had power over Tretus of Nemea and Apesas: yet the strength of stout Heracles overcame him.

(ll. 333-336) And Ceto was joined in love to Phorcys and bare her youngest, the awful snake who guards the apples all of gold in the secret places of the dark earth at its great bounds. This is the offspring of Ceto and Phoreys.

(ll. 334-345) And Tethys bare to Ocean eddying rivers, Nilus, and Alpheus, and deep-swirling Eridanus, Strymon, and Meander, and the fair stream of Ister, and Phasis, and Rhesus, and the silver eddies of Achelous, Nessus, and Rhodius, Haliacmon, and Heptaporus, Granicus, and Aesepus, and holy Simois, and Peneus, and Hermus, and Caicus fair stream, and great Sangarius, Ladon, Parthenius, Euenus, Ardescus, and divine Scamander.

(ll. 346-370) Also she brought forth a holy company of daughters <sup>(15)</sup> who with the lord Apollo and the Rivers have youths in their keeping -- to this charge Zeus appointed them -- Peitho, and Admete, and Ianthe, and Electra, and Doris, and Prynno, and Urania divine in form, Hippo, Clymene, Rhodea, and Callirrhoe, Zeuxo and Clytie, and Idyia, and Pasithoe, Plexaura, and Galaxaura, and lovely Dione, Melobosis and Thoe and handsome Polydora, Cerceis lovely of form, and soft eyed Pluto, Perseis, Ianeira, Acaste, Xanthe, Petraea the fair, Menestho, and Europa, Metis, and Eurynome, and Telesto saffron-clad, Chryseis and Asia and charming Calypso, Eudora, and Tyche, Amphirho, and Ocyrrhoe, and Styx who is the chiefest of them all. These are the eldest daughters that sprang from Ocean and Tethys; but there are many besides. For there are three thousand neat-ankled daughters of Ocean who are dispersed far and wide, and in every place alike serve the earth and the deep waters, children who are glorious among goddesses. And as many other rivers are there, babbling as they flow, sons of Ocean, whom queenly Tethys bare, but their names it is hard for a mortal man to tell, but people know those by which they severally dwell.

(ll. 371-374) And Theia was subject in love to Hyperion and bare great Helius (Sun) and clear Selene (Moon) and Eos (Dawn) who shines upon all that are on earth and upon the deathless Gods who live in the wide heaven.

(ll. 375-377) And Eurybia, bright goddess, was joined in love to Crius and bare great Astraeus, and Pallas, and Perses who also was eminent among all men in wisdom.

(ll. 378-382) And Eos bare to Astraeus the strong-hearted winds, brightening Zephyrus, and Boreas, headlong in his course, and Notus, -- a goddess mating in love with a god. And after these Erigenia <sup>(16)</sup> bare the star Eosphorus (Dawn-bringer), and the gleaming stars with which heaven is crowned.

(ll. 383-403) And Styx the daughter of Ocean was joined to Pallas and bare Zelus (Emulation) and trim-ankled Nike (Victory) in the house. Also she brought forth Cratos (Strength) and Bia (Force), wonderful children. These have no house apart from Zeus, nor any dwelling nor path except that wherein God leads them, but they dwell always with Zeus the loud-thunderer. For so did Styx the deathless daughter of Ocean plan on that day

when the Olympian Lightener called all the deathless gods to great Olympus, and said that whosoever of the gods would fight with him against the Titans, he would not cast him out from his rights, but each should have the office which he had before amongst the deathless gods. And he declared that he who was without office and rights as is just. So deathless Styx came first to Olympus with her children through the wit of her dear father. And Zeus honoured her, and gave her very great gifts, for her he appointed to be the great oath of the gods, and her children to live with him always. And as he promised, so he performed fully unto them all. But he himself mightily reigns and rules.

(ll. 404-452) Again, Phoebe came to the desired embrace of Coeus.

Then the goddess through the love of the god conceived and brought forth dark-gowned Leto, always mild, kind to men and to the deathless gods, mild from the beginning, gentlest in all Olympus. Also she bare Asteria of happy name, whom Perses once led to his great house to be called his dear wife. And she conceived and bare Hecate whom Zeus the son of Cronos honoured above all. He gave her splendid gifts, to have a share of the earth and the unfruitful sea. She received honour also in starry heaven, and is honoured exceedingly by the deathless gods. For to this day, whenever any one of men on earth offers rich sacrifices and prays for favour according to custom, he calls upon Hecate. Great honour comes full easily to him whose prayers the goddess receives favourably, and she bestows wealth upon him; for the power surely is with her. For as many as were born of Earth and Ocean amongst all these she has her due portion. The son of Cronos did her no wrong nor took anything away of all that was her portion among the former Titan gods: but she holds, as the division was at the first from the beginning, privilege both in earth, and in heaven, and in sea. Also, because she is an only child, the goddess receives not less honour, but much more still, for Zeus honours her. Whom she will she greatly aids and advances: she sits by worshipful kings in judgement, and in the assembly whom she will is distinguished among the people. And when men arm themselves for the battle that destroys men, then the goddess is at hand to give victory and grant glory readily to whom she will. Good is she also when men contend at the games, for there too the goddess is with them and profits them: and he who by might and strength gets the victory wins the rich prize easily with joy, and brings glory to his parents. And she is good to stand by horsemen, whom she will: and to those whose business is in the grey discomfortable sea, and who pray to Hecate and the loud-crashing Earth-Shaker, easily the glorious goddess gives great catch, and easily she takes it away as soon as seen, if so she will. She is good in the byre with Hermes to increase the stock. The droves of kine and wide herds of goats and flocks of fleecy sheep, if she will, she increases from a few, or makes many to be less. So, then, albeit her mother's only child <sup>(17)</sup>, she is honoured amongst all the deathless gods. And the son of Cronos made her a nurse of the young who after that day saw with their eyes the light of all-seeing Dawn. So from the beginning she is a nurse of the young, and these are her honours.

(ll. 453-491) But Rhea was subject in love to Cronos and bare splendid children, Hestia <sup>(18)</sup>, Demeter, and gold-shod Hera and strong Hades, pitiless in heart, who dwells under the earth, and the loud-crashing Earth-Shaker, and wise Zeus, father of gods and men, by whose thunder the wide earth is shaken. These great Cronos swallowed as each came forth from the womb to his mother's knees with this intent, that no other of the proud sons of Heaven should hold the kingly office amongst the deathless gods. For he learned from Earth and starry Heaven that he was destined to be overcome by his own son, strong though he was, through the contriving of great Zeus <sup>(19)</sup>. Therefore he kept no blind outlook, but watched and swallowed down his children: and unceasing grief seized Rhea. But when she was about to bear Zeus, the father of gods and men, then she besought her own dear parents, Earth and starry Heaven, to devise some plan with her that the birth of her dear child might be concealed, and that retribution might overtake great, crafty Cronos for his own father and also for the children whom he had swallowed down. And they readily heard and obeyed their dear daughter, and told her all that was destined to happen touching Cronos the king and his stout-hearted son. So they sent her to Lyctus, to the rich land of Crete, when she was ready to bear great Zeus, the youngest of her children. Him did vast Earth receive from Rhea in wide Crete to nourish and to bring up. Thither came Earth carrying him swiftly through the black night to Lyctus first, and took him in her arms and hid him in a remote

cave beneath the secret places of the holy earth on thick-wooded Mount Aegeum; but to the mightily ruling son of Heaven, the earlier king of the gods, she gave a great stone wrapped in swaddling clothes. Then he took it in his hands and thrust it down into his belly: wretch! he knew not in his heart that in place of the stone his son was left behind, unconquered and untroubled, and that he was soon to overcome him by force and might and drive him from his honours, himself to reign over the deathless gods.

(ll. 492-506) After that, the strength and glorious limbs of the prince increased quickly, and as the years rolled on, great Cronos the wily was beguiled by the deep suggestions of Earth, and brought up again his offspring, vanquished by the arts and might of his own son, and he vomited up first the stone which he had swallowed last. And Zeus set it fast in the wide-pathed earth at goodly Pytho under the glens of Parnassus, to be a sign thenceforth and a marvel to mortal men <sup>(20)</sup>. And he set free from their deadly bonds the brothers of his father, sons of Heaven whom his father in his foolishness had bound. And they remembered to be grateful to him for his kindness, and gave him thunder and the glowing thunderbolt and lightening: for before that, huge Earth had hidden these. In them he trusts and rules over mortals and immortals.

(ll. 507-543) Now Iapetus took to wife the neat-ankled mad Clymene, daughter of Ocean, and went up with her into one bed. And she bare him a stout-hearted son, Atlas: also she bare very glorious Menoetius and clever Prometheus, full of various wiles, and scatter-brained Epimetheus who from the first was a mischief to men who eat bread; for it was he who first took of Zeus the woman, the maiden whom he had formed. But Menoetius was outrageous, and far-seeing Zeus struck him with a lurid thunderbolt and sent him down to Erebus because of his mad presumption and exceeding pride. And Atlas through hard constraint upholds the wide heaven with unwearying head and arms, standing at the borders of the earth before the clear-voiced Hesperides; for this lot wise Zeus assigned to him. And ready-witted Prometheus he bound with inextricable bonds, cruel chains, and drove a shaft through his middle, and set on him a long-winged eagle, which used to eat his immortal liver; but by night the liver grew as much again everyway as the long-winged bird devoured in the whole day. That bird Heracles, the valiant son of shapely-ankled Alcmene, slew; and delivered the son of Iapetus from the cruel plague, and released him from his affliction -- not without the will of Olympian Zeus who reigns on high, that the glory of Heracles the Theban-born might be yet greater than it was before over the plenteous earth. This, then, he regarded, and honoured his famous son; though he was angry, he ceased from the wrath which he had before because Prometheus matched himself in wit with the almighty son of Cronos. For when the gods and mortal men had a dispute at Mecone, even then Prometheus was forward to cut up a great ox and set portions before them, trying to befool the mind of Zeus. Before the rest he set flesh and inner parts thick with fat upon the hide, covering them with an ox paunch; but for Zeus he put the white bones dressed up with cunning art and covered with shining fat. Then the father of men and of gods said to him:

(ll. 543-544) 'Son of Iapetus, most glorious of all lords, good sir, how unfairly you have divided the portions!'

(ll. 545-547) So said Zeus whose wisdom is everlasting, rebuking him. But wily Prometheus answered him, smiling softly and not forgetting his cunning trick:

(ll. 548-558) 'Zeus, most glorious and greatest of the eternal gods, take which ever of these portions your heart within you bids.' So he said, thinking trickery. But Zeus, whose wisdom is everlasting, saw and failed not to perceive the trick, and in his heart he thought mischief against mortal men which also was to be fulfilled. With both hands he took up the white fat and was angry at heart, and wrath came to his spirit when he saw the white ox-bones craftily tricked out: and because of this the tribes of men upon earth burn white bones to the deathless gods upon fragrant altars. But Zeus who drives the clouds was greatly vexed and said to him:

(ll. 559-560) 'Son of Iapetus, clever above all! So, sir, you have not yet forgotten your cunning arts!'

(ll. 561-584) So spake Zeus in anger, whose wisdom is everlasting; and from that time he was always mindful of the trick, and would not give the power of unwearying fire to the Melian <sup>(21)</sup> race of mortal men who live on the earth. But the noble son of Iapetus outwitted him and stole the far-seen gleam of unwearying fire in a hollow fennel stalk. And Zeus who thunders on high was stung in spirit, and his dear heart was angered when he saw amongst men the far-seen ray of fire. Forthwith he made an evil thing for men as the price of fire; for the very famous Limping God formed of earth the likeness of a shy maiden as the son of Cronos willed. And the goddess bright-eyed Athene girded and clothed her with silvery raiment, and down from her head she spread with her hands a brodered veil, a wonder to see; and she, Pallas Athene, put about her head lovely garlands, flowers of new-grown herbs. Also she put upon her head a crown of gold which the very famous Limping God made himself and worked with his own hands as a favour to Zeus his father. On it was much curious work, wonderful to see; for of the many creatures which the land and sea rear up, he put most upon it, wonderful things, like living beings with voices: and great beauty shone out from it.

(ll. 585-589) But when he had made the beautiful evil to be the price for the blessing, he brought her out, delighting in the finery which the bright-eyed daughter of a mighty father had given her, to the place where the other gods and men were. And wonder took hold of the deathless gods and mortal men when they saw that which was sheer guile, not to be withstood by men.

(ll. 590-612) For from her is the race of women and female kind: of her is the deadly race and tribe of women who live amongst mortal men to their great trouble, no helpmeets in hateful poverty, but only in wealth. And as in thatched hives bees feed the drones whose nature is to do mischief -- by day and throughout the day until the sun goes down the bees are busy and lay the white combs, while the drones stay at home in the covered skeps and reap the toil of others into their own bellies -- even so Zeus who thunders on high made women to be an evil to mortal men, with a nature to do evil. And he gave them a second evil to be the price for the good they had: whoever avoids marriage and the sorrows that women cause, and will not wed, reaches deadly old age without anyone to tend his years, and though he at least has no lack of livelihood while he lives, yet, when he is dead, his kinsfolk divide his possessions amongst them. And as for the man who chooses the lot of marriage and takes a good wife suited to his mind, evil continually contends with good; for whoever happens to have mischievous children, lives always with unceasing grief in his spirit and heart within him; and this evil cannot be healed.

(ll. 613-616) So it is not possible to deceive or go beyond the will of Zeus; for not even the son of Iapetus, kindly Prometheus, escaped his heavy anger, but of necessity strong bands confined him, although he knew many a wile.

(ll. 617-643) But when first their father was vexed in his heart with Obriareus and Cottus and Gyes, he bound them in cruel bonds, because he was jealous of their exceeding manhood and comeliness and great size: and he made them live beneath the wide-pathed earth, where they were afflicted, being set to dwell under the ground, at the end of the earth, at its great borders, in bitter anguish for a long time and with great grief at heart. But the son of Cronos and the other deathless gods whom rich-haired Rhea bare from union with Cronos, brought them up again to the light at Earth's advising. For she herself recounted all things to the gods fully, how that with these they would gain victory and a glorious cause to vaunt themselves. For the Titan gods and as many as sprang from Cronos had long been fighting together in stubborn war with heart-grieving toil, the lordly Titans from high Othyrs, but the gods, givers of good, whom rich-haired Rhea bare in union with Cronos, from Olympus. So they, with bitter wrath, were fighting continually with one another at that time for ten full years, and the hard strife had no close or end for either side, and the issue of the war hung evenly balanced. But when he had provided those three with all things fitting, nectar and ambrosia which the gods themselves eat, and when their proud spirit revived within them all after they had fed on nectar and delicious ambrosia, then it was that the father of men and gods spoke amongst them:

(ll. 644-653) 'Hear me, bright children of Earth and Heaven, that I may say what my heart within me bids. A long while now have we, who are sprung from Cronos and the Titan gods, fought with each other every day to get victory and to prevail. But do you show your great might and unconquerable strength, and face the Titans in bitter strife; for remember our friendly kindness, and from what sufferings you are come back to the light from your cruel bondage under misty gloom through our counsels.'

(ll. 654-663) So he said. And blameless Cottus answered him again: 'Divine one, you speak that which we know well: nay, even of ourselves we know that your wisdom and understanding is exceeding, and that you became a defender of the deathless ones from chill doom. And through your devising we are come back again from the murky gloom and from our merciless bonds, enjoying what we looked not for, O lord, son of Cronos. And so now with fixed purpose and deliberate counsel we will aid your power in dreadful strife and will fight against the Titans in hard battle.'

(ll. 664-686) So he said: and the gods, givers of good things, applauded when they heard his word, and their spirit longed for war even more than before, and they all, both male and female, stirred up hated battle that day, the Titan gods, and all that were born of Cronos together with those dread, mighty ones of overwhelming strength whom Zeus brought up to the light from Erebus beneath the earth. An hundred arms sprang from the shoulders of all alike, and each had fifty heads growing upon his shoulders upon stout limbs. These, then, stood against the Titans in grim strife, holding huge rocks in their strong hands. And on the other part the Titans eagerly strengthened their ranks, and both sides at one time showed the work of their hands and their might. The boundless sea rang terribly around, and the earth crashed loudly: wide Heaven was shaken and groaned, and high Olympus reeled from its foundation under the charge of the undying gods, and a heavy quaking reached dim Tartarus and the deep sound of their feet in the fearful onset and of their hard missiles. So, then, they launched their grievous shafts upon one another, and the cry of both armies as they shouted reached to starry heaven; and they met together with a great battle-cry.

(ll. 687-712) Then Zeus no longer held back his might; but straight his heart was filled with fury and he showed forth all his strength. From Heaven and from Olympus he came forthwith, hurling his lightning: the bold flew thick and fast from his strong hand together with thunder and lightning, whirling an awesome flame. The life-giving earth crashed around in burning, and the vast world crackled loud with fire all about. All the land seethed, and Ocean's streams and the unfruitful sea. The hot vapour lapped round the earthborn Titans: flame unspeakable rose to the bright upper air: the flashing glare of the thunder- stone and lightning blinded their eyes for all that there were strong. Astounding heat seized Chaos: and to see with eyes and to hear the sound with ears it seemed even as if Earth and wide Heaven above came together; for such a mighty crash would have arisen if Earth were being hurled to ruin, and Heaven from on high were hurling her down; so great a crash was there while the gods were meeting together in strife. Also the winds brought rumbling earthquake and duststorm, thunder and lightning and the lurid thunderbolt, which are the shafts of great Zeus, and carried the clangour and the warcry into the midst of the two hosts. An horrible uproar of terrible strife arose: mighty deeds were shown and the battle inclined. But until then, they kept at one another and fought continually in cruel war.

(ll. 713-735) And amongst the foremost Cottus and Briareos and Gyes insatiate for war raised fierce fighting: three hundred rocks, one upon another, they launched from their strong hands and overshadowed the Titans with their missiles, and buried them beneath the wide-pathed earth, and bound them in bitter chains when they had conquered them by their strength for all their great spirit, as far beneath the earth to Tartarus. For a brazen anvil falling down from heaven nine nights and days would reach the earth upon the tenth: and again, a brazen anvil falling from earth nine nights and days would reach Tartarus upon the tenth. Round it runs a fence of bronze, and night spreads in triple line all about it like a neck-circlet, while above grow the roots of the earth and unfruitful sea. There by the counsel of Zeus who drives the clouds the Titan gods are hidden under misty

gloom, in a dank place where are the ends of the huge earth. And they may not go out; for Poseidon fixed gates of bronze upon it, and a wall runs all round it on every side. There Gyes and Cottus and great-souled Obriareus live, trusty warders of Zeus who holds the aegis.

(ll. 736-744) And there, all in their order, are the sources and ends of gloomy earth and misty Tartarus and the unfruitful sea and starry heaven, loathsome and dank, which even the gods abhor.

It is a great gulf, and if once a man were within the gates, he would not reach the floor until a whole year had reached its end, but cruel blast upon blast would carry him this way and that. And this marvel is awful even to the deathless gods.

(ll. 744-757) There stands the awful home of murky Night wrapped in dark clouds. In front of it the son of Iapetus <sup>(22)</sup> stands immovably upholding the wide heaven upon his head and unwearied hands, where Night and Day draw near and greet one another as they pass the great threshold of bronze: and while the one is about to go down into the house, the other comes out at the door.

And the house never holds them both within; but always one is without the house passing over the earth, while the other stays at home and waits until the time for her journeying come; and the one holds all-seeing light for them on earth, but the other holds in her arms Sleep the brother of Death, even evil Night, wrapped in a vaporous cloud.

(ll. 758-766) And there the children of dark Night have their dwellings, Sleep and Death, awful gods. The glowing Sun never looks upon them with his beams, neither as he goes up into heaven, nor as he comes down from heaven. And the former of them roams peacefully over the earth and the sea's broad back and is kindly to men; but the other has a heart of iron, and his spirit within him is pitiless as bronze: whomsoever of men he has once seized he holds fast: and he is hateful even to the deathless gods.

(ll. 767-774) There, in front, stand the echoing halls of the god of the lower-world, strong Hades, and of awful Persephone. A fearful hound guards the house in front, pitiless, and he has a cruel trick. On those who go in he fawns with his tail and both his ears, but suffers them not to go out back again, but keeps watch and devours whomsoever he catches going out of the gates of strong Hades and awful Persephone.

(ll. 775-806) And there dwells the goddess loathed by the deathless gods, terrible Styx, eldest daughter of back-flowing <sup>(23)</sup> Ocean. She lives apart from the gods in her glorious house vaulted over with great rocks and propped up to heaven all round with silver pillars. Rarely does the daughter of Thaumias, swift-footed Iris, come to her with a message over the sea's wide back.

But when strife and quarrel arise among the deathless gods, and when any of them who live in the house of Olympus lies, then Zeus sends Iris to bring in a golden jug the great oath of the gods from far away, the famous cold water which trickles down from a high and beetling rock. Far under the wide-pathed earth a branch of Oceanus flows through the dark night out of the holy stream, and a tenth part of his water is allotted to her. With nine silver-swirling streams he winds about the earth and the sea's wide back, and then falls into the main <sup>(24)</sup>; but the tenth flows out from a rock, a sore trouble to the gods. For whoever of the deathless gods that hold the peaks of snowy Olympus pours a libation of her water is forsworn, lies breathless until a full year is completed, and never comes near to taste ambrosia and nectar, but lies spiritless and voiceless on a strewn bed: and a heavy trance overshadows him. But when he has spent a long year in his sickness, another penance and a harder follows after the first. For nine years he is cut off from the eternal gods and never joins their councils of their feasts, nine full years. But in the tenth year he comes again to join the assemblies of the deathless gods who live in the house of Olympus. Such an oath, then, did the gods appoint the eternal and primaeval water of Styx to be: and it spouts through a rugged place.

(ll. 807-819) And there, all in their order, are the sources and ends of the dark earth and misty Tartarus and the

unfruitful sea and starry heaven, loathsome and dank, which even the gods abhor.

And there are shining gates and an immoveable threshold of bronze having unending roots and it is grown of itself <sup>(25)</sup>. And beyond, away from all the gods, live the Titans, beyond gloomy Chaos. But the glorious allies of loud-crashing Zeus have their dwelling upon Ocean's foundations, even Cottus and Gyes; but Briareos, being goodly, the deep-roaring Earth-Shaker made his son-in-law, giving him Cymopolea his daughter to wed.

(ll. 820-868) But when Zeus had driven the Titans from heaven, huge Earth bare her youngest child Typhoeus of the love of Tartarus, by the aid of golden Aphrodite. Strength was with his hands in all that he did and the feet of the strong god were untiring. From his shoulders grew an hundred heads of a snake, a fearful dragon, with dark, flickering tongues, and from under the brows of his eyes in his marvellous heads flashed fire, and fire burned from his heads as he glared. And there were voices in all his dreadful heads which uttered every kind of sound unspeakable; for at one time they made sounds such that the gods understood, but at another, the noise of a bull bellowing aloud in proud ungovernable fury; and at another, the sound of a lion, relentless of heart; and at another, sounds like whelps, wonderful to hear; and again, at another, he would hiss, so that the high mountains re-echoed. And truly a thing past help would have happened on that day, and he would have come to reign over mortals and immortals, had not the father of men and gods been quick to perceive it. But he thundered hard and mightily: and the earth around resounded terribly and the wide heaven above, and the sea and Ocean's streams and the nether parts of the earth. Great Olympus reeled beneath the divine feet of the king as he arose and earth groaned thereat. And through the two of them heat took hold on the dark-blue sea, through the thunder and lightning, and through the fire from the monster, and the scorching winds and blazing thunderbolt. The whole earth seethed, and sky and sea: and the long waves raged along the beaches round and about, at the rush of the deathless gods: and there arose an endless shaking. Hades trembled where he rules over the dead below, and the Titans under Tartarus who live with Cronos, because of the unending clamour and the fearful strife. So when Zeus had raised up his might and seized his arms, thunder and lightning and lurid thunderbolt, he leaped from Olympus and struck him, and burned all the marvellous heads of the monster about him. But when Zeus had conquered him and lashed him with strokes, Typhoeus was hurled down, a maimed wreck, so that the huge earth groaned. And flame shot forth from the thunder-stricken lord in the dim rugged glens of the mount <sup>(26)</sup>, when he was smitten. A great part of huge earth was scorched by the terrible vapour and melted as tin melts when heated by men's art in channelled <sup>(27)</sup> crucibles; or as iron, which is hardest of all things, is softened by glowing fire in mountain glens and melts in the divine earth through the strength of Hephaestus <sup>(28)</sup>. Even so, then, the earth melted in the glow of the blazing fire. And in the bitterness of his anger Zeus cast him into wide Tartarus.

(ll. 869-880) And from Typhoeus come boisterous winds which blow damply, except Notus and Boreas and clear Zephyr. These are a god-sent kind, and a great blessing to men; but the others blow fitfully upon the seas. Some rush upon the misty sea and work great havoc among men with their evil, raging blasts; for varying with the season they blow, scattering ships and destroying sailors. And men who meet these upon the sea have no help against the mischief. Others again over the boundless, flowering earth spoil the fair fields of men who dwell below, filling them with dust and cruel uproar.

(ll. 881-885) But when the blessed gods had finished their toil, and settled by force their struggle for honours with the Titans, they pressed far-seeing Olympian Zeus to reign and to rule over them, by Earth's prompting. So he divided their dignities amongst them.

(ll. 886-900) Now Zeus, king of the gods, made Metis his wife first, and she was wisest among gods and mortal men. But when she was about to bring forth the goddess bright-eyed Athene, Zeus craftily deceived her with cunning words and put her in his own belly, as Earth and starry Heaven advised. For they advised him so, to the end that no other should hold royal sway over the eternal gods in place of Zeus; for very wise children were destined to be born of her, first the maiden bright-eyed Tritogeneia, equal to her father in strength and in

wise understanding; but afterwards she was to bear a son of overbearing spirit, king of gods and men. But Zeus put her into his own belly first, that the goddess might devise for him both good and evil.

(ll. 901-906) Next he married bright Themis who bare the Horae (Hours), and Eunomia (Order), Dike (Justice), and blooming Eirene (Peace), who mind the works of mortal men, and the Moerae (Fates) to whom wise Zeus gave the greatest honour, Clotho, and Lachesis, and Atropos who give mortal men evil and good to have.

(ll. 907-911) And Eurynome, the daughter of Ocean, beautiful in form, bare him three fair-cheeked Charites (Graces), Aglaea, and Euphrosyne, and lovely Thaleia, from whose eyes as they glanced flowed love that unnerves the limbs: and beautiful is their glance beneath their brows.

(ll. 912-914) Also he came to the bed of all-nourishing Demeter, and she bare white-armed Persephone whom Aidoneus carried off from her mother; but wise Zeus gave her to him.

(ll. 915-917) And again, he loved Mnemosyne with the beautiful hair: and of her the nine gold-crowned Muses were born who delight in feasts and the pleasures of song.

(ll. 918-920) And Leto was joined in love with Zeus who holds the aegis, and bare Apollo and Artemis delighting in arrows, children lovely above all the sons of Heaven.

(ll. 921-923) Lastly, he made Hera his blooming wife: and she was joined in love with the king of gods and men, and brought forth Hebe and Ares and Eileithya.

(ll. 924-929) But Zeus himself gave birth from his own head to bright-eyed Tritogeneia <sup>(29)</sup>, the awful, the strife-stirring, the host-leader, the unwearying, the queen, who delights in tumults and wars and battles. But Hera without union with Zeus -- for she was very angry and quarrelled with her mate -- bare famous Hephaestus, who is skilled in crafts more than all the sons of Heaven.

(ll. 929a-929t) <sup>(30)</sup> But Hera was very angry and quarrelled with her mate. And because of this strife she bare without union with Zeus who holds the aegis a glorious son, Hephaestus, who excelled all the sons of Heaven in crafts. But Zeus lay with the fair-cheeked daughter of Ocean and Tethys apart from Hera... ((LACUNA)) ...deceiving Metis (Thought) although she was full wise. But he seized her with his hands and put her in his belly, for fear that she might bring forth something stronger than his thunderbolt: therefore did Zeus, who sits on high and dwells in the aether, swallow her down suddenly. But she straightway conceived Pallas Athene: and the father of men and gods gave her birth by way of his head on the banks of the river Triton. And she remained hidden beneath the inward parts of Zeus, even Metis, Athena's mother, worker of righteousness, who was wiser than gods and mortal men. There the goddess (Athena) received that <sup>(31)</sup> whereby she excelled in strength all the deathless ones who dwell in Olympus, she who made the host-scaring weapon of Athena. And with it (Zeus) gave her birth, arrayed in arms of war.

(ll. 930-933) And of Amphitrite and the loud-roaring Earth-Shaker was born great, wide-ruling Triton, and he owns the depths of the sea, living with his dear mother and the lord his father in their golden house, an awful god.

(ll. 933-937) Also Cytherea bare to Ares the shield-piercer Panic and Fear, terrible gods who drive in disorder the close ranks of men in numbing war, with the help of Ares, sacker of towns: and Harmonia whom high-spirited Cadmus made his wife.

(Il. 938-939) And Maia, the daughter of Atlas, bare to Zeus glorious Hermes, the herald of the deathless gods, for she went up into his holy bed.

(Il. 940-942) And Semele, daughter of Cadmus was joined with him in love and bare him a splendid son, joyous Dionysus, -- a mortal woman an immortal son. And now they both are gods.

(Il. 943-944) And Alemena was joined in love with Zeus who drives the clouds and bare mighty Heracles.

(Il. 945-946) And Hephaestus, the famous Lamé One, made Aglaea, youngest of the Graces, his buxom wife.

(Il. 947-949) And golden-haired Dionysus made brown-haired Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, his buxom wife: and the son of Cronos made her deathless and unageing for him.

(Il. 950-955) And mighty Heracles, the valiant son of neat-ankled Alemena, when he had finished his grievous toils, made Hebe the child of great Zeus and gold-shod Hera his shy wife in snowy Olympus. Happy he! For he has finished his great works and lives amongst the dying gods, untroubled and unaging all his days.

(Il. 956-962) And Perseis, the daughter of Ocean, bare to unwearying Helios Circe and Aetes the king. And Aetes, the son of Helios who shows light to men, took to wife fair-cheeked Idyia, daughter of Ocean the perfect stream, by the will of the gods: and she was subject to him in love through golden Aphrodite and bare him neat-ankled Medea.

(Il. 963-968) And now farewell, you dwellers on Olympus and you islands and continents and thou briny sea within. Now sing the company of goddesses, sweet-voiced Muses of Olympus, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis, -- even those deathless one who lay with mortal men and bare children like unto gods.

(Il. 969-974) Demeter, bright goddess, was joined in sweet love with the hero Iasion in a thrice-ploughed fallow in the rich land of Crete, and bare Plutus, a kindly god who goes everywhere over land and the sea's wide back, and him who finds him and into whose hands he comes he makes rich, bestowing great wealth upon him.

(Il. 975-978) And Harmonia, the daughter of golden Aphrodite, bare to Cadmus Ino and Semele and fair-cheeked Agave and Autonoe whom long haired Aristaeus wedded, and Polydorus also in rich-crowned Thebe.

(Il. 979-983) And the daughter of Ocean, Callirrhoe was joined in the love of rich Aphrodite with stout hearted Chrysaor and bare a son who was the strongest of all men, Geryones, whom mighty Heracles killed in sea-girt Erythea for the sake of his shambling oxen.

(Il. 984-991) And Eos bare to Tithonus brazen-crested Memnon, king of the Ethiopians, and the Lord Emathion. And to Cephalus she bare a splendid son, strong Phaethon, a man like the gods, whom, when he was a young boy in the tender flower of glorious youth with childish thoughts, laughter-loving Aphrodite seized and caught up and made a keeper of her shrine by night, a divine spirit.

(Il. 993-1002) And the son of Aeson by the will of the gods led away from Aetes the daughter of Aetes the heaven-nurtured king, when he had finished the many grievous labours which the great king, over bearing Pelias, that outrageous and presumptuous doer of violence, put upon him. But when the son of Aeson had finished them, he came to Iolcus after long toil bringing the coy-eyed girl with him on his swift ship, and made her his buxom wife. And she was subject to Jason, shepherd of the people, and bare a son Medeus whom

Cheiron the son of Philyra brought up in the mountains. And the will of great Zeus was fulfilled.

(ll. 1003-1007) But of the daughters of Nereus, the Old man of the Sea, Psamathe the fair goddess, was loved by Aeacus through golden Aphrodite and bare Phocus. And the silver-shod goddess Thetis was subject to Peleus and brought forth lion-hearted Achilles, the destroyer of men.

(ll. 1008-1010) And Cytherea with the beautiful crown was joined in sweet love with the hero Anchises and bare Aeneas on the peaks of Ida with its many wooded glens.

(ll. 1011-1016) And Circe the daughter of Helios, Hyperion's son, loved steadfast Odysseus and bare Agrius and Latinus who was faultless and strong: also she brought forth Telegonus by the will of golden Aphrodite. And they ruled over the famous Tyrenians, very far off in a recess of the holy islands.

(ll. 1017-1018) And the bright goddess Calypso was joined to Odysseus in sweet love, and bare him Nausithous and Nausinous.

(ll. 1019-1020) These are the immortal goddesses who lay with mortal men and bare them children like unto gods.

(ll. 1021-1022) But now, sweet-voiced Muses of Olympus, daughters of Zeus who holds the aegis, sing of the company of women.

ENDNOTES:

1. The epithet probably indicates coquettishness.

2. A proverbial saying meaning, 'why enlarge on irrelevant topics?'

3. 'She of the noble voice': Calliope is queen of Epic poetry.

4. Earth, in the cosmology of Hesiod, is a disk surrounded by the river Oceanus and floating upon a waste of waters. It is called the foundation of all (the qualification 'the deathless ones...' etc. is an interpolation), because not only trees, men, and animals, but even the hills and seas

(ll. 129, 131) are supported by it.

5. Aether is the bright, untainted upper atmosphere, as distinguished from Aer, the lower atmosphere of the earth.

6. Brontes is the Thunderer; Steropes, the Lightener; and Arges, the Vivid One.

7. The myth accounts for the separation of Heaven and Earth. In Egyptian cosmology Nut (the Sky) is thrust and held apart from her brother Geb (the Earth) by their father Shu, who corresponds to the Greek Atlas.

8. Nymphs of the ash-trees, as Dryads are nymphs of the oak-trees. Cp. note on "Works and Days", l. 145.

9. 'Member-loving': the title is perhaps only a perversion of the regular PHILOMEIDES (laughter-loving).

10. Cletho (the Spinner) is she who spins the thread of man's life; Lachesis (the Disposer of Lots) assigns to each man his destiny; Atropos (She who cannot be turned) is the 'Fury with the abhorred shears.'

11. Many of the names which follow express various qualities or aspects of the sea: thus Galene is 'Calm', Cymothoe is the 'Wave-swift', Pherusa and Dynamene are 'She who speeds (ships)' and 'She who has power'.

12. The 'Wave-receiver' and the 'Wave-stiller'.

13. 'The Unerring' or 'Truthful'; cp. l. 235.

14. i.e. Poseidon.

15. Goettling notes that some of these nymphs derive their names from lands over which they preside, as Europa, Asia, Doris, Ianeira ('Lady of the Ionians'), but that most are called after some quality which their streams possessed: thus Xanthe is the 'Brown' or 'Turbid', Amphirho is the 'Surrounding' river, Ianthe is 'She who delights', and Ocyrrhoe is the 'Swift-flowing'.

16. i.e. Eos, the 'Early-born'.

17. Van Lennep explains that Hecate, having no brothers to support her claim, might have been slighted.
18. The goddess of the hearth (the Roman "Vesta"), and so of the house. Cp. "Homeric Hymns" v.22 ff.; xxxix.1 ff.
19. The variant reading 'of his father' (sc. Heaven) rests on inferior MS. authority and is probably an alteration due to the difficulty stated by a Scholiast: 'How could Zeus, being not yet begotten, plot against his father?' The phrase is, however, part of the prophecy. The whole line may well be spurious, and is rejected by Heyne, Wolf, Gaisford and Guyet.
20. Pausanias (x. 24.6) saw near the tomb of Neoptolemus 'a stone of no great size', which the Delphians anointed every day with oil, and which he says was supposed to be the stone given to Cronos.
21. A Scholiast explains: 'Either because they (men) sprang from the Melian nymphs (cp. l. 187); or because, when they were born (?), they cast themselves under the ash-trees, that is, the trees.' The reference may be to the origin of men from ash-trees: cp. "Works and Days", l. 145 and note.
22. sc. Atlas, the Shu of Egyptian mythology: cp. note on line 177.
23. Oceanus is here regarded as a continuous stream enclosing the earth and the seas, and so as flowing back upon himself.
24. The conception of Oceanus is here different: he has nine streams which encircle the earth and the flow out into the 'main' which appears to be the waste of waters on which, according to early Greek and Hebrew cosmology, the disk-like earth floated.
25. i.e. the threshold is of 'native' metal, and not artificial.
26. According to Homer Typhoeus was overwhelmed by Zeus amongst the Arimi in Cilicia. Pindar represents him as buried under Aetna, and Tzetzes reads Aetna in this passage.
27. The epithet (which means literally 'well-bored') seems to refer to the spout of the crucible.
28. The fire god. There is no reference to volcanic action: iron was smelted on Mount Ida; cp. "Epigrams of Homer", ix. 2-4.
29. i.e. Athena, who was born 'on the banks of the river Triton' (cp. l. 929l)
30. Restored by Peppmuller. The nineteen following lines from another recension of lines 889-900, 924-9 are quoted by Chrysippus (in Galen).
31. sc. the aegis. Line 929s is probably spurious, since it disagrees with l. 929q and contains a suspicious reference to Athens.

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## Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns and Homeric

### THE HOMERIC HYMNS

Online Medieval and Classical Library Release #8

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#### II. TO DEMETER (495 lines)

(ll. 1-3) I begin to sing of rich-haired Demeter, awful goddess  
-- of her and her trim-ankled daughter whom Aidoneus rapt away,  
given to him by all-seeing Zeus the loud-thunderer.

(ll. 4-18) Apart from Demeter, lady of the golden sword and  
glorious fruits, she was playing with the deep-bosomed daughters  
of Oceanus and gathering flowers over a soft meadow, roses and  
crocuses and beautiful violets, irises also and hyacinths and the  
narcissus, which Earth made to grow at the will of Zeus and to  
please the Host of Many, to be a snare for the bloom-like girl --  
a marvellous, radiant flower. It was a thing of awe whether for  
deathless gods or mortal men to see: from its root grew a hundred  
blooms and is smelled most sweetly, so that all wide heaven above  
and the whole earth and the sea's salt swell laughed for joy.  
And the girl was amazed and reached out with both hands to take  
the lovely toy; but the wide-pathed earth yawned there in the  
plain of Nysa, and the lord, Host of Many, with his immortal  
horses sprang out upon her -- the Son of Cronos, He who has many  
names (5).

(ll. 19-32) He caught her up reluctant on his golden car and bare  
her away lamenting. Then she cried out shrilly with her voice,  
calling upon her father, the Son of Cronos, who is most high and  
excellent. But no one, either of the deathless gods or of mortal  
men, heard her voice, nor yet the olive-trees bearing rich fruit:  
only tender-hearted Hecate, bright-coiffed, the daughter of  
Persaeus, heard the girl from her cave, and the lord Helios,  
Hyperion's bright son, as she cried to her father, the Son of  
Cronos. But he was sitting aloof, apart from the gods, in his  
temple where many pray, and receiving sweet offerings from mortal  
men. So he, that Son of Cronos, of many names, who is Ruler of  
Many and Host of Many, was bearing her away by leave of Zeus on  
his immortal chariot -- his own brother's child and all  
unwilling.

(ll. 33-39) And so long as she, the goddess, yet beheld earth and  
starry heaven and the strong-flowing sea where fishes shoal, and  
the rays of the sun, and still hoped to see her dear mother and  
the tribes of the eternal gods, so long hope calmed her great

heart for all her trouble....

((LACUNA))

....and the heights of the mountains and the depths of the sea rang with her immortal voice: and her queenly mother heard her.

(ll. 40-53) Bitter pain seized her heart, and she rent the covering upon her divine hair with her dear hands: her dark cloak she cast down from both her shoulders and sped, like a wild-bird, over the firm land and yielding sea, seeking her child. But no one would tell her the truth, neither god nor mortal men; and of the birds of omen none came with true news for her. Then for nine days queenly Deo wandered over the earth with flaming torches in her hands, so grieved that she never tasted ambrosia and the sweet draught of nectar, nor sprinkled her body with water. But when the tenth enlightening dawn had come, Hecate, with a torch in her hands, met her, and spoke to her and told her news:

(ll. 54-58) 'Queenly Demeter, bringer of seasons and giver of good gifts, what god of heaven or what mortal man has rapt away Persephone and pierced with sorrow your dear heart? For I heard her voice, yet saw not with my eyes who it was. But I tell you truly and shortly all I know.'

(ll. 59-73) So, then, said Hecate. And the daughter of rich-haired Rhea answered her not, but sped swiftly with her, holding flaming torches in her hands. So they came to Helios, who is watchman of both gods and men, and stood in front of his horses: and the bright goddess enquired of him: 'Helios, do you at least regard me, goddess as I am, if ever by word or deed of mine I have cheered your heart and spirit. Through the fruitless air I heard the thrilling cry of my daughter whom I bare, sweet scion of my body and lovely in form, as of one seized violently; though with my eyes I saw nothing. But you -- for with your beams you look down from the bright upper air Over all the earth and sea -- tell me truly of my dear child, if you have seen her anywhere, what god or mortal man has violently seized her against her will and mine, and so made off.'

(ll. 74-87) So said she. And the Son of Hyperion answered her: 'Queen Demeter, daughter of rich-haired Rhea, I will tell you the truth; for I greatly reverence and pity you in your grief for your trim-ankled daughter. None other of the deathless gods is to blame, but only cloud-gathering Zeus who gave her to Hades, her father's brother, to be called his buxom wife. And Hades seized her and took her loudly crying in his chariot down to his realm of mist and gloom. Yet, goddess, cease your loud lament and keep not vain anger unrelentingly: Aidoneus, the Ruler of Many, is no unfitting husband among the deathless gods for your

child, being your own brother and born of the same stock: also, for honour, he has that third share which he received when division was made at the first, and is appointed lord of those among whom he dwells.'

(ll. 88-89) So he spake, and called to his horses: and at his chiding they quickly whirled the swift chariot along, like long-winged birds.

(ll. 90-112) But grief yet more terrible and savage came into the heart of Demeter, and thereafter she was so angered with the dark-clouded Son of Cronos that she avoided the gathering of the gods and high Olympus, and went to the towns and rich fields of men, disfiguring her form a long while. And no one of men or deep-bosomed women knew her when they saw her, until she came to the house of wise Celeus who then was lord of fragrant Eleusis. Vexed in her dear heart, she sat near the wayside by the Maiden Well, from which the women of the place were used to draw water, in a shady place over which grew an olive shrub. And she was like an ancient woman who is cut off from childbearing and the gifts of garland-loving Aphrodite, like the nurses of king's children who deal justice, or like the house-keepers in their echoing halls. There the daughters of Celeus, son of Eleusis, saw her, as they were coming for easy-drawn water, to carry it in pitchers of bronze to their dear father's house: four were they and like goddesses in the flower of their girlhood, Callidice and Cleisidice and lovely Demo and Callithoe who was the eldest of them all. They knew her not, -- for the gods are not easily discerned by mortals -- but standing near by her spoke winged words:

(ll. 113-117) 'Old mother, whence and who are you of folk born long ago? Why are you gone away from the city and do not draw near the houses? For there in the shady halls are women of just such age as you, and others younger; and they would welcome you both by word and by deed.'

(ll. 118-144) Thus they said. And she, that queen among goddesses answered them saying: 'Hail, dear children, whosoever you are of woman-kind. I will tell you my story; for it is not unseemly that I should tell you truly what you ask. Doso is my name, for my stately mother gave it me. And now I am come from Crete over the sea's wide back, -- not willingly; but pirates brought be thence by force of strength against my liking. Afterwards they put in with their swift craft to Thoricus, and there the women landed on the shore in full throng and the men likewise, and they began to make ready a meal by the stern-cables of the ship. But my heart craved not pleasant food, and I fled secretly across the dark country and escaped by masters, that

they should not take me unpurchased across the sea, there to win a price for me. And so I wandered and am come here: and I know not at all what land this is or what people are in it. But may all those who dwell on Olympus give you husbands and birth of children as parents desire, so you take pity on me, maidens, and show me this clearly that I may learn, dear children, to the house of what man and woman I may go, to work for them cheerfully at such tasks as belong to a woman of my age. Well could I nurse a new born child, holding him in my arms, or keep house, or spread my masters' bed in a recess of the well-built chamber, or teach the women their work.'

(ll. 145-146) So said the goddess. And straightway the unwed maiden Callidice, goodliest in form of the daughters of Celeus, answered her and said:

(ll. 147-168) 'Mother, what the gods send us, we mortals bear perforce, although we suffer; for they are much stronger than we. But now I will teach you clearly, telling you the names of men who have great power and honour here and are chief among the people, guarding our city's coif of towers by their wisdom and true judgements: there is wise Triptolemus and Dioclus and Polyxeinus and blameless Eumolpus and Dolichus and our own brave father. All these have wives who manage in the house, and no one of them, so soon as she has seen you, would dishonour you and turn you from the house, but they will welcome you; for indeed you are godlike. But if you will, stay here; and we will go to our father's house and tell Metaneira, our deep-bosomed mother, all this matter fully, that she may bid you rather come to our home than search after the houses of others. She has an only son, late-born, who is being nursed in our well-built house, a child of many prayers and welcome: if you could bring him up until he reached the full measure of youth, any one of womankind who should see you would straightway envy you, such gifts would our mother give for his upbringing.'

(ll. 169-183) So she spake: and the goddess bowed her head in assent. And they filled their shining vessels with water and carried them off rejoicing. Quickly they came to their father's great house and straightway told their mother according as they had heard and seen. Then she bade them go with all speed and invite the stranger to come for a measureless hire. As hinds or heifers in spring time, when sated with pasture, bound about a meadow, so they, holding up the folds of their lovely garments, darted down the hollow path, and their hair like a crocus flower streamed about their shoulders. And they found the good goddess near the wayside where they had left her before, and led her to the house of their dear father. And she walked behind, distressed in her dear heart, with her head veiled and wearing a

dark cloak which waved about the slender feet of the goddess.

(ll. 184-211) Soon they came to the house of heaven-nurtured Celeus and went through the portico to where their queenly mother sat by a pillar of the close-fitted roof, holding her son, a tender scion, in her bosom. And the girls ran to her. But the goddess walked to the threshold: and her head reached the roof and she filled the doorway with a heavenly radiance. Then awe and reverence and pale fear took hold of Metaneira, and she rose up from her couch before Demeter, and bade her be seated. But Demeter, bringer of seasons and giver of perfect gifts, would not sit upon the bright couch, but stayed silent with lovely eyes cast down until careful Iambe placed a jointed seat for her and threw over it a silvery fleece. Then she sat down and held her veil in her hands before her face. A long time she sat upon the stool (6) without speaking because of her sorrow, and greeted no one by word or by sign, but rested, never smiling, and tasting neither food nor drink, because she pined with longing for her deep-bosomed daughter, until careful Iambe -- who pleased her moods in aftertime also -- moved the holy lady with many a quip and jest to smile and laugh and cheer her heart. Then Metaneira filled a cup with sweet wine and offered it to her; but she refused it, for she said it was not lawful for her to drink red wine, but bade them mix meal and water with soft mint and give her to drink. And Metaneira mixed the draught and gave it to the goddess as she bade. So the great queen Deo received it to observe the sacrament.... (7)

((LACUNA))

(ll. 212-223) And of them all, well-girded Metaneira first began to speak: 'Hail, lady! For I think you are not meanly but nobly born; truly dignity and grace are conspicuous upon your eyes as in the eyes of kings that deal justice. Yet we mortals bear perforce what the gods send us, though we be grieved; for a yoke is set upon our necks. But now, since you are come here, you shall have what I can bestow: and nurse me this child whom the gods gave me in my old age and beyond my hope, a son much prayed for. If you should bring him up until he reach the full measure of youth, any one of womankind that sees you will straightway envy you, so great reward would I give for his upbringing.'

(ll. 224-230) Then rich-haired Demeter answered her: 'And to you, also, lady, all hail, and may the gods give you good! Gladly will I take the boy to my breast, as you bid me, and will nurse him. Never, I ween, through any heedlessness of his nurse shall witchcraft hurt him nor yet the Undercutter (8): for I know a charm far stronger than the Woodcutter, and I know an excellent safeguard against woeful witchcraft.'

(Il. 231-247) When she had so spoken, she took the child in her fragrant bosom with her divine hands: and his mother was glad in her heart. So the goddess nursed in the palace Demophoon, wise Celeus' goodly son whom well-girded Metaneira bare. And the child grew like some immortal being, not fed with food nor nourished at the breast: for by day rich-crowned Demeter would anoint him with ambrosia as if he were the offspring of a god and breathe sweetly upon him as she held him in her bosom. But at night she would hide him like a brand in the heard of the fire, unknown to his dear parents. And it wrought great wonder in these that he grew beyond his age; for he was like the gods face to face. And she would have made him deathless and unageing, had not well-girded Metaneira in her heedlessness kept watch by night from her sweet-smelling chamber and spied. But she wailed and smote her two hips, because she feared for her son and was greatly distraught in her heart; so she lamented and uttered winged words:

(Il. 248-249) 'Demophoon, my son, the strange woman buries you deep in fire and works grief and bitter sorrow for me.'

(Il. 250-255) Thus she spoke, mourning. And the bright goddess, lovely-crowned Demeter, heard her, and was wroth with her. So with her divine hands she snatched from the fire the dear son whom Metaneira had born unhoped-for in the palace, and cast him from her to the ground; for she was terribly angry in her heart. Forthwith she said to well-girded Metaneira:

(Il. 256-274) 'Witless are you mortals and dull to foresee your lot, whether of good or evil, that comes upon you. For now in your heedlessness you have wrought folly past healing; for -- be witness the oath of the gods, the relentless water of Styx -- I would have made your dear son deathless and unaging all his days and would have bestowed on him everlasting honour, but now he can in no way escape death and the fates. Yet shall unfailing honour always rest upon him, because he lay upon my knees and slept in my arms. But, as the years move round and when he is in his prime, the sons of the Eleusinians shall ever wage war and dread strife with one another continually. Lo! I am that Demeter who has share of honour and is the greatest help and cause of joy to the undying gods and mortal men. But now, let all the people build be a great temple and an altar below it and beneath the city and its sheer wall upon a rising hillock above Callichorus. And I myself will teach my rites, that hereafter you may reverently perform them and so win the favour of my heart.'

(Il. 275-281) When she had so said, the goddess changed her stature and her looks, thrusting old age away from her: beauty spread round about her and a lovely fragrance was wafted from her

sweet-smelling robes, and from the divine body of the goddess a light shone afar, while golden tresses spread down over her shoulders, so that the strong house was filled with brightness as with lightning. And so she went out from the palace.

(Il. 281-291) And straightway Metaneira's knees were loosed and she remained speechless for a long while and did not remember to take up her late-born son from the ground. But his sisters heard his pitiful wailing and sprang down from their well-spread beds: one of them took up the child in her arms and laid him in her bosom, while another revived the fire, and a third rushed with soft feet to bring their mother from her fragrant chamber. And they gathered about the struggling child and washed him, embracing him lovingly; but he was not comforted, because nurses and handmaids much less skilful were holding him now.

(Il. 292-300) All night long they sought to appease the glorious goddess, quaking with fear. But, as soon as dawn began to show, they told powerful Celeus all things without fail, as the lovely-crowned goddess Demeter charged them. So Celeus called the countless people to an assembly and bade them make a goodly temple for rich-haired Demeter and an altar upon the rising hillock. And they obeyed him right speedily and harkened to his voice, doing as he commanded. As for the child, he grew like an immortal being.

(Il. 301-320) Now when they had finished building and had drawn back from their toil, they went every man to his house. But golden-haired Demeter sat there apart from all the blessed gods and stayed, wasting with yearning for her deep-bosomed daughter. Then she caused a most dreadful and cruel year for mankind over the all-nourishing earth: the ground would not make the seed sprout, for rich-crowned Demeter kept it hid. In the fields the oxen drew many a curved plough in vain, and much white barley was cast upon the land without avail. So she would have destroyed the whole race of man with cruel famine and have robbed them who dwell on Olympus of their glorious right of gifts and sacrifices, had not Zeus perceived and marked this in his heart. First he sent golden-winged Iris to call rich-haired Demeter, lovely in form. So he commanded. And she obeyed the dark-clouded Son of Cronos, and sped with swift feet across the space between. She came to the stronghold of fragrant Eleusis, and there finding dark-cloaked Demeter in her temple, spake to her and uttered winged words:

(Il. 321-323) 'Demeter, father Zeus, whose wisdom is everlasting, calls you to come join the tribes of the eternal gods: come therefore, and let not the message I bring from Zeus pass unobeyed.'

(Il. 324-333) Thus said Iris imploring her. But Demeter's heart was not moved. Then again the father sent forth all the blessed and eternal gods besides: and they came, one after the other, and kept calling her and offering many very beautiful gifts and whatever right she might be pleased to choose among the deathless gods. Yet no one was able to persuade her mind and will, so wrath was she in her heart; but she stubbornly rejected all their words: for she vowed that she would never set foot on fragrant Olympus nor let fruit spring out of the ground, until she beheld with her eyes her own fair-faced daughter.

(Il. 334-346) Now when all-seeing Zeus the loud-thunderer heard this, he sent the Slayer of Argus whose wand is of gold to Erebus, so that having won over Hades with soft words, he might lead forth chaste Persephone to the light from the misty gloom to join the gods, and that her mother might see her with her eyes and cease from her anger. And Hermes obeyed, and leaving the house of Olympus, straightway sprang down with speed to the hidden places of the earth. And he found the lord Hades in his house seated upon a couch, and his shy mate with him, much reluctant, because she yearned for her mother. But she was afar off, brooding on her fell design because of the deeds of the blessed gods. And the strong Slayer of Argus drew near and said:

(Il. 347-356) 'Dark-haired Hades, ruler over the departed, father Zeus bids me bring noble Persephone forth from Erebus unto the gods, that her mother may see her with her eyes and cease from her dread anger with the immortals; for now she plans an awful deed, to destroy the weakly tribes of earthborn men by keeping seed hidden beneath the earth, and so she makes an end of the honours of the undying gods. For she keeps fearful anger and does not consort with the gods, but sits aloof in her fragrant temple, dwelling in the rocky hold of Eleusis.'

(Il. 357-359) So he said. And Aidoneus, ruler over the dead, smiled grimly and obeyed the behest of Zeus the king. For he straightway urged wise Persephone, saying:

(Il. 360-369) 'Go now, Persephone, to your dark-robed mother, go, and feel kindly in your heart towards me: be not so exceedingly cast down; for I shall be no unfitting husband for you among the deathless gods, that am own brother to father Zeus. And while you are here, you shall rule all that lives and moves and shall have the greatest rights among the deathless gods: those who defraud you and do not appease your power with offerings, reverently performing rites and paying fit gifts, shall be punished for evermore.'

(Il. 370-383) When he said this, wise Persephone was filled with

joy and hastily sprang up for gladness. But he on his part secretly gave her sweet pomegranate seed to eat, taking care for himself that she might not remain continually with grave, dark-robed Demeter. Then Aidoneus the Ruler of Many openly got ready his deathless horses beneath the golden chariot. And she mounted on the chariot, and the strong Slayer of Argos took reins and whip in his dear hands and drove forth from the hall, the horses speeding readily. Swiftly they traversed their long course, and neither the sea nor river-waters nor grassy glens nor mountain-peaks checked the career of the immortal horses, but they clave the deep air above them as they went. And Hermes brought them to the place where rich-crowned Demeter was staying and checked them before her fragrant temple.

(ll. 384-404) And when Demeter saw them, she rushed forth as does a Maenad down some thick-wooded mountain, while Persephone on the other side, when she saw her mother's sweet eyes, left the chariot and horses, and leaped down to run to her, and falling upon her neck, embraced her. But while Demeter was still holding her dear child in her arms, her heart suddenly misgave her for some snare, so that she feared greatly and ceased fondling her daughter and asked of her at once: 'My child, tell me, surely you have not tasted any food while you were below? Speak out and hide nothing, but let us both know. For if you have not, you shall come back from loathly Hades and live with me and your father, the dark-clouded Son of Cronos and be honoured by all the deathless gods; but if you have tasted food, you must go back again beneath the secret places of the earth, there to dwell a third part of the seasons every year: yet for the two parts you shall be with me and the other deathless gods. But when the earth shall bloom with the fragrant flowers of spring in every kind, then from the realm of darkness and gloom thou shalt come up once more to be a wonder for gods and mortal men. And now tell me how he rapt you away to the realm of darkness and gloom, and by what trick did the strong Host of Many beguile you?'

(ll. 405-433) Then beautiful Persephone answered her thus: 'Mother, I will tell you all without error. When luck-bringing Hermes came, swift messenger from my father the Son of Cronos and the other Sons of Heaven, bidding me come back from Erebus that you might see me with your eyes and so cease from your anger and fearful wrath against the gods, I sprang up at once for joy; but he secretly put in my mouth sweet food, a pomegranate seed, and forced me to taste against my will. Also I will tell how he rapt me away by the deep plan of my father the Son of Cronos and carried me off beneath the depths of the earth, and will relate the whole matter as you ask. All we were playing in a lovely meadow, Leucippe (9) and Phaeno and Electra and Ianche, Melita also and Iache with Rhodea and Callirhoe and Melobosis and Tyche

and Ocyrhoe, fair as a flower, Chryseis, Ianeira, Acaste and Admete and Rhodope and Pluto and charming Calypso; Styx too was there and Urania and lovely Galaxaura with Pallas who rouses battles and Artemis delighting in arrows: we were playing and gathering sweet flowers in our hands, soft crocuses mingled with irises and hyacinths, and rose-blooms and lilies, marvellous to see, and the narcissus which the wide earth caused to grow yellow as a crocus. That I plucked in my joy; but the earth parted beneath, and there the strong lord, the Host of Many, sprang forth and in his golden chariot he bore me away, all unwilling, beneath the earth: then I cried with a shrill cry. All this is true, sore though it grieves me to tell the tale.'

(Il. 434-437) So did they turn, with hearts at one, greatly cheer each the other's soul and spirit with many an embrace: their heart had relief from their griefs while each took and gave back joyousness.

(Il. 438-440) Then bright-coiffed Hecate came near to them, and often did she embrace the daughter of holy Demeter: and from that time the lady Hecate was minister and companion to Persephone.

(Il. 441-459) And all-seeing Zeus sent a messenger to them, rich-haired Rhea, to bring dark-cloaked Demeter to join the families of the gods: and he promised to give her what right she should choose among the deathless gods and agreed that her daughter should go down for the third part of the circling year to darkness and gloom, but for the two parts should live with her mother and the other deathless gods. Thus he commanded. And the goddess did not disobey the message of Zeus; swiftly she rushed down from the peaks of Olympus and came to the plain of Rharus, rich, fertile corn-land once, but then in nowise fruitful, for it lay idle and utterly leafless, because the white grains was hidden by design of trim-ankled Demeter. But afterwards, as springtime waxed, it was soon to be waving with long ears of corn, and its rich furrows to be loaded with grain upon the ground, while others would already be bound in sheaves. There first she landed from the fruitless upper air: and glad were the goddesses to see each other and cheered in heart. Then bright-coiffed Rhea said to Demeter:

(Il. 460-469) 'Come, my daughter; for far-seeing Zeus the loud-thunderer calls you to join the families of the gods, and has promised to give you what rights you please among the deathless gods, and has agreed that for a third part of the circling year your daughter shall go down to darkness and gloom, but for the two parts shall be with you and the other deathless gods: so has he declared it shall be and has bowed his head in token. But come, my child, obey, and be not too angry unrelentingly with the

dark-clouded Son of Cronos; but rather increase forthwith for men the fruit that gives them life.'

(ll. 470-482) So spake Rhea. And rich-crowned Demeter did not refuse but straightway made fruit to spring up from the rich lands, so that the whole wide earth was laden with leaves and flowers. Then she went, and to the kings who deal justice, Triptolemus and Diocles, the horse-driver, and to doughty Eumolpus and Celeus, leader of the people, she showed the conduct of her rites and taught them all her mysteries, to Triptolemus and Polyxeinus and Diocles also, -- awful mysteries which no one may in any way transgress or pry into or utter, for deep awe of the gods checks the voice. Happy is he among men upon earth who has seen these mysteries; but he who is uninitiate and who has no part in them, never has lot of like good things once he is dead, down in the darkness and gloom.

(ll. 483-489) But when the bright goddess had taught them all, they went to Olympus to the gathering of the other gods. And there they dwell beside Zeus who delights in thunder, awful and reverend goddesses. Right blessed is he among men on earth whom they freely love: soon they do send Plutus as guest to his great house, Plutus who gives wealth to mortal men.

(ll. 490-495) And now, queen of the land of sweet Eleusis and sea-girt Paros and rocky Antron, lady, giver of good gifts, bringer of seasons, queen Deo, be gracious, you and your daughter all beauteous Persephone, and for my song grant me heart-cheering substance. And now I will remember you and another song also.

#### **IV. TO HERMES (582 lines)**

(ll. 1-29) Muse, sing of Hermes, the son of Zeus and Maia, lord of Cyllene and Arcadia rich in flocks, the luck-bringing messenger of the immortals whom Maia bare, the rich-tressed nymph, when she was joined in love with Zeus, -- a shy goddess, for she avoided the company of the blessed gods, and lived within a deep, shady cave. There the son of Cronos used to lie with the rich-tressed nymph, unseen by deathless gods and mortal men, at dead of night while sweet sleep should hold white-armed Hera fast. And when the purpose of great Zeus was fixed in heaven, she was delivered and a notable thing was come to pass. For then she bare a son, of many shifts, blandly cunning, a robber, a cattle driver, a bringer of dreams, a watcher by night, a thief at the gates, one who was soon to show forth wonderful deeds among the deathless gods. Born with the dawning, at mid-day he played on the lyre, and in the evening he stole the cattle of far-shooting Apollo on the fourth day of the month; for on that day queenly Maia bare him. So soon as he had leaped from his

mother's heavenly womb, he lay not long waiting in his holy cradle, but he sprang up and sought the oxen of Apollo. But as he stepped over the threshold of the high-roofed cave, he found a tortoise there and gained endless delight. For it was Hermes who first made the tortoise a singer. The creature fell in his way at the courtyard gate, where it was feeding on the rich grass before the dwelling, waddling along. When he saw it, the luck-bringing son of Zeus laughed and said:

(ll. 30-38) `An omen of great luck for me so soon! I do not slight it. Hail, comrade of the feast, lovely in shape, sounding at the dance! With joy I meet you! Where got you that rich gaud for covering, that spangled shell -- a tortoise living in the mountains? But I will take and carry you within: you shall help me and I will do you no disgrace, though first of all you must profit me. It is better to be at home: harm may come out of doors. Living, you shall be a spell against mischievous witchcraft (13); but if you die, then you shall make sweetest song.

(ll. 39-61) Thus speaking, he took up the tortoise in both hands and went back into the house carrying his charming toy. Then he cut off its limbs and scooped out the marrow of the mountain-tortoise with a scoop of grey iron. As a swift thought darts through the heart of a man when thronging cares haunt him, or as bright glances flash from the eye, so glorious Hermes planned both thought and deed at once. He cut stalks of reed to measure and fixed them, fastening their ends across the back and through the shell of the tortoise, and then stretched ox hide all over it by his skill. Also he put in the horns and fitted a cross-piece upon the two of them, and stretched seven strings of sheep-gut. But when he had made it he proved each string in turn with the key, as he held the lovely thing. At the touch of his hand it sounded marvellously; and, as he tried it, the god sang sweet random snatches, even as youths bandy taunts at festivals. He sang of Zeus the son of Cronos and neat-shod Maia, the converse which they had before in the comradeship of love, telling all the glorious tale of his own begetting. He celebrated, too, the handmaids of the nymph, and her bright home, and the tripods all about the house, and the abundant cauldrons.

(ll. 62-67) But while he was singing of all these, his heart was bent on other matters. And he took the hollow lyre and laid it in his sacred cradle, and sprang from the sweet-smelling hall to a watch-place, pondering sheet trickery in his heart -- deeds such as knavish folk pursue in the dark night-time; for he longed to taste flesh.

(ll. 68-86) The Sun was going down beneath the earth towards

Ocean with his horses and chariot when Hermes came hurrying to the shadowy mountains of Pieria, where the divine cattle of the blessed gods had their steeds and grazed the pleasant, unmown meadows. Of these the Son of Maia, the sharp-eyed slayer of Argus then cut off from the herd fifty loud-lowing kine, and drove them straggling-wise across a sandy place, turning their hoof-prints aside. Also, he bethought him of a crafty ruse and reversed the marks of their hoofs, making the front behind and the hind before, while he himself walked the other way (14). Then he wove sandals with wicker-work by the sand of the sea, wonderful things, unthought of, unimagined; for he mixed together tamarisk and myrtle-twigs, fastening together an armful of their fresh, young wood, and tied them, leaves and all securely under his feet as light sandals. The brushwood the glorious Slayer of Argus plucked in Pieria as he was preparing for his journey, making shift (15) as one making haste for a long journey.

(ll. 87-89) But an old man tilling his flowering vineyard saw him as he was hurrying down the plain through grassy Onchestus. So the Son of Maia began and said to him:

(ll. 90-93) 'Old man, digging about your vines with bowed shoulders, surely you shall have much wine when all these bear fruit, if you obey me and strictly remember not to have seen what you have seen, and not to have heard what you have heard, and to keep silent when nothing of your own is harmed.'

(ll. 94-114) When he had said this much, he hurried the strong cattle on together: through many shadowy mountains and echoing gorges and flowery plains glorious Hermes drove them. And now the divine night, his dark ally, was mostly passed, and dawn that sets folk to work was quickly coming on, while bright Selene, daughter of the lord Pallas, Megamedes' son, had just climbed her watch-post, when the strong Son of Zeus drove the wide-browed cattle of Phoebus Apollo to the river Alpheus. And they came unwearied to the high-roofed byres and the drinking-troughs that were before the noble meadow. Then, after he had well-fed the loud-bellowing cattle with fodder and driven them into the byre, close-packed and chewing lotus and began to seek the art of fire. He chose a stout laurel branch and trimmed it with the knife....

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....held firmly in his hand: and the hot smoke rose up. For it was Hermes who first invented fire-sticks and fire. Next he took many dried sticks and piled them thick and plenty in a sunken trench: and flame began to glow, spreading afar the blast of fierce-burning fire.

(ll. 115-137) And while the strength of glorious Hephaestus was beginning to kindle the fire, he dragged out two lowing, horned

cows close to the fire; for great strength was with him. He threw them both panting upon their backs on the ground, and rolled them on their sides, bending their necks over (17), and pierced their vital chord. Then he went on from task to task: first he cut up the rich, fatted meat, and pierced it with wooden spits, and roasted flesh and the honourable chine and the paunch full of dark blood all together. He laid them there upon the ground, and spread out the hides on a rugged rock: and so they are still there many ages afterwards, a long, long time after all this, and are continually (18). Next glad-hearted Hermes dragged the rich meats he had prepared and put them on a smooth, flat stone, and divided them into twelve portions distributed by lot, making each portion wholly honourable. Then glorious Hermes longed for the sacrificial meat, for the sweet savour wearied him, god though he was; nevertheless his proud heart was not prevailed upon to devour the flesh, although he greatly desired (19). But he put away the fat and all the flesh in the high-roofed byre, placing them high up to be a token of his youthful theft. And after that he gathered dry sticks and utterly destroyed with fire all the hoofs and all the heads.

(ll. 138-154) And when the god had duly finished all, he threw his sandals into deep-eddying Alpheus, and quenched the embers, covering the black ashes with sand, and so spent the night while Selene's soft light shone down. Then the god went straight back again at dawn to the bright crests of Cyllene, and no one met him on the long journey either of the blessed gods or mortal men, nor did any dog bark. And luck-bringing Hermes, the son of Zeus, passed edgeways through the key-hole of the hall like the autumn breeze, even as mist: straight through the cave he went and came to the rich inner chamber, walking softly, and making no noise as one might upon the floor. Then glorious Hermes went hurriedly to his cradle, wrapping his swaddling clothes about his shoulders as though he were a feeble babe, and lay playing with the covering about his knees; but at his left hand he kept close his sweet lyre.

(ll. 155-161) But the god did not pass unseen by the goddess his mother; but she said to him: 'How now, you rogue! Whence come you back so at night-time, you that wear shamelessness as a garment? And now I surely believe the son of Leto will soon have you forth out of doors with unbreakable cords about your ribs, or you will live a rogue's life in the glens robbing by whites. Go to, then; your father got you to be a great worry to mortal men and deathless gods.'

(ll. 162-181) Then Hermes answered her with crafty words: 'Mother, why do you seek to frighten me like a feeble child whose heart knows few words of blame, a fearful babe that fears its

mother's scolding? Nay, but I will try whatever plan is best, and so feed myself and you continually. We will not be content to remain here, as you bid, alone of all the gods unfee'd with offerings and prayers. Better to live in fellowship with the deathless gods continually, rich, wealthy, and enjoying stories of grain, than to sit always in a gloomy cave: and, as regards honour, I too will enter upon the rite that Apollo has. If my father will not give it to me, I will seek -- and I am able -- to be a prince of robbers. And if Leto's most glorious son shall seek me out, I think another and a greater loss will befall him. For I will go to Pytho to break into his great house, and will plunder therefrom splendid tripods, and cauldrons, and gold, and plenty of bright iron, and much apparel; and you shall see it if you will.'

(ll. 182-189) With such words they spoke together, the son of Zeus who holds the aegis, and the lady Maia. Now Eros the early born was rising from deep-flowing Ocean, bringing light to men, when Apollo, as he went, came to Onchestus, the lovely grove and sacred place of the loud-roaring Holder of the Earth. There he found an old man grazing his beast along the pathway from his court-yard fence, and the all-glorious Son of Leto began and said to him.

(ll. 190-200) 'Old man, weeder (20) of grassy Onchestus, I am come here from Pieria seeking cattle, cows all of them, all with curving horns, from my herd. The black bull was grazing alone away from the rest, but fierce-eyed hounds followed the cows, four of them, all of one mind, like men. These were left behind, the dogs and the bull -- which is great marvel; but the cows strayed out of the soft meadow, away from the pasture when the sun was just going down. Now tell me this, old man born long ago: have you seen one passing along behind those cows?'

(ll. 201-211) Then the old man answered him and said: 'My son, it is hard to tell all that one's eyes see; for many wayfarers pass to and fro this way, some bent on much evil, and some on good: it is difficult to know each one. However, I was digging about my plot of vineyard all day long until the sun went down, and I thought, good sir, but I do not know for certain, that I marked a child, whoever the child was, that followed long-horned cattle -- an infant who had a staff and kept walking from side to side: he was driving them backwards way, with their heads toward him.'

(ll. 212-218) So said the old man. And when Apollo heard this report, he went yet more quickly on his way, and presently, seeing a long-winged bird, he knew at once by that omen that thief was the child of Zeus the son of Cronos. So the lord Apollo, son of Zeus, hurried on to goodly Pylos seeking his

shambling oxen, and he had his broad shoulders covered with a dark cloud. But when the Far-Shooter perceived the tracks, he cried:

(Il. 219-226) 'Oh, oh! Truly this is a great marvel that my eyes behold! These are indeed the tracks of straight-horned oxen, but they are turned backwards towards the flowery meadow. But these others are not the footprints of man or woman or grey wolves or bears or lions, nor do I think they are the tracks of a rough-maned Centaur -- whoever it be that with swift feet makes such monstrous footprints; wonderful are the tracks on this side of the way, but yet more wonderfully are those on that.'

(Il. 227-234) When he had so said, the lord Apollo, the Son of Zeus hastened on and came to the forest-clad mountain of Cyllene and the deep-shadowed cave in the rock where the divine nymph brought forth the child of Zeus who is the son of Cronos. A sweet odour spread over the lovely hill, and many thin-shanked sheep were grazing on the grass. Then far-shooting Apollo himself stepped down in haste over the stone threshold into the dusky cave.

(Il. 235-253) Now when the Son of Zeus and Maia saw Apollo in a rage about his cattle, he snuggled down in his fragrant swaddling-clothes; and as wood-ash covers over the deep embers of tree-stumps, so Hermes cuddled himself up when he saw the Far-Shooter. He squeezed head and hands and feet together in a small space, like a new born child seeking sweet sleep, though in truth he was wide awake, and he kept his lyre under his armpit. But the Son of Leto was aware and failed not to perceive the beautiful mountain-nymph and her dear son, albeit a little child and swathed so craftily. He peered in ever corner of the great dwelling and, taking a bright key, he opened three closets full of nectar and lovely ambrosia. And much gold and silver was stored in them, and many garments of the nymph, some purple and some silvery white, such as are kept in the sacred houses of the blessed gods. Then, after the Son of Leto had searched out the recesses of the great house, he spake to glorious Hermes:

(Il. 254-259) 'Child, lying in the cradle, make haste and tell me of my cattle, or we two will soon fall out angrily. For I will take and cast you into dusty Tartarus and awful hopeless darkness, and neither your mother nor your father shall free you or bring you up again to the light, but you will wander under the earth and be the leader amongst little folk.' (21)

(Il. 260-277) Then Hermes answered him with crafty words: 'Son of Leto, what harsh words are these you have spoken? And is it cattle of the field you are come here to seek? I have not seen

them: I have not heard of them: no one has told me of them. I cannot give news of them, nor win the reward for news. Am I like a cattle-liter, a stalwart person? This is no task for me: rather I care for other things: I care for sleep, and milk of my mother's breast, and wrappings round my shoulders, and warm baths. Let no one hear the cause of this dispute; for this would be a great marvel indeed among the deathless gods, that a child newly born should pass in through the forepart of the house with cattle of the field: herein you speak extravagantly. I was born yesterday, and my feet are soft and the ground beneath is rough; nevertheless, if you will have it so, I will swear a great oath by my father's head and vow that neither am I guilty myself, neither have I seen any other who stole your cows -- whatever cows may be; for I know them only by hearsay.'

(ll. 278-280) So, then, said Hermes, shooting quick glances from his eyes: and he kept raising his brows and looking this way and that, whistling long and listening to Apollo's story as to an idle tale.

(ll. 281-292) But far-working Apollo laughed softly and said to him: 'O rogue, deceiver, crafty in heart, you talk so innocently that I most surely believe that you have broken into many a well-built house and stripped more than one poor wretch bare this night (22), gathering his goods together all over the house without noise. You will plague many a lonely herdsman in mountain glades, when you come on herds and thick-fleeced sheep, and have a hankering after flesh. But come now, if you would not sleep your last and latest sleep, get out of your cradle, you comrade of dark night. Surely hereafter this shall be your title amongst the deathless gods, to be called the prince of robbers continually.'

(ll. 293-300) So said Phoebus Apollo, and took the child and began to carry him. But at that moment the strong Slayer of Argus had his plan, and, while Apollo held him in his hands, sent forth an omen, a hard-worked belly-serf, a rude messenger, and sneezed directly after. And when Apollo heard it, he dropped glorious Hermes out of his hands on the ground: then sitting down before him, though he was eager to go on his way, he spoke mockingly to Hermes:

(ll. 301-303) 'Fear not, little swaddling baby, son of Zeus and Maia. I shall find the strong cattle presently by these omens, and you shall lead the way.'

(ll. 304-306) When Apollo had so said, Cyllenian Hermes sprang up quickly, starting in haste. With both hands he pushed up to his ears the covering that he had wrapped about his shoulders, and

said:

(Il. 307-312) `Where are you carrying me, Far-Worker, hastiest of all the gods? Is it because of your cattle that you are so angry and harass me? O dear, would that all the sort of oxen might perish; for it is not I who stole your cows, nor did I see another steal them -- whatever cows may be, and of that I have only heard report. Nay, give right and take it before Zeus, the Son of Cronos.'

(Il. 313-326) So Hermes the shepherd and Leto's glorious son kept stubbornly disputing each article of their quarrel: Apollo, speaking truly....  
(LACUNA)

...not fairly sought to seize glorious Hermes because of the cows; but he, the Cyllenian, tried to deceive the God of the Silver Bow with tricks and cunning words. But when, though he had many wiles, he found the other had as many shifts, he began to walk across the sand, himself in front, while the Son of Zeus and Leto came behind. Soon they came, these lovely children of Zeus, to the top of fragrant Olympus, to their father, the Son of Cronos; for there were the scales of judgement set for them both. There was an assembly on snowy Olympus, and the immortals who perish not were gathering after the hour of gold-throned Dawn.

(Il. 327-329) Then Hermes and Apollo of the Silver Bow stood at the knees of Zeus: and Zeus who thunders on high spoke to his glorious son and asked him:

(Il. 330-332) `Phoebus, whence come you driving this great spoil, a child new born that has the look of a herald? This is a weighty matter that is come before the council of the gods.'

(Il. 333-364) Then the lord, far-working Apollo, answered him: `O my father, you shall soon hear no trifling tale though you reproach me that I alone am fond of spoil. Here is a child, a burgling robber, whom I found after a long journey in the hills of Cyllene: for my part I have never seen one so pert either among the gods or all men that catch folk unawares throughout the world. He strole away my cows from their meadow and drove them off in the evening along the shore of the loud-roaring sea, making straight for Pylos. There were double tracks, and wonderful they were, such as one might marvel at, the doing of a clever sprite; for as for the cows, the dark dust kept and showed their footprints leading towards the flowery meadow; but he himself -- bewildering creature -- crossed the sandy ground outside the path, not on his feet nor yet on his hands; but, furnished with some other means he trudged his way -- wonder of wonders! -- as though one walked on slender oak-trees. Now while

he followed the cattle across sandy ground, all the tracks showed quite clearly in the dust; but when he had finished the long way across the sand, presently the cows' track and his own could not be traced over the hard ground. But a mortal man noticed him as he drove the wide-browed kine straight towards Pylos. And as soon as he had shut them up quietly, and had gone home by crafty turns and twists, he lay down in his cradle in the gloom of a dim cave, as still as dark night, so that not even an eagle keenly gazing would have spied him. Much he rubbed his eyes with his hands as he prepared falsehood, and himself straightway said roundly: "I have not seen them: I have not heard of them: no man has told me of them. I could not tell you of them, nor win the reward of telling."

(Il. 365-367) When he had so spoken, Phoebus Apollo sat down. But Hermes on his part answered and said, pointing at the Son of Cronos, the lord of all the gods:

(Il. 368-386) 'Zeus, my father, indeed I will speak truth to you; for I am truthful and I cannot tell a lie. He came to our house to-day looking for his shambling cows, as the sun was newly rising. He brought no witnesses with him nor any of the blessed gods who had seen the theft, but with great violence ordered me to confess, threatening much to throw me into wide Tartarus. For he has the rich bloom of glorious youth, while I was born but yesterday -- as he too knows -- nor am I like a cattle-lifter, a sturdy fellow. Believe my tale (for you claim to be my own father), that I did not drive his cows to my house -- so may I prosper -- nor crossed the threshold: this I say truly. I reverence Helios greatly and the other gods, and you I love and him I dread. You yourself know that I am not guilty: and I will swear a great oath upon it: -- No! by these rich-decked porticoes of the gods. And some day I will punish him, strong as he is, for this pitiless inquisition; but now do you help the younger.'

(Il. 387-396) So spake the Cyllenian, the Slayer of Argus, while he kept shooting sidelong glances and kept his swaddling-clothes upon his arm, and did not cast them away. But Zeus laughed out loud to see his evil-plotting child well and cunningly denying guilt about the cattle. And he bade them both to be of one mind and search for the cattle, and guiding Hermes to lead the way and, without mischievousness of heart, to show the place where now he had hidden the strong cattle. Then the Son of Cronos bowed his head: and goodly Hermes obeyed him; for the will of Zeus who holds the aegis easily prevailed with him.

(Il. 397-404) Then the two all-glorious children of Zeus hastened both to sandy Pylos, and reached the ford of Alpheus, and came to the fields and the high-roofed byre where the beasts were

cherished at night-time. Now while Hermes went to the cave in the rock and began to drive out the strong cattle, the son of Leto, looking aside, saw the cowhides on the sheer rock. And he asked glorious Hermes at once:

(Il. 405-408) 'How were you able, you crafty rogue, to flay two cows, new-born and babyish as you are? For my part, I dread the strength that will be yours: there is no need you should keep growing long, Cyllenian, son of Maia!'

(Il. 409-414) So saying, Apollo twisted strong withes with his hands meaning to bind Hermes with firm bands; but the bands would not hold him, and the withes of osier fell far from him and began to grow at once from the ground beneath their feet in that very place. And intertwining with one another, they quickly grew and covered all the wild-roving cattle by the will of thievish Hermes, so that Apollo was astonished as he gazed.

(Il. 414-435) Then the strong slayer of Argus looked furtively upon the ground with eyes flashing fire.... desiring to hide....  
(LACUNA)

....Very easily he softened the son of all-glorious Leto as he would, stern though the Far-shooter was. He took the lyre upon his left arm and tried each string in turn with the key, so that it sounded awesomely at his touch. And Phoebus Apollo laughed for joy; for the sweet throb of the marvellous music went to his heart, and a soft longing took hold on his soul as he listened. Then the son of Maia, harping sweetly upon his lyre, took courage and stood at the left hand of Phoebus Apollo; and soon, while he played shrilly on his lyre, he lifted up his voice and sang, and lovely was the sound of his voice that followed. He sang the story of the deathless gods and of the dark earth, how at the first they came to be, and how each one received his portion. First among the gods he honoured Mnemosyne, mother of the Muses, in his song; for the son of Maia was of her following. And next the goodly son of Zeus hymned the rest of the immortals according to their order in age, and told how each was born, mentioning all in order as he struck the lyre upon his arm. But Apollo was seized with a longing not to be allayed, and he opened his mouth and spoke winged words to Hermes:

(Il. 436-462) 'Slayer of oxen, trickster, busy one, comrade of the feast, this song of yours is worth fifty cows, and I believe that presently we shall settle our quarrel peacefully. But come now, tell me this, resourceful son of Maia: has this marvellous thing been with you from your birth, or did some god or mortal man give it you -- a noble gift -- and teach you heavenly song? For wonderful is this new-uttered sound I hear, the like of which I vow that no man nor god dwelling on Olympus ever yet has known

but you, O thievish son of Maia. What skill is this? What song for desperate cares? What way of song? For verily here are three things to hand all at once from which to choose, -- mirth, and love, and sweet sleep. And though I am a follower of the Olympian Muses who love dances and the bright path of song -- the full-toned chant and ravishing thrill of flutes -- yet I never cared for any of those feats of skill at young men's revels, as I do now for this: I am filled with wonder, O son of Zeus, at your sweet playing. But now, since you, though little, have such glorious skill, sit down, dear boy, and respect the words of your elders. For now you shall have renown among the deathless gods, you and your mother also. This I will declare to you exactly: by this shaft of cornel wood I will surely make you a leader renowned among the deathless gods, and fortunate, and will give you glorious gifts and will not deceive you from first to last.'

(ll. 463-495) Then Hermes answered him with artful words: 'You question me carefully, O Far-worker; yet I am not jealous that you should enter upon my art: this day you shall know it. For I seek to be friendly with you both in thought and word. Now you well know all things in your heart, since you sit foremost among the deathless gods, O son of Zeus, and are goodly and strong. And wise Zeus loves you as all right is, and has given you splendid gifts. And they say that from the utterance of Zeus you have learned both the honours due to the gods, O Far-worker, and oracles from Zeus, even all his ordinances. Of all these I myself have already learned that you have great wealth. Now, you are free to learn whatever you please; but since, as it seems, your heart is so strongly set on playing the lyre, chant, and play upon it, and give yourself to merriment, taking this as a gift from me, and do you, my friend, bestow glory on me. Sing well with this clear-voiced companion in your hands; for you are skilled in good, well-ordered utterance. From now on bring it confidently to the rich feast and lovely dance and glorious revel, a joy by night and by day. Whoso with wit and wisdom enquires of it cunningly, him it teaches through its sound all manner of things that delight the mind, being easily played with gentle familiarities, for it abhors toilsome drudgery; but whoso in ignorance enquires of it violently, to him it chatters mere vanity and foolishness. But you are able to learn whatever you please. So then, I will give you this lyre, glorious son of Zeus, while I for my part will graze down with wild-roving cattle the pastures on hill and horse-feeding plain: so shall the cows covered by the bulls calve abundantly both males and females. And now there is no need for you, bargainer though you are, to be furiously angry.'

(ll. 496-502) When Hermes had said this, he held out the lyre: and Phoebus Apollo took it, and readily put his shining whip in

Hermes' hand, and ordained him keeper of herds. The son of Maia received it joyfully, while the glorious son of Leto, the lord far-working Apollo, took the lyre upon his left arm and tried each string with the key. Awesomely it sounded at the touch of the god, while he sang sweetly to its note.

(Il. 503-512) Afterwards they two, the all-glorious sons of Zeus turned the cows back towards the sacred meadow, but themselves hastened back to snowy Olympus, delighting in the lyre. Then wise Zeus was glad and made them both friends. And Hermes loved the son of Leto continually, even as he does now, when he had given the lyre as token to the Far-shooter, who played it skilfully, holding it upon his arm. But for himself Hermes found out another cunning art and made himself the pipes whose sound is heard afar.

(Il. 513-520) Then the son of Leto said to Hermes: 'Son of Maia, guide and cunning one, I fear you may steal from me the lyre and my curved bow together; for you have an office from Zeus, to establish deeds of barter amongst men throughout the fruitful earth. Now if you would only swear me the great oath of the gods, either by nodding your head, or by the potent water of Styx, you would do all that can please and ease my heart.'

(Il. 521-549) Then Maia's son nodded his head and promised that he would never steal anything of all the Far-shooter possessed, and would never go near his strong house; but Apollo, son of Leto, swore to be fellow and friend to Hermes, vowing that he would love no other among the immortals, neither god nor man sprung from Zeus, better than Hermes: and the Father sent forth an eagle in confirmation. And Apollo swore also: 'Verily I will make you only to be an omen for the immortals and all alike, trusted and honoured by my heart. Moreover, I will give you a splendid staff of riches and wealth: it is of gold, with three branches, and will keep you scatheless, accomplishing every task, whether of words or deeds that are good, which I claim to know through the utterance of Zeus. But as for sooth-saying, noble, heaven-born child, of which you ask, it is not lawful for you to learn it, nor for any other of the deathless gods: only the mind of Zeus knows that. I am pledged and have vowed and sworn a strong oath that no other of the eternal gods save I should know the wise-hearted counsel of Zeus. And do not you, my brother, bearer of the golden wand, bid me tell those decrees which all-seeing Zeus intends. As for men, I will harm one and profit another, sorely perplexing the tribes of unenviable men. Whosoever shall come guided by the call and flight of birds of sure omen, that man shall have advantage through my voice, and I will not deceive him. But whoso shall trust to idly-chattering birds and shall seek to invoke my prophetic art contrary to my

will, and to understand more than the eternal gods, I declare that he shall come on an idle journey; yet his gifts I would take.

(ll. 550-568) 'But I will tell you another thing, Son of all-glorious Maia and Zeus who holds the aegis, luck-bringing genius of the gods. There are certain holy ones, sisters born -- three virgins (23) gifted with wings: their heads are besprinkled with white meal, and they dwell under a ridge of Parnassus. These are teachers of divination apart from me, the art which I practised while yet a boy following herds, though my father paid no heed to it. From their home they fly now here, now there, feeding on honey-comb and bringing all things to pass. And when they are inspired through eating yellow honey, they are willing to speak truth; but if they be deprived of the gods' sweet food, then they speak falsely, as they swarm in and out together. These, then, I give you; enquire of them strictly and delight your heart: and if you should teach any mortal so to do, often will he hear your response -- if he have good fortune. Take these, Son of Maia, and tend the wild roving, horned oxen and horses and patient mules.'

(ll. 568a-573) So he spake. And from heaven father Zeus himself gave confirmation to his words, and commanded that glorious Hermes should be lord over all birds of omen and grim-eyed lions, and boars with gleaming tusks, and over dogs and all flocks that the wide earth nourishes, and over all sheep; also that he only should be the appointed messenger to Hades, who, though he takes no gift, shall give him no mean prize.

(ll. 574-578) Thus the lord Apollo showed his kindness for the Son of Maia by all manner of friendship: and the Son of Cronos gave him grace besides. He consorts with all mortals and immortals: a little he profits, but continually throughout the dark night he cozens the tribes of mortal men.

(ll. 579-580) And so, farewell, Son of Zeus and Maia; but I will remember you and another song also.

## **V. TO APHRODITE (293 lines)**

(ll. 1-6) Muse, tell me the deeds of golden Aphrodite the Cyprian, who stirs up sweet passion in the gods and subdues the tribes of mortal men and birds that fly in air and all the many creatures that the dry land rears, and all the sea: all these love the deeds of rich-crowned Cytherea.

(ll. 7-32) Yet there are three hearts that she cannot bend nor yet ensnare. First is the daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis, bright-eyed Athene; for she has no pleasure in the deeds of

golden Aphrodite, but delights in wars and in the work of Ares, in strifes and battles and in preparing famous crafts. She first taught earthly craftsmen to make chariots of war and cars variously wrought with bronze, and she, too, teaches tender maidens in the house and puts knowledge of goodly arts in each one's mind. Nor does laughter-loving Aphrodite ever tame in love Artemis, the huntress with shafts of gold; for she loves archery and the slaying of wild beasts in the mountains, the lyre also and dancing and thrilling cries and shady woods and the cities of upright men. Nor yet does the pure maiden Hestia love Aphrodite's works. She was the first-born child of wily Cronos and youngest too (24), by will of Zeus who holds the aegis, -- a queenly maid whom both Poseidon and Apollo sought to wed. But she was wholly unwilling, nay, stubbornly refused; and touching the head of father Zeus who holds the aegis, she, that fair goddess, swore a great oath which has in truth been fulfilled, that she would be a maiden all her days. So Zeus the Father gave her an high honour instead of marriage, and she has her place in the midst of the house and has the richest portion. In all the temples of the gods she has a share of honour, and among all mortal men she is chief of the goddesses.

(Il. 33-44) Of these three Aphrodite cannot bend or ensnare the hearts. But of all others there is nothing among the blessed gods or among mortal men that has escaped Aphrodite. Even the heart of Zeus, who delights in thunder, is led astray by her; though he is greatest of all and has the lot of highest majesty, she beguiles even his wise heart whensoever she pleases, and mates him with mortal women, unknown to Hera, his sister and his wife, the grandest far in beauty among the deathless goddesses -- most glorious is she whom wily Cronos with her mother Rhea did beget: and Zeus, whose wisdom is everlasting, made her his chaste and careful wife.

(Il. 45-52) But upon Aphrodite herself Zeus cast sweet desire to be joined in love with a mortal man, to the end that, very soon, not even she should be innocent of a mortal's love; lest laughter-loving Aphrodite should one day softly smile and say mockingly among all the gods that she had joined the gods in love with mortal women who bare sons of death to the deathless gods, and had mated the goddesses with mortal men.

(Il. 53-74) And so he put in her heart sweet desire for Anchises who was tending cattle at that time among the steep hills of many-fountained Ida, and in shape was like the immortal gods. Therefore, when laughter-loving Aphrodite saw him, she loved him, and terribly desire seized her in her heart. She went to Cyprus, to Paphos, where her precinct is and fragrant altar, and passed into her sweet-smelling temple. There she went in and put to the

glittering doors, and there the Graces bathed her with heavenly oil such as blooms upon the bodies of the eternal gods -- oil divinely sweet, which she had by her, filled with fragrance. And laughter-loving Aphrodite put on all her rich clothes, and when she had decked herself with gold, she left sweet-smelling Cyprus and went in haste towards Troy, swiftly travelling high up among the clouds. So she came to many-fountained Ida, the mother of wild creatures and went straight to the homestead across the mountains. After her came grey wolves, fawning on her, and grim-eyed lions, and bears, and fleet leopards, ravenous for deer: and she was glad in heart to see them, and put desire in their breasts, so that they all mated, two together, about the shadowy coombes.

(ll. 75-88) (25) But she herself came to the neat-built shelters, and him she found left quite alone in the homestead -- the hero Anchises who was comely as the gods. All the others were following the herds over the grassy pastures, and he, left quite alone in the homestead, was roaming hither and thither and playing thrillingly upon the lyre. And Aphrodite, the daughter of Zeus stood before him, being like a pure maiden in height and mien, that he should not be frightened when he took heed of her with his eyes. Now when Anchises saw her, he marked her well and wondered at her mien and height and shining garments. For she was clad in a robe out-shining the brightness of fire, a splendid robe of gold, enriched with all manner of needlework, which shimmered like the moon over her tender breasts, a marvel to see. Also she wore twisted brooches and shining earrings in the form of flowers; and round her soft throat were lovely necklaces.

(ll. 91-105) And Anchises was seized with love, and said to her: 'Hail, lady, whoever of the blessed ones you are that are come to this house, whether Artemis, or Leto, or golden Aphrodite, or high-born Themis, or bright-eyed Athene. Or, maybe, you are one of the Graces come hither, who bear the gods company and are called immortal, or else one of those who inhabit this lovely mountain and the springs of rivers and grassy meads. I will make you an altar upon a high peak in a far seen place, and will sacrifice rich offerings to you at all seasons. And do you feel kindly towards me and grant that I may become a man very eminent among the Trojans, and give me strong offspring for the time to come. As for my own self, let me live long and happily, seeing the light of the sun, and come to the threshold of old age, a man prosperous among the people.'

(ll. 106-142) Thereupon Aphrodite the daughter of Zeus answered him: 'Anchises, most glorious of all men born on earth, know that I am no goddess: why do you liken me to the deathless ones? Nay, I am but a mortal, and a woman was the mother that bare me.'

Otreus of famous name is my father, if so be you have heard of him, and he reigns over all Phrygia rich in fortresses. But I know your speech well beside my own, for a Trojan nurse brought me up at home: she took me from my dear mother and reared me thenceforth when I was a little child. So comes it, then, that I well know you tongue also. And now the Slayer of Argus with the golden wand has caught me up from the dance of huntress Artemis, her with the golden arrows. For there were many of us, nymphs and marriageable (26) maidens, playing together; and an innumerable company encircled us: from these the Slayer of Argus with the golden wand rapt me away. He carried me over many fields of mortal men and over much land untilled and unpossessed, where savage wild-beasts roam through shady coombes, until I thought never again to touch the life-giving earth with my feet. And he said that I should be called the wedded wife of Anchises, and should bear you goodly children. But when he had told and advised me, he, the strong Slayer of Argos, went back to the families of the deathless gods, while I am now come to you: for unbending necessity is upon me. But I beseech you by Zeus and by your noble parents -- for no base folk could get such a son as you -- take me now, stainless and unproved in love, and show me to your father and careful mother and to your brothers sprung from the same stock. I shall be no ill-liking daughter for them, but a likely. Moreover, send a messenger quickly to the swift-horsed Phrygians, to tell my father and my sorrowing mother; and they will send you gold in plenty and woven stuffs, many splendid gifts; take these as bride-piece. So do, and then prepare the sweet marriage that is honourable in the eyes of men and deathless gods.'

(Il. 143-144) When she had so spoken, the goddess put sweet desire in his heart. And Anchises was seized with love, so that he opened his mouth and said:

(Il. 145-154) 'If you are a mortal and a woman was the mother who bare you, and Otreus of famous name is your father as you say, and if you are come here by the will of Hermes the immortal Guide, and are to be called my wife always, then neither god nor mortal man shall here restrain me till I have lain with you in love right now; no, not even if far-shooting Apollo himself should launch grievous shafts from his silver bow. Willingly would I go down into the house of Hades, O lady, beautiful as the goddesses, once I had gone up to your bed.'

(Il. 155-167) So speaking, he caught her by the hand. And laughter-loving Aphrodite, with face turned away and lovely eyes downcast, crept to the well-spread couch which was already laid with soft coverings for the hero; and upon it lay skins of bears and deep-roaring lions which he himself had slain in the high

mountains. And when they had gone up upon the well-fitted bed, first Anchises took off her bright jewelry of pins and twisted brooches and earrings and necklaces, and loosed her girdle and stripped off her bright garments and laid them down upon a silver-studded seat. Then by the will of the gods and destiny he lay with her, a mortal man with an immortal goddess, not clearly knowing what he did.

(Il. 168-176) But at the time when the herdsmen driver their oxen and hardy sheep back to the fold from the flowery pastures, even then Aphrodite poured soft sleep upon Anchises, but herself put on her rich raiment. And when the bright goddess had fully clothed herself, she stood by the couch, and her head reached to the well-hewn roof-tree; from her cheeks shone unearthly beauty such as belongs to rich-crowned Cytherea. Then she aroused him from sleep and opened her mouth and said:

(Il. 177-179) 'Up, son of Dardanus! -- why sleep you so heavily? -- and consider whether I look as I did when first you saw me with your eyes.'

(Il. 180-184) So she spake. And he awoke in a moment and obeyed her. But when he saw the neck and lovely eyes of Aphrodite, he was afraid and turned his eyes aside another way, hiding his comely face with his cloak. Then he uttered winged words and entreated her:

(Il. 185-190) 'So soon as ever I saw you with my eyes, goddess, I knew that you were divine; but you did not tell me truly. Yet by Zeus who holds the aegis I beseech you, leave me not to lead a palsied life among men, but have pity on me; for he who lies with a deathless goddess is no hale man afterwards.'

(Il. 191-201) Then Aphrodite the daughter of Zeus answered him: 'Anchises, most glorious of mortal men, take courage and be not too fearful in your heart. You need fear no harm from me nor from the other blessed ones, for you are dear to the gods: and you shall have a dear son who shall reign among the Trojans, and children's children after him, springing up continually. His name shall be Aeneas (27), because I felt awful grief in that I laid me in the bed of mortal man: yet are those of your race always the most like to gods of all mortal men in beauty and in stature (28).

(Il. 202-217) 'Verily wise Zeus carried off golden-haired Ganymedes because of his beauty, to be amongst the Deathless Ones and pour drink for the gods in the house of Zeus -- a wonder to see -- honoured by all the immortals as he draws the red nectar from the golden bowl. But grief that could not be soothed filled

the heart of Tros; for he knew not whither the heaven-sent whirlwind had caught up his dear son, so that he mourned him always, unceasingly, until Zeus pitied him and gave him high-stepping horses such as carry the immortals as recompense for his son. These he gave him as a gift. And at the command of Zeus, the Guide, the slayer of Argus, told him all, and how his son would be deathless and unageing, even as the gods. So when Tros heard these tidings from Zeus, he no longer kept mourning but rejoiced in his heart and rode joyfully with his storm-footed horses.

(ll. 218-238) `So also golden-throned Eos rapt away Tithonus who was of your race and like the deathless gods. And she went to ask the dark-clouded Son of Cronos that he should be deathless and live eternally; and Zeus bowed his head to her prayer and fulfilled her desire. Too simply was queenly Eos: she thought not in her heart to ask youth for him and to strip him of the slough of deadly age. So while he enjoyed the sweet flower of life he lived rapturously with golden-throned Eos, the early-born, by the streams of Ocean, at the ends of the earth; but when the first grey hairs began to ripple from his comely head and noble chin, queenly Eos kept away from his bed, though she cherished him in her house and nourished him with food and ambrosia and gave him rich clothing. But when loathsome old age pressed full upon him, and he could not move nor lift his limbs, this seemed to her in her heart the best counsel: she laid him in a room and put to the shining doors. There he babbles endlessly, and no more has strength at all, such as once he had in his supple limbs.

(ll. 239-246) `I would not have you be deathless among the deathless gods and live continually after such sort. Yet if you could live on such as now you are in look and in form, and be called my husband, sorrow would not then enfold my careful heart. But, as it is, harsh (29) old age will soon enshroud you -- ruthless age which stands someday at the side of every man, deadly, wearying, dreaded even by the gods.

(ll. 247-290) `And now because of you I shall have great shame among the deathless gods henceforth, continually. For until now they feared my jibes and the wiles by which, or soon or late, I mated all the immortals with mortal women, making them all subject to my will. But now my mouth shall no more have this power among the gods; for very great has been my madness, my miserable and dreadful madness, and I went astray out of my mind who have gotten a child beneath my girdle, mating with a mortal man. As for the child, as soon as he sees the light of the sun, the deep-breasted mountain Nymphs who inhabit this great and holy mountain shall bring him up. They rank neither with mortals nor

with immortals: long indeed do they live, eating heavenly food and treading the lovely dance among the immortals, and with them the Sileni and the sharp-eyed Slayer of Argus mate in the depths of pleasant caves; but at their birth pines or high-topped oaks spring up with them upon the fruitful earth, beautiful, flourishing trees, towering high upon the lofty mountains (and men call them holy places of the immortals, and never mortal lops them with the axe); but when the fate of death is near at hand, first those lovely trees wither where they stand, and the bark shrivels away about them, and the twigs fall down, and at last the life of the Nymph and of the tree leave the light of the sun together. These Nymphs shall keep my son with them and rear him, and as soon as he is come to lovely boyhood, the goddesses will bring him here to you and show you your child. But, that I may tell you all that I have in mind, I will come here again towards the fifth year and bring you my son. So soon as ever you have seen him -- a scion to delight the eyes -- you will rejoice in beholding him; for he shall be most godlike: then bring him at once to windy Ilion. And if any mortal man ask you who got your dear son beneath her girdle, remember to tell him as I bid you: say he is the offspring of one of the flower-like Nymphs who inhabit this forest-clad hill. But if you tell all and foolishly boast that you lay with rich-crowned Aphrodite, Zeus will smite you in his anger with a smoking thunderbolt. Now I have told you all. Take heed: refrain and name me not, but have regard to the anger of the gods.'

(l. 291) When the goddess had so spoken, she soared up to windy heaven.

(ll. 292-293) Hail, goddess, queen of well-built Cyprus! With you have I begun; now I will turn me to another hymn.

## VI. TO APHRODITE (21 lines)

(ll. 1-18) I will sing of stately Aphrodite, gold-crowned and beautiful, whose dominion is the walled cities of all sea-set Cyprus. There the moist breath of the western wind wafted her over the waves of the loud-moaning sea in soft foam, and there the gold-filleted Hours welcomed her joyously. They clothed her with heavenly garments: on her head they put a fine, well-wrought crown of gold, and in her pierced ears they hung ornaments of orichalc and precious gold, and adorned her with golden necklaces over her soft neck and snow-white breasts, jewels which the gold-filleted Hours wear themselves whenever they go to their father's house to join the lovely dances of the gods. And when they had fully decked her, they brought her to the gods, who welcomed her when they saw her, giving her their hands. Each one of them prayed that he might lead her home to be his wedded wife, so greatly were they amazed at the beauty of violet-crowned

Cytherea.

(ll. 19-21) Hail, sweetly-winning, coy-eyed goddess! Grant that I may gain the victory in this contest, and order you my song. And now I will remember you and another song also.

## VII. TO DIONYSUS (59 lines)

(ll. 1-16) I will tell of Dionysus, the son of glorious Semele, how he appeared on a jutting headland by the shore of the fruitless sea, seeming like a stripling in the first flush of manhood: his rich, dark hair was waving about him, and on his strong shoulders he wore a purple robe. Presently there came swiftly over the sparkling sea Tyrsenian (30) pirates on a well-decked ship -- a miserable doom led them on. When they saw him they made signs to one another and sprang out quickly, and seizing him straightway, put him on board their ship exultingly; for they thought him the son of heaven-nurtured kings. They sought to bind him with rude bonds, but the bonds would not hold him, and the withes fell far away from his hands and feet: and he sat with a smile in his dark eyes. Then the helmsman understood all and cried out at once to his fellows and said:

(ll. 17-24) 'Madmen! What god is this whom you have taken and bind, strong that he is? Not even the well-built ship can carry him. Surely this is either Zeus or Apollo who has the silver bow, or Poseidon, for he looks not like mortal men but like the gods who dwell on Olympus. Come, then, let us set him free upon the dark shore at once: do not lay hands on him, lest he grow angry and stir up dangerous winds and heavy squalls.'

(ll. 25-31) So said he: but the master chid him with taunting words: 'Madman, mark the wind and help hoist sail on the ship: catch all the sheets. As for this fellow we men will see to him: I reckon he is bound for Egypt or for Cyprus or to the Hyperboreans or further still. But in the end he will speak out and tell us his friends and all his wealth and his brothers, now that providence has thrown him in our way.'

(ll. 32-54) When he had said this, he had mast and sail hoisted on the ship, and the wind filled the sail and the crew hauled taut the sheets on either side. But soon strange things were seen among them. First of all sweet, fragrant wine ran streaming throughout all the black ship and a heavenly smell arose, so that all the seamen were seized with amazement when they saw it. And all at once a vine spread out both ways along the top of the sail with many clusters hanging down from it, and a dark ivy-plant twined about the mast, blossoming with flowers, and with rich berries growing on it; and all the thole-pins were covered with

garlands. When the pirates saw all this, then at last they bade the helmsman to put the ship to land. But the god changed into a dreadful lion there on the ship, in the bows, and roared loudly: amidships also he showed his wonders and created a shaggy bear which stood up ravening, while on the forepeak was the lion glaring fiercely with scowling brows. And so the sailors fled into the stern and crowded bemused about the right-minded helmsman, until suddenly the lion sprang upon the master and seized him; and when the sailors saw it they leapt out overboard one and all into the bright sea, escaping from a miserable fate, and were changed into dolphins. But on the helmsman Dionysus had mercy and held him back and made him altogether happy, saying to him:

(ll. 55-57) 'Take courage, good...; you have found favour with my heart. I am loud-crying Dionysus whom Cadmus' daughter Semele bare of union with Zeus.'

(ll. 58-59) Hail, child of fair-faced Semele! He who forgets you can in no wise order sweet song.

#### **Endnotes**

- (5) The Greeks feared to name Pluto directly and mentioned him by one of many descriptive titles, such as 'Host of Many': compare the Christian use of O DIABOLOS or our 'Evil One'.
- (6) Demeter chooses the lowlier seat, supposedly as being more suitable to her assumed condition, but really because in her sorrow she refuses all comforts.
- (7) An act of communion -- the drinking of the potion here described -- was one of the most important pieces of ritual in the Eleusinian mysteries, as commemorating the sorrows of the goddess.
- (8) Undercutter and Woodcutter are probably popular names (after the style of Hesiod's 'Boneless One') for the worm thought to be the cause of teething and toothache.
- (9) The list of names is taken -- with five additions -- from Hesiod, "Theogony" 349 ff.: for their general significance see note on that passage.
- (13) Pliny notices the efficacy of the flesh of a tortoise against withcraft. In "Geoponica" i. 14. 8 the living tortoise is prescribed as a charm to preserve vineyards from hail.
- (14) Hermes makes the cattle walk backwards way, so that they seem to be going towards the meadow instead of leaving it (cp. l. 345); he himself walks in the normal manner, relying on his sandals as a disguise.
- (15) Such seems to be the meaning indicated by the context, though the verb is taken by Allen and Sikes to mean, 'to be like oneself, and so 'to be original'.
- (16) Kuhn points out that there is a lacuna here. In l. 109 the borer is described, but the friction of this upon the fireblock (to which the phrase 'held firmly' clearly

- belongs) must also have been mentioned.
- (17) The cows being on their sides on the ground, Hermes bends their heads back towards their flanks and so can reach their backbones.
- (18) O. Muller thinks the 'hides' were a stalactite formation in the 'Cave of Nestor' near Messenian Pylos, -- though the cave of Hermes is near the Alpheus (l. 139). Others suggest that actual skins were shown as relics before some cave near Triphylian Pylos.
- (19) Gemoll explains that Hermes, having offered all the meat as sacrifice to the Twelve Gods, remembers that he himself as one of them must be content with the savour instead of the substance of the sacrifice. Can it be that by eating he would have forfeited the position he claimed as one of the Twelve Gods?
- (20) Lit. 'thorn-plucker'.
- (21) Hermes is ambitious (l. 175), but if he is cast into Hades he will have to be content with the leadership of mere babies like himself, since those in Hades retain the state of growth -- whether childhood or manhood -- in which they are at the moment of leaving the upper world.
- (22) Literally, 'you have made him sit on the floor', i.e. 'you have stolen everything down to his last chair.'
- (23) The Thriae, who practised divination by means of pebbles (also called THRIAE). In this hymn they are represented as aged maidens (ll. 553-4), but are closely associated with bees (ll. 559-563) and possibly are here conceived as having human heads and breasts with the bodies and wings of bees. See the edition of Allen and Sikes, Appendix III.
- (24) Cronos swallowed each of his children the moment that they were born, but ultimately was forced to disgorge them. Hestia, being the first to be swallowed, was the last to be disgorged, and so was at once the first and latest born of the children of Cronos. Cp. Hesiod "Theogony", ll. 495-7.
- (25) Mr. Evelyn-White prefers a different order for lines #87-90 than that preserved in the MSS. This translation is based upon the following sequence: ll. 89,90,87,88. -- DBK.
- (26) 'Cattle-earning', because an accepted suitor paid for his bride in cattle.
- (27) The name Aeneas is here connected with the epithet AIEOS (awful): similarly the name Odysseus is derived (in "Odyssey" i.62) from ODYSSMAI (I grieve).
- (28) Aphrodite extenuates her disgrace by claiming that the race of Anchises is almost divine, as is shown in the persons of Ganymedes and Tithonus.
- (29) So Christ connecting the word with OMOS. L. and S. give =OMOIOS, 'common to all'. (30) Probably not Etruscans, but the non-Hellenic peoples of Thrace and (according to Thucydides) of Lemnos and Athens. Cp. Herodotus i. 57; Thucydides iv. 109.

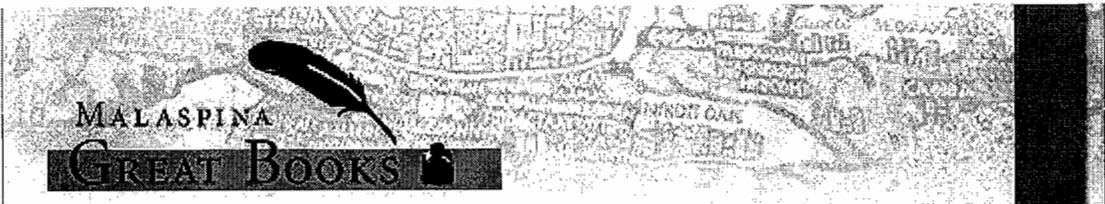
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1821



BIOGRAPHY

Lucian of Samosata (c. 120-c. 190)



Greek satirist of the Silver Age of Greek literature, was born at Samosata on the Euphrates in northern Syria. He tells us in the *Somnium or Vita Luciani*, that, his means being small, he was at first apprenticed to his maternal uncle, a statuary, or rather sculptor of the stone pillars called Hermae. Having made an unlucky beginning by breaking a marble slab, and having been well beaten for it, he absconded and returned home. Here he had a dream or vision of two women, representing *Statuary* and *Literature*. Both plead their cause at length, setting forth the advantages and the prospects of their respective professions; but the youth chooses *Haukia*, and decides to pursue learning. For some time he seems to have made money as a prirup, following the example of Demosthenes, on whose merits and patriotism he expatiates in the dialogue *Demosthenis Encomium*. He was very familiar with the rival schools of philosophy, and he must have well studied their teachings; but he lashes them all alike, the Cynics, perhaps, being the chief object of his derision. Lucian was not only a sceptic; he was a scoffer and a downright unbeliever. He felt that men's actions and conduct always fall far short of their professions and therefore he concluded that the professions themselves were worthless, and a mere guise to secure popularity or respect. Of Christianity he shows some knowledge, and it must have been somewhat largely professed in Syria at the close of the 2nd century. In the *Philopatris*, though the dialogue so called is generally regarded as spurious, there is a statement of the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Galilaean who had ascended to the third heaven," and "renewed " by the waters of baptism, may possibly allude to St Paul. In the *Alexander* we are told that the province of Pontus, due north of Syria, was " full of Christians."

*Timon* is a very amusing and witty dialogue. The misanthrope, once wealthy, has become a poor farm-labourer, and reproaches Zeus for his indifference to the injustice of man. Zeus declares that the noisy disputes in Attica have so disgusted him that he has not been there for a long time. He tells Hermes to conduct *Plutus* to visit *Timon*, and see what can be done to help him. *Plutus*, who at first refuses to go, is persuaded after a long conversation with Hermes, and *Timon* is found by them digging in his field. Poverty is unwilling to resign her votary to wealth; and *Timon* himself is with difficulty persuaded to turn up with his mattock a crock of gold coins. Now that he has once more become rich, his former flatterers come cringing with their congratulations and respects, but they are all driven off with broken heads or pelted with stones. Between this dialogue and the *Plutus* of *Aristophanes* there are many close resemblances.

*Hermotimus* is one of the longer dialogues, *Hermotimus*, a student of the Stoic philosophy for twenty years, and *Lucian* (*Lycinus*) being the interlocutors. The long time - forty years at the least - required for climbing up to the temple of virtue and happiness, and the short span of life, if any, left for the enjoyment of it, are discussed. That the greatest philosophers do not always attain perfect indifference, the Stoic ultimatum, is shown by the anecdote of one who dragged his pupil into court to make him pay his fee, and again by a violent quarrel with another at a banquet. Virtue is compared to a city with just and good and contented inhabitants; but so many offer themselves as guides to the right road to virtue that the inquirer is bewildered. What is truth, and who are the right

make a selection:

antiquity

medieval

renaissance

baroque

classical

romantic

modern

all periods

science

art

theatre

literature

music

history

cinema

all subjects

search

search

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teachers of it? The question is argued at length, and illustrated by a peculiar custom of watching the pairs of athletes and setting aside the reserved combatant at the Olympian games by the marks on the ballots. This, it is argued, cannot be done till all the ballots have been examined; so a man cannot select the right way till he has tried all the ways to virtue. But to know the doctrines of all the sects is impossible in the term of a life. To take a taste of each, like trying a sample of wine, will not do, because the doctrines taught are not, like the crock of wine, the same throughout, but vary or advance day by day. A suggestion is made that the searcher after truth should begin by taking lessons in the science of discrimination, so as to be a good judge of truth before testing the rival claims. But who is a good teacher of such a science? The general conclusion is that philosophy is not worth the pursuit. "If I ever again," says Herotimus, "meet a philosopher on the road, I will shun him, as I would a mad dog."

The *Anacharsis* is a dialogue between Solon and the Scythian philosopher, who has come to Athens to learn the nature of the Greek institutions. Seeing the young men performing athletic exercises in the Lyceum, he expresses his surprise at such a waste of energy. This gives Socrates an opportunity of descanting at length on training as a discipline, and emulation as a motive for excelling. Love of glory, Solon says, is one of the chief goods in life. The argument is rather ingenious and well put; the style reminds us of the minor essays of Xenophon.

These are the chief of Lucian's works. Many others, e.g. *Prometheus*, *Menippus*, *Life of Demonax*, *Toxaris*, *Zeus Tragoedus*, *The Dream or the Cock*, *Icaromenippus* (an amusing satire on the physical philosophers), are of considerable literary value. [Adapted from Encyclopedia Britannica (1911)]

The Great Books: Lucian of Samosata

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LINKS

## THE WORKS OF LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA

Complete with exceptions specified in the preface

TRANSLATED BY

H. W. FOWLER AND F. G. FOWLER

IN FOUR VOLUMES

### HERMOTIMUS, OR THE RIVAL PHILOSOPHIES

#### *Lycinus and Hermotimus*

*Lycinus.* Good morning, Hermotimus; I guess by your book and the pace you are going at that you are on your way to lecture, and a little late. You were coming over something as you walked, your lips working and muttering, your hand flung out this way and that as you got a speech into order in your mind; you were doubtless inventing one of your crooked questions, or pondering some tricky problem; never a vacant mind, even in the streets; always on the stretch and in earnest, bent on advancing in your studies.

*Hermotimus.* I admit the impeachment; I was running over the details of what he said in yesterday's lecture. One must lose no chance, you know; the Coan doctor [Poonote: Hippocrates] spoke so truly: *ars longa, vita brevis* [art is long, life is brief]. And what he referred to was only physic—a simpler matter. As to philosophy, not only will you never attain it, however long you study, unless you are wide awake all the time, contemplating it with intense eager gaze; the stake is so tremendous, too,—whether you shall rot miserably with the vulgar herd, or be counted among philosophers and reach Happiness.

*Lycinus.* A glorious prize, indeed! however, you cannot be far off it now, if one may judge by the time you have given to philosophy, and the extraordinary vigour of your long pursuit. For twenty years now, I should say, I have watched you perpetually going to your professors, generally bent over a book taking notes of past lectures, pale with thought and emaciated in body. I suspect you find no release even in your dreams, you are so wrapped up in the thing. With all this you must surely get hold of Happiness soon, if indeed you have not found it long ago without telling us.

*Hermotimus.* Alas, Lycinus, I am only just beginning to get an inkling of the right way. Very far off dwells Virtue, as Hestod says, and long and steep and rough is the way thither, and travellers must bedew it with sweat.

*Lycinus.* And you have not yet sweated and travelled enough?

*Hermotimus.* Surely not; else should I have been on the summit, with nothing left between me and bliss; but I am only starting yet, Lycinus.

*Lycinus.* Ah, but Hestod, your own authority, tells us, Well begun is half done; so we may safely call you half-way by this time.

*Hermotimus.* Not even there yet; that would indeed have been much.

*Lycinus.* Where *shall* we put you, then?

*Hermotimus.* Still on the lower slopes, just making an effort to get on; but it is slippery and rough, and needs a helping hand.

*Lycinus.* Well, your master can give you that; from his station on the summit, like Zeus in Homer with his golden cord, he can let you down his discourse, and therewith haul and heave you up to himself and to the Virtue which he has himself attained this long time.

*Hermotimus.* The very picture of what he is doing; if it depended on him alone, I should have been hauled up long ago; it is my part that is still wanting.

*Lycinus.* You must be of good cheer and keep a stout heart; gaze at the end of your climb and the Happiness at the top, and remember that he is working with you. What prospect does he hold out? when are you to be up? does he think you will be on the top next year—by the Great Mysteries, or the Panathenaea, say?

*Hermotimus.* Too soon, Lycinus.

*Lycinus.* By next Olympiad, then?

*Hermotimus.* All too short a time, even that, for habituation to Virtue and attainment of Happiness.

*Lycinus.* Say two Olympiads, then, for an outside estimate. You may fairly be found guilty of laziness, if you cannot get it done by then; the time would allow you three return trips from the Pillars of Heracles to India, with a margin for exploring the tribes on the way instead of sailing straight and never stopping. How much higher and more slippery, pray, is the peak on which your Virtue dwells than that Aomos crag which Alexander stormed in a few days?

*Hermotimus.* There is no resemblance, Lycinus; this is not a thing, as you conceive it, to be compassed and captured quickly, though ten thousand Alexanders were to assault it; in that case, the sealers would have been legion. As it is, a good number begin the climb with great confidence, and do make progress, some very little indeed, others more; but when they get half-way, they find endless difficulties and discomforts, lose heart, and turn back, panting, dripping, and exhausted. But those who endure to the end reach the top, to be blessed thenceforth with wondrous days, looking down from their height upon the ants which are the rest of mankind.

*Lycinus.* Dear me, what tiny things you make us out—not so big as the Pygmies even, but positively grovelling on the face of the earth. I quite understand it; your thoughts are up aloft already. And we, the common men that walk the earth, shall mingle you with the Gods in our prayers; for you are translated above the clouds, and gone up whither you have so long striven.

*Hermotimus.* If but that ascent might be, Lycinus! but it is far yet.

*Lycinus.* But you have never told me *how* far, in terms of time.

*Hermotimus.* No, for I know not precisely myself. My guess is that it will not be more than twenty years; by that time I shall surely be on the summit.

*Lycinus.* Mercy upon us, you take long views!

*Hermotimus.* Ay, but, as the toil, so is the reward.

*Lycinus.* That may be; but about these twenty years—have you your master's promise that you will live so long? is he prophet as well as philosopher? or is it a soothsayer or Chaldean expert that you trust? such things are known to them, I understand. You would never, of course, if there were any uncertainty of your life's lasting to the Virtue-point, slave and toil night and day like this; why, just as you were close to the top, your fate might come upon you, lay hold of you by the heel, and lug you down with your hopes unfulfilled.

*Hermotimus.* God forbid! these are words of ill omen, Lycinus; may life be granted me, that I may grow wise, and have if it be but one day of Happiness!

*Lycinus.* For all these toils will you be content with your one day?

*Hermotimus.* Content? yes, or with the briefest moment of it.

*Lycinus.* But is there indeed Happiness up there—and worth all the pains? How can you tell? You have never been up yourself.

*Hermotimus.* I trust my master's word; and he knows well; is he not on the topmost height?

*Lycinus.* Oh, do tell me what he says about it; what is Happiness like? wealth, glory, pleasures incomparable?

*Hermotimus.* Hush, friend! all these have nought to do with the Virtuous life.

*Lycinus.* Well, if these will not do, what *are* the good things he offers to those who carry their course right through?

*Hermotimus.* Wisdom, courage, true beauty, justice, full and firm knowledge of all things as they are; but wealth and glory and pleasure and all bodily things--these a man strips off and abandons before he mounts up, like Hercules burning on Mount Oeta before defecation; he too cast off whatever of the human he had from his mother, and soared up to the Gods with his divine part pure and unalloyed, sifted by the fire. Even so those I speak of are purged by a philosophic fire of all that deluded men count admirable, and reaching the summit have Happiness with never a thought of wealth and glory and pleasure--except to smile at any who count them more than phantoms.

*Lycinus.* By Hercules (and his death on Oeta), they quit themselves like men, and have their reward, it seems. But there is one thing I should like to know: are they allowed to come down from their elevation sometimes, and have a taste of what they left behind them? or when they have once got up, must they stay there, conversing with Virtue, and smiling at wealth and glory and pleasure?

*Hermotimus.* The latter, assuredly; more than that, a man once admitted of Virtue's company will never be subject to wrath or fear or desire any more; no, nor can he feel pain, nor any such sensation.

*Lycinus.* Well, but--if one might dare to say what one thinks--but no--let me keep a good tongue in my head--it were irreverent to pry into what wise men do.

*Hermotimus.* Nay, nay; let me know your meaning.

*Lycinus.* Dear friend, I have not the courage.

*Hermotimus.* Out with it, my good fellow; we are alone.

*Lycinus.* Well, then--most of your account I followed and accepted--how they grow wise and brave and just, and the rest--indeed I was quite fascinated by it; but then you went on to say they despised wealth and glory and pleasure; well, just there (quite between ourselves, you know) I was pulled up; I thought of a scene t'other day with--shall I tell you whom? Perhaps we can do without a name?

*Hermotimus.* No, no; we must have that too.

*Lycinus.* Your own professor himself, then,--a person to whom all respect is due, surely, not to mention his years.

*Hermotimus.* Well?

*Lycinus.* You know the Heracleot, quite an old pupil of his in philosophy by this time--red-haired--likes an argument?

*Hermotimus.* Yes; Dion, he is called.

*Lycinus.* Well, I suppose he had not paid up punctually; anyhow the other day the old man hailed him before the magistrate, with a halter made of his own coat; he was shouting and fuming, and if some friends had not come up and got the young man out of his hands, he would have bitten off his nose, he was in such a temper.

*Hermotimus.* Ah, *he* is a bad character, always an unconscionable time paying his debts. There are plenty of others who owe the professor money, and he has never treated any of them so; they pay him his interest punctually.

*Lycinus.* Not so fast; what in the world does it matter to him, if they do not pay up? he is purified by philosophy,

and has no further need of the cast clothes of Oeta.

*Hermotimus.* Do you suppose his interest in such things is selfish? no, but he has little ones; his care is to save them from indigence.

*Lycinus.* Whereas he ought to have brought them up to Virtue too, and let them share his inexpensive Happiness.

*Hermotimus.* Well, I have no time to argue it, Lycinus; I must not be late for lecture, lest in the end I find myself left behind.

*Lycinus.* Don't be afraid, my duteous one; to-day is a holiday; I can save you the rest of your walk.

*Hermotimus.* What do you mean?

*Lycinus.* You will not find him just now, if the notice is to be trusted; there was a tablet over the door announcing in large print, No meeting this day. I hear he dined yesterday with the great Eucrates, who was keeping his daughter's birthday. He talked a good deal of philosophy over the wine, and lost his temper a little with Euthydemus the Peripatetic; they were debating the old Peripatetic objections to the Porch. His long vocal exertions (for it was midnight before they broke up) gave him a bad headache, with violent perspiration. I fancy he had also drunk a little too much, toasts being the order of the day, and eaten more than an old man should. When he got home, he was very ill, they said, just managed to check and lock up carefully the slices of meat which he had conveyed to his servant at table, and then, giving orders that he was not at home, went to sleep, and has not waked since. I overheard Midas his man telling this to some of his pupils; there were a number of them coming away.

*Hermotimus.* Which had the victory, though, he or Euthydemus--if Midas said anything about that?

*Lycinus.* Why, at first, I gathered, it was very even between them; but you Stoics had it in the end, and your master was much too hard for him. Euthydemus did not even get off whole; he had a great cut on his head. He was pretentious, insisted on proving his point, would not give in, and proved a hard nut to crack; so your excellent professor, who had a goblet as big as Nestor's in his hand, brought this down on him as he lay within easy reach, and the victory was his.

*Hermotimus.* Good; so perish all who will not yield to their betters!

*Lycinus.* Very reasonable, Hermotimus; what was Euthydemus thinking of, to irritate an old man who is purged of wrath and master of his passions, when he had such a heavy goblet in his hand?

But we have time to spare--you might tell a friend like me the story of your start in philosophy; then I might perhaps, if it is not too late, begin now and join your school; you are my friends; you will not be exclusive?

*Hermotimus.* If only you would, Lycinus! you will soon find out how much you are superior to the rest of men. I do assure you, you will think them all children, you will be so much wiser.

*Lycinus.* Enough for me, if after twenty years of it I am where you are now.

*Hermotimus.* Oh, I was about your age when I started on philosophy; I was forty; and you must be about that.

*Lycinus.* Just that; so take and lead me on the same way; that is but right. And first tell me--do you allow learners to criticize, if they find difficulties in your doctrines, or must juniors abstain from that?

*Hermotimus.* Why, yes, they must; but *you* shall have leave to ask questions and criticize; you will learn easier that way.

*Lycinus.* I thank you for it, Hermotimus, by your name--God Hermes.

Now, is there only one road to philosophy--the Stoic way? they tell me there are a great many other philosophers; is

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that so?

*Hermotimus.* Certainly--Peripatetics, Epicureans, Platonists, followers of Diogenes, Antisthenes, Pythagoras, and more yet.

*Lycinus.* Quite so; numbers of them. Now, are their doctrines the same, or different?

*Hermotimus.* Entirely different.

*Lycinus.* But the truth, I presume, is bound to be in one of them, and not in all, as they differ?

*Hermotimus.* Certainly.

*Lycinus.* Then, as you love me, answer this: when you first went in pursuit of philosophy, you found many gates wide open; what induced you to pass the others by, and go in at the Stoic gate? Why did you assume that that was the only true one, which would set you on the straight road to Virtue, while the rest all opened on blind alleys? What was the test you applied *then*? Please abolish your present self, the self which is now instructed, or half-instructed, and better able to distinguish between good and bad than we outsiders, and answer in your then character of a layman, with no advantage over me as I am now.

*Hermotimus.* I cannot tell what you are driving at.

*Lycinus.* Oh, there is nothing recondit about it. There are a great many philosophers--let us say Plato, Aristotle, Antisthenes, and your spiritual fathers, Chrysippus, Zeno, and all the rest of them; what was it that induced you, leaving the rest alone, to pick out the school you did from among them all, and pin your philosophic faith to it? Were you favoured like Chacrecption with a revelation from Apollo? Did he tell you the Stoics were the best of men, and send you to their school? I dare say he recommends different philosophers to different persons, according to their individual needs?

*Hermotimus.* Nothing of the kind, Lycinus; I never consulted him upon it.

*Lycinus.* Why? was it not a *dignus vindice nodus*? or were you confident in your own unaided discrimination?

*Hermotimus.* Why, yes; I was.

*Lycinus.* Then this must be my first lesson from you--how one can decide out of hand which is the best and the true philosophy to be taken, and the others left.

*Hermotimus.* I will tell you: I observed that it attracted most disciples, and thence inferred that it was superior.

*Lycinus.* Give me figures; how many more of them than of Epicureans, Platonists, Peripatetics? Of course you took a sort of show of hands.

*Hermotimus.* Well, no; I didn't count; I just guessed.

*Lycinus.* Now, now! you are not teaching, but hoaxing me; judge by guess work and impression, indeed, on a thing of this importance! You are hiding the truth.

*Hermotimus.* Well, that was not my only way; every one told me the Epicureans were sensual and self-indulgent, the Peripatetics avaricious and contentious, the Platonists conceited and vain; about the Stoics, on the contrary, many said they had fortitude and an open mind; he who goes their way, I heard, was the true king and millionaire and wise man, alone and all in one.

*Lycinus.* And, of course, it was other people who so described them; you would not have taken their own word for their excellences.

*Hermotimus.* Certainly not; it was others who said it.

*Lycinus.* Not their rivals, I suppose?

*Hermotimus.* Oh, no.

*Lycinus.* Laymen, then?

*Hermotimus.* Just so.

*Lycinus.* There you are again, cheating me with your irony; you take me for a blockhead, who will believe that an intelligent person like Hermotimus, at the age of forty, would accept the word of laymen about philosophy and philosophers, and make his own selection on the strength of what they said.

*Hermotimus.* But you see, Lycinus, I did not depend on their judgement entirely, but on my own too. I saw the Stoics going about with dignity, decently dressed and groomed, ever with a thoughtful air and a manly countenance, as far from effeminacy as from the utter repulsive negligence of the Cynics, bearing themselves, in fact, like moderate men; and every one admits that moderation is right.

*Lycinus.* Did you ever see them behaving like your master, as I described him to you just now? Lending money and clamouring for payment, losing their tempers in philosophic debates, and making other exhibitions of themselves? Or perhaps these are trifles, so long as the dress is decent, the beard long, and the hair close-cropped? We are provided for the future, then, with an infallible rule and balance, guaranteed by Hermotimus? It is by appearance and walk and haughtiness that the best men are to be distinguished; and whosoever has not these marks, and is not solemn and thoughtful, shall be condemned and rejected?

Nay, do not play with me like this; you want to see whether I shall catch you at it.

*Hermotimus.* Why do you say that?

*Lycinus.* Because, my dear sir, this appearance test is one for stamers; *their* decent orderly attire has it easily over the Stoics, because Phidias or Alcamenes or Myron designed them to be graceful. However, granting as much as you like that these are the right tests, what is a blind man to do, if he wants to take up philosophy? how is he to find the man whose principles are right, when he cannot see his appearance or gait?

*Hermotimus.* I am not teaching the blind, Lycinus; I have nothing to do with them.

*Lycinus.* Ah, but, my good sir, there ought to have been some universal criterion, in a matter of such great and general use. Still, if you will have it so, let the blind be excluded from philosophy, as they cannot see--though, by the way, they are just the people who most need philosophy to console them for their misfortune; but now, the people who *can* see--give them the utmost possible acuity of vision, and what can they detect of the spiritual qualities from this external shell?

What I mean is this: was it not from admiration of their *spiriti* that you joined them, expecting to have your own spirit purified?

*Hermotimus.* Assuredly.

*Lycinus.* How could you possibly discern the true philosopher from the false, then, by the marks you mentioned? It is not the way of such qualities to come out like that; they are hidden and secret; they are revealed only under long and patient observation, in talk and debate and the conduct they inspire. You have probably heard of Momus's indictment of Hephaestus; if not, you shall have it now. According to the myth, Athene, Posidon, and Hephaestus had a match in inventiveness. Posidon made a bull, Athene planned a house, Hephaestus constructed a man; when they came before Momus, who was to judge, he examined their productions; I need not trouble you with his criticisms of the other two; but his objection to the man, and the fault he found with Hephaestus, was this: he should have made a window in his chest, so that, when it was opened, his thoughts and designs, his truth or falsehood, might have been apparent. Momus

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must have been blear-eyed, to have such ideas about men; but you have sharper eyes than Lyncus, and pierce through the chest to what is inside; all is patent to you, not merely any man's wishes and sentiments, but the comparative merits of any pair.

*Heremotimus.* You trifle, Lycinus. I made a pious choice, and do not repent it; that is enough for me.

*Lycinus.* And will you yet make a mystery of it to your friend, and let him be lost with the vulgar herd?

*Heremotimus.* Why, you will not accept anything I say.

*Lycinus.* On the contrary, my good sir, it is you who will not say anything I can accept. Well, as you refuse me your confidence, and are so jealous of my becoming a philosopher and your equal, I must even do my best to find out the infallible test and learn to choose safely for myself. And you may listen, if you like.

*Heremotimus.* That I will, Lycinus; you will very likely hit on some good idea.

*Lycinus.* Then attend, and do not mock me, if my inquiry is quite unscientific; it is all I can do, as you, who know better, will not give me any clearer light.

I conceive Virtue, then, under the figure of a State whose citizens are happy—as your professor, who is one of them, phrases it,—absolutely wise, all of them brave, just, and self-controlled, hardly distinguishable, in fact, from Gods. All sorts of things that go on here, such as robbery, assault, unfair gain, you will never find attempted there, I believe; their relations are all peace and unity; and this is quite natural, seeing that none of the things which elsewhere occasion strife and rivalry, and prompt men to plot against their neighbours, so much as come in their way at all. Gold, pleasures, distinctions, they never regard as objects of dispute; they have banished them long ago as undesirable elements. Their life is serene and blissful, in the enjoyment of legality, equality, liberty, and all other good things.

*Heremotimus.* Well, Lycinus? Must not all men yearn to belong to a State like that, and never count the toil of getting there, nor lose heart over the time it takes? Enough that one day they will arrive, and be naturalized, and given the franchise.

*Lycinus.* In good truth, Heremotimus, we should devote all our efforts to this, and neglect everything else; we need pay little heed to any claims of our earthly country; we should steel our hearts against the clings and cryings of children or parents, if we have them; it is well if we can induce them to go with us; but, if they will not or cannot, shake them off and march straight for the city of bliss, leaving your coat in their hands, if they lay hold of it to keep you back, in your hurry to get there; what matter for a coat? You will be admitted there without one.

I remember hearing a description of it all once before from an old man, who urged me to go there with him. He would show me the way, enroll me when I got there, introduce me to his own circles, and promise me a share in the universal Happiness. But I was stiff-necked, in my youthful folly (it was some fifteen years ago), else might I have been in the ouskirts, nay, haply at the very gates, by now. Among the noteworthy things he told me, I seem to remember these: all the citizens are aliens and foreigners, not a native among them; they include numbers of barbarians, slaves, cripples, dwarfs, and poor: in fact any one is admitted; for their law does not associate the franchise with income, with shape, size, or beauty, with old or brilliant ancestry; these things are not considered at all; any one who would be a citizen needs only understanding, zeal for the right, energy, perseverance, fortitude and resolution in facing all the trials of the road; whoever proves his possession of these by persisting till he reaches the city is *ipso facto* a full citizen, regardless of his antecedents. Such distinctions as superior and inferior, noble and common, bond and free, simply do not exist there, even in name.

*Heremotimus.* There, now, you see I am not wasting my pains on trifles; I yearn to be counted among the citizens of that fair and happy State.

*Lycinus.* Why, your yearning is mine too; there is nothing I would sooner pray for. If the city had been near at hand and plain for all to see, be assured I would never have doubted, nor needed prompting; I would have gone thither and had my franchise long ago; but as you tell me—you and your bard Hesiod—that it is set exceeding far off, one must find out the way to it, and the best guide. You agree?

*Heremotimus.* Of course that is the only thing to do.

*Lycinus.* Now, so far as promises and professions go, there is no lack of guides; there are numbers of them waiting about, all representing themselves as from there. But instead of one single road there seem to be many different and inconsistent ones. North and South, East and West, they go; one leads through meadows and vegetation and shade, and is well watered and pleasant, with never a stumbling-block or inequality; another is rough and rocky, threatening heat and drought and toil. Yet all these are supposed to lead to the one city, though they take such different directions.

That is where my difficulty lies; whichever of them I try, there is sure to be a most respectable person stationed just at the entrance, with a welcoming hand and an exhortation to go his way; each of them says he is the only one who knows the straight road; his rivals are all mistaken, have never been themselves, nor learnt the way from competent guides. I go to his neighbour, and he gives the same assurances about *his* way, abusing the other respectable persons; and so the next, and the next, and the next. This multiplicity and dissimilarity of the roads gives me searchings of heart, and still more the assertiveness and self-satisfaction of the guides; I really cannot tell which turning or whose directions are most likely to bring me to the city.

*Heremotimus.* Oh, but I can solve that puzzle for you; you cannot go wrong, if you trust those who have been already.

*Lycinus.* Which do you mean? those who have been by which road, and under whose guidance? It is the old puzzle in a new form; you have only substituted men for measures.

*Heremotimus.* How do you mean?

*Lycinus.* Why, the man who has taken Plato's road and travelled with him will recommend that road; so with Epicurus and the rest; and *you* will recommend your own. How else, Heremotimus? it must be so.

*Heremotimus.* Well, of course.

*Lycinus.* So you have not solved my puzzle; I know just as little as before which traveller to trust; I find that each of them, as well as his guide, has tried one only, which he now recommends and will have to be the only one leading to the city. Whether he tells the truth I have no means of knowing; that he has attained *some* end, and seen *some* city, I may perhaps allow; but whether he saw the right one, or whether, Corinth being the real goal, he got to Babylon and thought he had seen Corinth—that is still undecided; for surely every one who has seen a city has not seen Corinth, unless Corinth is the only city there is. But my greatest difficulty of all is the absolute certainty that the true road is one; for Corinth is one, and the other roads lead anywhere but to Corinth, though there may be people deluded enough to suppose that the North road and the South road lead equally to Corinth.

*Heremotimus.* But that is absurd, Lycinus; they go opposite ways, you see.

*Lycinus.* Then, my dear good man, this choice of roads and guides is quite a serious matter; we can by no means just follow our noses; we shall be discovering that we are well on the way to Babylon or Bactria instead of to Corinth. Nor is it advisable to toss up, either, on the chance that we may hit upon the right way if we start upon any one at a venture. That is no impossibility; it may have come off once and again in a cycle; but I cannot think we ought to gamble recklessly with such high stakes, not commit our hopes to a frail craft, like the wise men who went to sea in a bow; we should have no fair complaint against Fortune, if her arrow or dart did not precisely hit the centre; the odds are ten thousand to one against her; just so the archer in Homer—Teucer, I suppose it was—when he meant to hit the dove, only cut the string, which held it; of course it is infinitely more likely that the point of the arrow will find its billet in one of the numberless other places, than just in that particular central one. And as to the perils of blundering into one of the wrong roads instead of the right one, misled by a belief in the discretion of Fortune, here is an illustration:—it is no easy matter to turn back and get safe into port when you have once cast loose your moorings and committed yourself to the breeze; you are at the mercy of the sea, frightened, sick and sorry with your tossing about, most likely. Your mistake was at the beginning; before leaving, you should have gone up to some high point, and observed whether the wind was in the right quarter, and of the right strength for a crossing to Corinth, not neglecting, by the way, to secure the very best pilot obtainable, and a seaworthy craft equal to so high a sea.

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*Hermotimus*. Much better so, Lycinus. However, I know that, if you go the whole round, you will find no better guides or more expert pilots than the Stoics; if you mean ever to get to Corinth, you will follow them, in the tracks of Chryseippus and Zeno. It is the only way to do it.

*Lycinus*. Ah, many can play at the game of assertion. Plato's fellow traveller, Epicurus's follower, and all the rest, will tell me just what you do, that I shall never get to Corinth except with whichever of them it is. So I must either believe them all, or disbelieve impartially. The latter is much the safest, until we have found out the truth.

Put a case, now: just as I am, as uncertain as ever which of the whole number has the truth, I choose your school; I rely on you, who are my friend, but who still know only the Stoic doctrine, and have not travelled any way but that. Now some God brings Plato, Pythagoras, Aristotle, and the rest to life again; they gather round and cross-examine me, or actually sue me in court for constructive defamation; "Good Lycinus," they say, "what possessed or who induced you to exalt Chryseippus and Zeno at our expense? we are far older established; they are mere creatures of yesterday; yet you never gave us a hearing, nor inquired into our statements at all." Well, what am I to plead? will it avail me to say I trusted my friend Hermotimus? I feel sure they will say, "We know not this Hermotimus, who he is, nor he us; you had no right to condemn us all, and give judgement by default against us, on the authority of a man who knew only one of the philosophic roads, and even that, perhaps, imperfectly. These are not the instructions issued to juries, Lycinus; they are not to hear one party, and, refuse the other permission to say what he deems advisable; they are to hear both sides alike, with a view to the better sifting of truth from falsehood by comparison of the arguments; if they fail in these duties, the law allows an appeal to another court." That is what we may expect them to say.

Then one of them might proceed to question me like this: "Suppose, Lycinus, that an Ethiopian who had never been abroad in his life, nor seen other men like us, were to state categorically in an Ethiopian assembly that there did not exist on earth any white or yellow men--nothing but blacks--would his statement be accepted? or would some Ethiopian elder remark, How do you know, my confident friend? you have never been in foreign parts, nor had any experience of other nations." Shall I tell him the old man's question was justified? what do you advise, my counsel?

*Hermotimus*. Say that, certainly; I consider the old man's rebuke quite reasonable.

*Lycinus*. So do I. But I am not so sure you will approve what comes next; as for me, I have as little doubt of that as of the other.

*Hermotimus*. What is it?

*Lycinus*. The next step will be the application; my questioner will say, "Now Lycinus, let us suppose an analogue, in a person acquainted only with the Stoic doctrine, like your friend Hermotimus; he has never travelled in Plato's country, or to Epicurus, or any other land; now, if he were to state that there was no such beauty or truth in those many countries as there is in the Porch and its teaching, would you not be justified in considering it bold of him to give you his opinion about them all, whereas he knew only one, having never set foot outside the bounds of Ethiopia?" What reply do you advise to that?

*Hermotimus*. The perfectly true one, of course, that it is indeed the Stoic doctrine that we study fully, being minded to sink or swim with that, but still we do know what the others say also; our teacher rehearses the articles of their beliefs to us incidentally, and demolishes them with his comments.

*Lycinus*. Do you suppose the Platonists, Pythagoreans, Epicureans, and other schools, will let that pass? or will they laugh out loud and say, "What remarkable methods your friend has, Lycinus! he accepts our adversaries' character of us, and gathers our doctrines from the description of people who do not know, or deliberately misrepresent them. If he were to see an athlete getting his muscles in trim by kicking high, or hitting out at empty space as though he were getting a real blow home, would he (in the capacity of umpire) at once proclaim him victor, because he could not help winning?" No; he would reflect that these displays are easy and safe, when there is no defence to be reckoned with, and that the real decision must wait till he has beaten and mastered his opponent, and the latter has had enough. Well then, do not let Hermotimus suppose from his teachers' sparrings with our shadows (for we are not there) that they have the victory, or that our doctrines are so easily upset; tell him the business is too like

the sand houses which children, having built them weak, have no difficulty in overturning, or, to change the figure, like people practising archery; they make a straw target, hang it to a post, plant it a little way off, and then let fly at it; if they hit and get through the straw, they burst into a shout, as if it were a great triumph to have driven through the dry stuff. That is not the way the Persians take, or those Scythian tribes which use the bow. Generally, when they shoot, in the first place they are themselves mounted and in motion, and secondly, they like the mark to be moving too; it is not to be stationary, waiting for the arrival of the arrow, but passing at full speed; they can usually kill beasts, and their marksmen hit birds. If it ever happens that they want to test the actual impact on a target, they set up one of stout wood, or a shield of raw hide; piercing that, they reckon that their shafts will go through armour too. So, Lycinus, tell Hermotimus from us that his teachers fierce straw targets, and then say they have disposed of armed men, or paint up figures of us, spar at them, and, after a not surprising success, think they have beaten us. But we shall severally quote against them Achilles's words against Hector:

They dare not face the nodding of my plume.

So say all of them, one after the other.

I suspect that Plato, with his intimate knowledge of Sicily, will add an anecdote from there. Gelo of Syracuse had disagreeable breath, but did not find it out himself for a long time, no one venturing to mention such a circumstance to a tyrant. At last a foreign woman who had a connexion with him dared to tell him, whereupon he went to his wife and scolded her for never having, with all her opportunities of knowing, warned him of it; she put in the defence that, as she had never been familiar or at close quarters with any other man, she had supposed all men were like that. So Hermotimus (Plato will say) after his exclusive association with Stoics, cannot be expected to know the savour of other people's mouths. Chryseippus, on the other hand, might say as much or more if I were to put him out of court and betake myself to Platonism, in reliance upon some one who had conversed with Plato alone. And in a word, as long as it is uncertain which is the true philosophic school, I choose none; choice of one is insult to the rest.

*Hermotimus*. For Heaven's sake, Lycinus, let us leave Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the rest of them alone; to argue with them is not for me. Why not just hold a private inquiry, you and I, whether philosophy is what I say it is? As for the Ethiopians and Gelo's wife, what a long way you have brought them on none of their business!

*Lycinus*. Away with them, then, if you find their company superfluous. And now do you proceed; my expectations are high.

*Hermotimus*. Well, it seems to me perfectly possible, Lycinus, after studying the Stoic doctrines alone, to get at the truth from them, without going through a course of all the others too. Look at it this way; if any one tells you simply, Twice two is four, need you go round all the mathematicians to find out whether there is one who makes it five, or seven; or would you know at once that the man was right?

*Lycinus*. Certainly I should.

*Hermotimus*. Then why should you think it impossible for a man who finds, without going further, that the Stoics make true statements, to believe them and dispense with further witness? He knows that four can never be five, though ten thousand Platos or Pythagorases said it was.

*Lycinus*. Not to the point. You compare accepted with disputed facts, whereas they are completely different. Tell me, did you ever meet a man who said twice two was seven or eleven?

*Hermotimus*. Not I; any one who did not make four of it must be mad.

*Lycinus*. But on the other hand--try to tell the truth, I adjure you-- did you ever meet a Stoic and an Epicurean who did not differ about principles or ends?

*Hermotimus*. No.

*Lycinus*. You are an honest man; now ask yourself whether you are trapping a friend with false logic. We are trying to find out with whom philosophic truth lies; and you beg the question and make a present of that same truth to

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the Stoics; for you say (what is quite unproved) that they are the people who make twice two four; the Epicureans or Platonists would say that *they* bring out that result, whereas you get five or seven. Does it not amount to that, when your school reckon goodness the only end, and the Epicureans pleasure? or again when you say everything is material, and Plato recognizes an immaterial element also in all that exists? As I said, you lay hold of the thing in dispute, as though it were the admitted property of the Stoics, and put it into their hands, though the others claim it and maintain that it is theirs; why, it is the very point at issue. If it is once established that Stoics have the monopoly of making four out of twice two, it is time for the rest to hold their tongues; but as long as they refuse to yield that point, we must hear all alike, or be prepared for people's calling us partial judges.

*Hermotimus.* It seems to me, Lycinus, you do not understand what I mean.

*Lycinus.* Very well, put it plainer, if it is something different from that.

*Hermotimus.* You will see in a minute. Let us suppose two people have gone into the temple of Asclepius or Dionysus, and subsequently one of the sacred cups is missing. Both of them will have to be searched, to see which has it about him.

*Lycinus.* Clearly.

*Hermotimus.* Of course one of them has it.

*Lycinus.* Necessarily, if it is missing.

*Hermotimus.* Then, if you find it on the first, you will not strip the other; it is clear he has not got it.

*Lycinus.* Quite.

*Hermotimus.* And if we fail to find it on the first, the other certainly has it; it is unnecessary to search him that way either.

*Lycinus.* Yes, he has it.

*Hermotimus.* So with us; if we find the cup in the possession of the Stoics, we shall not care to go on and search the others; we have what we were looking for, why trouble further?

*Lycinus.* There is no why, if you really find it, and can be certain it is the missing article, the sacred object being unmistakable. But there are some differences in this case, friend, the temple-visitors are not two, so that if one has not got the booty the other has, but many; and the identity of the missing object is also uncertain: it may be cup, or bowl, or garland; every priest gives a different description of it; they do not agree even about the material; bronze, say these, silver, say those--anything from gold to tin. So there is nothing for it but to strip the visitors, if you want to find it; even if you discover a gold cup on the first man, you must go on to the others.

*Hermotimus.* What for?

*Lycinus.* Because it is not certain that the thing was a cup. And even if that is generally admitted, they do not all agree that it was gold; and if it is well known that a gold cup is missing, and you find a gold cup on your first man, even so you are not quit of searching the others; it is not clear that this is *the* sacred cup; do you suppose there is only one gold cup in the world?

*Hermotimus.* No, indeed.

*Lycinus.* So you will have to go the round, and then collect all your finds together and decide which of them is most likely to be divine property.

For the source of all the difficulty is this: every one who is stripped has something or other on him, one a bowl, one a cup, one a garland, which again may be bronze, gold, or silver; but whether the one he has is the sacred one, is not yet

clear. It is absolutely impossible to know which man to accuse of sacrilege; even if all the objects were similar, it would be uncertain who had robbed the God; for such things may be private property too. Our perplexity, of course, is simply due to the fact that the missing cup--assume it to be a cup--has no inscription; if either the God's or the donor's name had been on it, we should not have had all this trouble; when we found the inscribed one, we should have stopped stripping and inconveniencing other visitors. I suppose, Hermotimus, you have often been at athletic meetings?

*Hermotimus.* You suppose right: and in many places too.

*Lycinus.* Did you ever have a seat close by the judges?

*Hermotimus.* Dear me, yes; last Olympia, I was on the left of the stewards; Euandridas of Elis had got me a place in the Elean enclosure; I particularly wanted to have a near view of how things are done there.

*Lycinus.* So you know how they arrange ties for the wrestling or the pancratium?

*Hermotimus.* Yes.

*Lycinus.* Then you will describe it better than I, as you have seen it so close.

*Hermotimus.* In old days, when Heracles presided, bay leaves--

*Lycinus.* No old days, thank you; tell me what you saw with your own eyes.

*Hermotimus.* A consecrated silver um is produced, and into it are thrown little lots about the size of a bean, with letters on them. Two are marked alpha [Footnote: The Greek alphabet runs: alpha, beta, gamma, delta, epsilon, zeta, eta, theta, iota, kappa, lambda, mu, nu, xi, omicron, pi, rho, sigma, tau, upsilon, phi, chi, psi, omega.] two beta, two more gamma, and so on, if the competitors run to more than that--two lots always to each letter. A competitor comes up, makes a prayer to Zeus, dips his hand into the um, and pulls out one lot; then another does the same; there is a policeman to each drawer, who holds his hand so that he cannot see what letter he has drawn. When all have drawn, the chief police officer, I think it is, or one of the stewards themselves--I cannot quite remember this detail--goes round and examines the lots while they stand in a circle, and puts together the two alphas for the wrestling or pancratium, and so for the two betas, and the rest. That is the procedure when the number of competitors is even, as eight, four, or twelve. If it is five, seven, nine, or other odd number, an odd letter is marked on one lot, which is put in with the others, not having a duplicate. Whoever draws this is a bye, and waits till the rest have finished their ties; no duplicate turns up for him; you see, and it is a considerable advantage to an athlete, to know that he will come fresh against tired competitors.

*Lycinus.* Stop there; that is just what I wanted. There are nine of them, we will say, and they have all drawn, and the lots are in their hands. You go round--for I promote you from spectator to steward--examining the letters: and I suppose you will not know who is the bye till you have been to them all and paired them.

*Hermotimus.* How do you mean?

*Lycinus.* It is impossible for you to hit straight upon the letter which indicates the bye: at least, you may hit upon the letter, but you will not know about the bye; it was not announced beforehand that kappa or mu or iota had the appointment in its gift; when you find alpha, you look for the holder of the other alpha, whom finding, you pair the two. Again finding beta, you inquire into the whereabouts of the second beta which matches it; and so all through, till there is no one left but the holder of the single unpaired letter.

*Hermotimus.* But suppose you come upon it first or second, what will you do then?

*Lycinus.* Never mind me; I want to know what you will do, Mr. Steward. Will you say at once, Here is the bye? or will you have to go round to all, and see whether there is a duplicate to be found, it being impossible to know the bye till you have seen all the lots?

*Hermotimus.* Why, Lycinus, I shall know quite easily; nine being the number, if I find the epsilon first or second, I know the holder of it for the bye.

*Lycinus.* But how?

*Hermotimus.* How? Why, two of them must have alpha, two beta, and of the next two pairs one has certainly drawn gammas and the other deltas, so that four letters have been used up over eight competitors. Obviously, then, the next letter, which is epsilon, is the only one that can be odd, and the drawer of it is the bye.

*Lycinus.* Shall I extol your intelligence, or would you rather I explained to you my own poor idea, which differs?

*Hermotimus.* The letter, of course, though I cannot conceive how you can reasonably differ.

*Lycinus.* You have gone on the assumption that the letters are taken in alphabetical order, until at a particular one the number of competitors runs short; and I grant you it may be done so at Olympia. But suppose we were to pick out five letters at random, say chi, sigma, zeta, kappa, theta, and duplicate the other four on the lots for eight competitors, but put a single zeta on the ninth, which we meant to indicate the bye--what then would you do if you came on the zeta first? How can you tell that its holder is the bye till you have been all round and found no counterpart to it? for you could not tell by the alphabetical order, as at Olympia.

*Hermotimus.* A difficult question.

*Lycinus.* Look at the same thing another way. Suppose we put no letters at all on the lots, but, instead of them, signs and marks such as the Egyptians use for letters, men with dogs' or lions' heads. Or no, those are rather too strange; let us avoid hybrids, and put down simple forms, as well as our draughtsmanship will allow--men on two lots, horses on two, a pair of cocks, a pair of dogs, and let a lion be the mark of the ninth. Now, if you hit upon the lion at the first try, how can you tell that this is the bye-maker, until you have gone all round and seen whether any one else has a lion to match?

*Hermotimus.* Your question is too much for me.

*Lycinus.* No wonder; there is no plausible answer. Consequently if we mean to find either the man who has the sacred cup, or the bye, or our best guide to the famous city of Corinth, we must absolutely go to and examine them all, trying them carefully, stripping and comparing them; the truth will be hard enough to find, even so. If I am to take any one's advice upon the right philosophy to choose, I insist upon his knowing what they all say; every one else I disqualify; I will not trust him while there is one philosophy he is unacquainted with: that one may possibly be the best of all. If some one were to produce a handsome man, and state that he was the handsomest of mankind, we should not accept that, unless we knew he had seen all men; very likely his man is handsome, but whether the handsomest, he has no means of knowing without seeing all. Now we are looking not simply for beauty, but for the greatest beauty, and if we miss that, we shall account ourselves no further than we were; we shall not be content with chancing upon some sort of beauty; we are in search of a definite thing, the supreme beauty, which must necessarily be one.

*Hermotimus.* True.

*Lycinus.* Well then, can you name me a man who has tried every road in philosophy? one who, knowing the doctrine of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Chrysippus, Epicurus, and the rest, has ended by selecting one out of all these roads, because he has proved it genuine, and had found it by experience to be the only one that led straight to Happiness? If we can meet with such a man, we are at the end of our troubles.

*Hermotimus.* Alas, that is no easy matter.

*Lycinus.* What shall we do, then? I do not think we ought to despair, in the momentary absence of such a guide. Perhaps the best and safest plan of all is to set to work oneself, go through every system, and carefully examine the various doctrines.

*Hermotimus.* That is what seems to be indicated. I am afraid, though, there is an obstacle in what you said just now: it is not easy, when you have committed yourself with a spread of canvases to the wind, to get home again. How can a man try all the roads, when, as you said, he will be unable to escape from the first of them?

*Lycinus.* My notion is to copy Theseus, get dame Ariadne to give us a skein, and go into one labyrinth after another, with the certainty of getting out by winding it up.

*Hermotimus.* Who is to be our Ariadne? Where shall we find the skein?

*Lycinus.* Never despair; I fancy I have found something to hold on to and escape.

*Hermotimus.* And what is that?

*Lycinus.* It is not original; I borrow it from one of the wise men: 'Be sober and doubt all things,' says he. If we do not believe everything we are told, but behave like jurymen who suspend judgement till they have heard the other side, we may have no difficulty in getting out of the labyrinths.

*Hermotimus.* A good plan; let us try it.

*Lycinus.* Very well, which shall we start with? However, that will make no difference, we may begin with whomsoever we fancy, Pythagoras, say; how long shall we allow for learning the whole of Pythagoreanism? and do not omit the five years of silence; including those, I suppose thirty altogether will do; or, if you do not like that, still we cannot put it lower than twenty.

*Hermotimus.* Put it at that.

*Lycinus.* Plato will come next with as many more, and then Aristotle cannot do with less.

*Hermotimus.* No.

*Lycinus.* As to Chrysippus, I need not ask you; you have told me already that forty is barely enough.

*Hermotimus.* That is so.

*Lycinus.* And we have still Epicurus and the others. I am not taking high figures, either, as you will see if you reflect upon the number of octogenarian Stoics, Epicureans, and Platonists who confess that they have not yet completely mastered their own systems. Or, if they did not confess it, at any rate Chrysippus, Aristotle, and Plato would for them; still more Socrates, who is as good as they; he used to proclaim to all comers that, so far from knowing all, he knew nothing whatever, except the one fact of his own ignorance. Well, let us add up. Twenty years we gave Pythagoras, the same to Plato, and so to the others. What will the total come to, if we assume only ten schools?

*Hermotimus.* Over two hundred years.

*Lycinus.* Shall we deduct a quarter of that, and say a hundred and fifty will do? or can we halve it?

*Hermotimus.* You must decide about that; but I see that, at the best, it will be but few who will get through the course, though they begin philosophy and life together.

*Lycinus.* In that case, what are we to do? Must we withdraw our previous admission, that no one can choose the best out of many without trying all? We thought selection without experiment a method of inquiry savouring more of divination than of judgement, did we not?

*Hermotimus.* Yes.

*Lycinus.* Without such longevity, then, it is absolutely impossible for us to complete the series--experiment,

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selection, philosophy, Happiness. Yet anything short of that is a mere game of blindman's-buff; whatever we knock against and get hold of we shall be taking for the thing we want, because the truth is hidden from us. Even if a mere piece of luck brings us straight to it, we shall have no grounded conviction of our success; there are so many similar objects, all claiming to be the real thing.

*Hermotimus.* Ah, Lycinus, your arguments seem to me more or less logical, but--but--to be frank with you--I hate to hear you going through them and wasting your acuteness. I suspect it was in an evil hour that I came out to-day and met you; my hopes were almost in my grasp, and now here are you plunging me into a slough of despond with your demonstrations; truth is undiscoverable, if the search needs so many years.

*Lycinus.* My dear friend, it would be much fairer to blame your parents, Menecrates and whatever your mother's name may have been--or indeed to go still further back to human nature. Why did not they make you a Tithonus for years and durability? instead of which, they limited you like other men to a century at the outside. As for me, I have only been helping you to deduce results.

*Hermotimus.* No, no; it is just your way; you want to crow over me; you detest philosophy--I cannot tell why--and poke fun at philosophers.

*Lycinus.* Hermotimus, I cannot show what truth is, so well as wise people like you and your professor; but one thing I do know about it, and that is that it is not pleasant to the ear; falsehood is far more esteemed; it is prettier, and therefore pleasanter; while Truth, conscious of its purity, blurs out downright remarks, and offends people. Here is a case of it; even you are offended with me for having discovered (with your assistance) how this matter really stands, and shown that our common object is hard of attainment. Suppose you had been in love with a statue and hoped to win it, under the impression that it was human, and I had realized that it was only bronze or marble, and given you a friendly warning that your passion was hopeless--you might just as well have thought I was your enemy then, because I would not leave you a prey to extravagant and impracticable delusions.

*Hermotimus.* Well, well; are we to give up philosophy, then, and idle our lives away like the common herd?

*Lycinus.* What have I said to justify that? My point is not that we are to give up philosophy, but this: whereas we are to pursue philosophy, and whereas there are many roads, each professing to lead to philosophy and Virtue, and whereas it is uncertain which of these is the true road, therefore the selection shall be made with care. Now we resolved that it was impossible out of many offers to choose the best, unless a man should try all in turn; and then the process of trial was found to be long. What do you propose?--It is the old question again. To follow and join philosophic forces with whomsoever you first fall in with, and let him thank Fortune for his proselyte?

*Hermotimus.* What is the good of answering your questions? You say no one can judge for himself, unless he can devote the life of a phoenix to going round experimenting; and on the other hand you refuse to trust either previous experience or the multitude of favourable testimony.

*Lycinus.* Where is your multitude, with knowledge and experience of all? Never mind the multitude; one man who answers the description will do for me. But if you mean the people who do not know, their mere numbers will never persuade me, as long as they pronounce upon all from knowledge of, at the most, one.

*Hermotimus.* Are you the only man who has found the truth, and are all the people who go in for philosophy fools?

*Lycinus.* You wrong me, Hermotimus, when you imply that I put myself above other people, or rank myself at all with those who know; you forget what I said; I never claimed to know the truth better than others, only confessed that I was as ignorant of it as every one else.

*Hermotimus.* Well, but, Lycinus, it may be all very well to insist on going the round, testing the various statements, and eschewing any other method of choice; but it is ridiculous to spend so many years on each experiment, as though there were no such thing as judging from samples. That device seems to me quite simple, and economical of time. There is a story that some sculptor, Phidias, I think, seeing a single claw, calculated from it the size of the lion, if it were modelled proportionally. So, if some one were to let you see a man's hand, keeping the rest of his body concealed, you would know at once that what was behind was a man, without seeing his whole body. Well, it is easy

to find out in a few hours the essential points of the various doctrines, and, for selecting the best, these will suffice, without any of your scrupulous exacting investigation.

*Lycinus.* Upon my word, how confident you are in your faculty of divining the whole from the parts! and yet I remember being told just the opposite--that knowledge of the whole includes that of the parts, but not vice versa. Well, but tell me; when Phidias saw the claw, would he ever have known it for a lion's, if he had never seen a lion? Could you have said the hand was a man's, if you had never known or seen a man? Why are you dumb? Let me make the only possible answer for you--that you could not; I am afraid Phidias has modelled his lion all for nothing; for it proves to be neither here nor there. What resemblance is there? What enabled you and Phidias to recognize the parts was just your knowledge of the wholes--the lion and the man. But in philosophy--the Stoic, for instance--how will the part reveal the other parts to you, or how can you conclude that they are beautiful? You do not know the whole to which the parts belong.

Then you say it is easy to hear in a few hours the essentials of all philosophy--meaning, I suppose, their principles and ends, their accounts of God and the soul, their views on the material and the immaterial, their respective identification of pleasure or goodness with the desirable and the Happy; well, it is easy--it is quite a trifle--to deliver an opinion after such a hearing; but really to know where the truth lies will be work, I suspect, not for a few hours, but for a good many days. If not, what can have induced them to enlarge on these rudiments to the tune of a hundred or a thousand volumes apiece? I imagine they only wanted to establish the truth of those few points which you thought so easy and intelligible. If you refuse to spend your time on a conscientious selection, after personal examination of each and all, in sum and in detail, it seems to me you will still want your soothingly to choose the best for you. It would be a fine short cut, with no meanderings or wastings of time, if you sent for him, listened to the summaries, and killed a victim at the end of each; by indicating in its liver which is the philosophy for you, the God would save you a pack of troubles.

Or, if you like, I can suggest a still simpler way; you need not sited all this blood in sacrifice to any God, nor employ an expensive priest; put into an urn a set of tablets, each marked with a philosopher's name, and tell a boy (the must be quite young, and his parents both be living) to go to the urn and pick out whichever tablet his hand first touches; and live a philosopher ever after, of the school which then comes out triumphant.

*Hermotimus.* This is buffoonery, Lycinus; I should not have expected it of you. Now tell me, did you ever buy wine? in person, I mean.

*Lycinus.* Many a time.

*Hermotimus.* Well, did you go to every wine vault in town, one after another, tasting and comparing?

*Lycinus.* Certainly not.

*Hermotimus.* No; as soon as you find good sound stuff, you have only to get it sent home.

*Lycinus.* To be sure.

*Hermotimus.* And from that little taste you could have answered for the quality of the whole?

*Lycinus.* Yes.

*Hermotimus.* Now suppose you had gone to all the wine-merchants and said: I want to buy a pint of wine; I must ask you, gentlemen, to let me drink the whole of the cask which each of you has on tap; after that exhaustive sampling, I shall know which of you keeps the best wine, and is the man for my money. If you had talked like that, they might have laughed at you, and, if you persisted in worrying them, have tried how you liked water.

*Lycinus.* Yes; it would be no more than my deserts.

*Hermotimus.* Apply this to philosophy. What need to drink the whole cask, when you can judge the quality of the whole from one little taste?

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*Lycinus*: What an adept at evasion you are, Hermetimus! How you slip through one's fingers! However, it is all the better this time; you fancied yourself out, but you have flopped into the net again.

*Hermetimus*: What do you mean?

*Lycinus*: You take a thing whose nature is self-evident and universally admitted, like wine, and argue from it to perfectly unlike things, whose nature is obscure and generally debated. In fact I cannot tell what analogy you find between philosophy and wine; there is just one, indeed: philosophers and wine-merchants both sell their wares, mostly resorting to adulteration, fraud, and false measures, in the process. But let us look into your real meaning. You say all the wine in a cask is of the same quality—which is perfectly reasonable; further, that any one who draws and tastes quite a small quantity will know at once the quality of the whole—of which the same may be said; I should never have thought of objecting. But mark what comes now: do philosophy and its professors (your own, for instance) give you every day the same remarks on the same subjects, or do they vary them? They vary them a great deal, friend; you would never have stuck to your master through your twenty years' wandering—quite a philosophic *Odyssey*—if he had always said the same thing; one hearing would have been enough.

*Hermetimus*: So it would.

*Lycinus*: How could you have known the whole of his doctrines from the first taste, then? They were not homogeneous, like the wine; novelty to-day, and novelty to-morrow on the top of it. Consequently, dear friend, short of drinking the whole cask, you might soak to no purpose; Providence seems to me to have hidden the philosophic Good right at the bottom, underneath the lees. So you will have to drain it dry, or you will never get to that nectar for which I know you have so long thirsted. According to your idea, it has such virtue that, could you once taste it and swallow the very least drop, you would straightaway have perfect wisdom; so they say the Delphian prophethess is inspired by one draught of the sacred spring with answers for those who consult the oracle. But it seems not to be so; you have drunk more than half the cask; yet you told me you were only beginning yet.

Now see whether this is not a better analogy. You shall keep your merchant, and your cask; but the contents of the latter are not to be wine, but assorted seeds. On the top is wheat, next beans, then barley, below that lentils, then peas—and other kinds yet. You go to buy seeds, and he takes some wheat out of that layer, and puts it in your hand as a sample; now, could you tell by looking at that whether the peas were Sound, the lentils tender, and the beans full?

*Hermetimus*: Impossible.

*Lycinus*: No more can you tell the quality of a philosophy from the first statements of its professor; it is not uniform, like the wine to which you compared it, claiming that it must resemble the sample glass; it is heterogeneous, and it had better not be cursorily tested. If you buy bad wine, the loss is limited to a few pence; but to rot with the common herd (in your own words) is not so light a loss. Moreover, your man who wants to drink up the cask as a preliminary to buying a pint will injure the merchant, with his dubious sampling; but philosophy knows no such danger; you may drink your fill, but this cask grows no emptier, and its owner suffers no loss. It is cut and come again here; we have the converse of the Danaids' cask; that would not hold what was put into it; it ran straight through; but here, the more you take away, the more remains.

And I have another similar remark to make about these specimen drops of philosophy. Do not fancy I am libelling it, if I say it is like hemlock, aconite, or other deadly poison. Those too, though they have death in them, will not kill if a man scrapes off the tiniest particle with the edge of his nail and tastes it; if they are not taken in the right quantity, the right manner, and the right vehicle, the taker will not die; you were wrong in claiming that the least possible quantity is enough to base a generalization on.

*Hermetimus*: Oh, have it your own way, *Lycinus*. Well then, we have got to live a hundred years, and go through all this trouble? There is no other road to philosophy?

*Lycinus*: No, none; and we need not complain; as you very truly said, *ars longa, vita brevis*. But I do not know what has come over you; you now make a grievance of it, if you cannot before set of sun develop into a Chrysisippus, a Plato, a Pythagoras.

*Hermetimus*: You trap me, and drive me into a corner, *Lycinus*; yet I never provoked you; it is all envy, I know, because I have made some progress in my studies, whereas you have neglected yourself, when you were old enough to know better.

*Lycinus*: Seest, then, thy true course? never mind me, but leave me as a lumatic to my follies, and you go on your way and accomplish what you have intended all this time.

*Hermetimus*: But you are so masterful, you will not let me make a choice, till I have proved all.

*Lycinus*: Why, I confess, you will never get me to budge from that. But when you call me masterful, it seems to me you blame the blameless, as the poet says; for I am myself being dragged along by reason, until you bring up some other reason to release me from durance. And here is reason about to talk more masterfully still, you will see; but I suppose you will exonerate it, and blame me.

*Hermetimus*: What can it be? I am surprised to hear it still has anything in reserve.

*Lycinus*: It says that seeing and going through all philosophies will not suffice, if you want to choose the best of them; the most important qualification is still missing.

*Hermetimus*: Indeed? Which?

*Lycinus*: Why (bear with me), a critical investigating faculty, mental acumen, intellectual precision and independence equal to the occasion; without this, the completest inspection will be useless. Reason insists that the owner of it must further be allowed ample time; he will collect the rival candidates together, and make his choice with long, lingering, repeated deliberation; he will give no heed to the candidate's age, appearance, or repute for wisdom, but perform his functions like the Areopagites, who judge in the darkness of night, so that they must regard not the pleaders, but the pleadings. Then and not till then will you be able to make a sound choice and live a philosopher.

*Hermetimus*: Live? An after life, then. No mortal span will meet your demands; let me see: go the whole round, examine each with care, on that examination form a judgement, on that judgement make a choice, on that choice be a philosopher; so and no otherwise you say the truth may be found.

*Lycinus*: I hardly dare tell you—even that is not exhaustive; I am afraid, after all, the solid basis we thought we had found was imaginary. You know how fishermen often let down their nets, feel a weight, and pull them up expecting a great haul; when they have got them up with much toil, behold, a stone, or an old pot full of sand. I fear our catch is one of those.

*Hermetimus*: I don't know what this particular net may be; your nets are all round me, anyhow.

*Lycinus*: Well, try and get through; providentially, you are as good a swimmer as can be. Now, this is it: granted that we go all round experimenting, and get it done at last, too, I do not believe we shall have solved the elementary question, whether *any* of them has the much-desired; perhaps they are all wrong together.

*Hermetimus*: Oh, come now! not one of *them* right either?

*Lycinus*: I cannot tell. Do you think it impossible they may all be deluded, and the truth be something which none of them has yet found?

*Hermetimus*: How can it possibly be?

*Lycinus*: This way: take a correct number, twenty; suppose, I mean, a man has twenty beans in his closed hand, and asks ten different persons to guess the number; they guess seven, five, thirty, ten, fifteen--various numbers, in short. It is possible, I suppose, that one may be right?

*Hermetimus*: Yes.

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*Lycinus*: It is not impossible, however, that they may all guess different incorrect numbers, and not one of them suggest twenty beans. What say you?

*Hermetimus*: It is not impossible.

*Lycinus*: In the same way, all philosophers are investigating the nature of Happiness; they get different answers one please, another Goodness, and so through the list. It is probable that Happiness is one of these; but it is also not improbable that it is something else altogether. We seem to have reversed the proper procedure, and hurried on to the end before we had found the beginning I suppose we ought first to have ascertained that the truth has actually been discovered, and that some philosopher or other has it, and only then to have gone on to the next question, *which* of them is to be believed.

*Hermetimus*: So that, even if we go all through all philosophy, we shall have no certainty of finding the truth even then; that is what you say.

*Lycinus*: Please, please do not ask *me*; once more, apply to reason itself. Its answer will perhaps be that there can be no certainty yet—as long as we cannot be sure that it is one or other of the things they say it is.

*Hermetimus*: Then, according to you, we shall never finish our quest nor be philosophers, but have to give it up and live the life of laymen. What you say amounts to that: philosophy is impossible and inaccessible to a mere mortal; for you expect the aspirant first to choose the best philosophy; and you considered that the only guarantee of such choice's being correct was to go through all philosophy before choosing the truest. Then in reckoning the number of years required by each you spurned all limits, extended the thing to several generations, and made out the quest of truth too long for the individual life; and now you crown all by proving success doubtful even apart from all that; you say it is uncertain whether the philosophers have ever found truth at all.

*Lycinus*: Could you state on oath that they have?

*Hermetimus*: Not on oath, no.

*Lycinus*: And yet there is much that I have intentionally spared you, though it merits careful examination too.

*Hermetimus*: For instance?

*Lycinus*: Is it not said that, among the professed Stoics, Platonists, and Epicureans, some do know their respective doctrines, and some do not (without prejudice to their general respectability)?

*Hermetimus*: That is true.

*Lycinus*: Well, don't you think it will be a troublesome business to distinguish the first, and know them from the ignorant professors?

*Hermetimus*: Very.

*Lycinus*: So, if you are to recognize the best of the Stoics, you will have to go to most, if not all, of them, make trial, and appoint the best your teacher, first going through a course of training to provide you with the appropriate critical faculty; otherwise you might mistakenly prefer the wrong one. Now reflect on the additional time this will mean; I purposely left it out of account, because I was afraid you might be angry; all the same, it is the most important and necessary thing of all in questions like this—so uncertain and dubious, I mean. For the discovery of truth, your one and only sure or well-founded hope is the possession of this power: you *must* be able to judge and sift truth from falsehood; you *must* have the assayer's sense for sound and true or forged coin; if you could have come to your examination of doctrines equipped with a technical skill like that, I should have nothing to say; but without it there is nothing to prevent their severally leading you by the nose; you will follow a dangled bunch of carrots like a donkey; or, better still, you will be water split on a table, trained whichever way one chooses with a finger-tip; or again, a reed growing on a river's bank, bending to every breath, however gentle the breeze that shakes it in its passage.

If you could find a teacher, now, who understood demonstration and controversial method, and would impart his knowledge to you, you would be quit of your troubles; the best and the true would straightway be revealed to you, at the bidding of this art of demonstration, while falsehood would stand convicted; you would make your choice with confidence; judgement would be followed by philosophy; you would reach your long-desired Happiness, and live in its company, which sums up all good things.

*Hermetimus*: Thank you, *Lycinus*; that is a much better hearing; there is more than a glimpse of hope in that. We must surely look for a man of that sort, to give us discernment, judgement, and, above all, the power of demonstration; then all will be easy and clear, and not too long. I am grateful to you already for thinking of this short and excellent plan.

*Lycinus*: Ah, no, I cannot fairly claim gratitude yet. I have not discovered or revealed anything that will bring you nearer your hope; on the contrary, we are further off than ever; it is a case of much cry and little wool.

*Hermetimus*: Bird of ill omen, pessimist, explain yourself.

*Lycinus*: Why, my friend, even if we find some one who claims to know this art of demonstration, and is willing to impart it, we shall surely not take his word for it straight off; we shall look about for another man to resolve us whether the first is telling the truth. Finding number two, we shall still be uncertain whether our guarantor really knows the difference between a good judge and a bad, and shall need a number three to guarantee number two; for how can we possibly know ourselves how to select the best judge? You see how far this must go: the thing is unending; its nature does not allow us to draw the line and put a stop to it; for you will observe that all the demonstrations that can possibly be thought of are themselves unfounded and open to dispute; most of them struggle to establish their certainty by appealing to facts as questionable as themselves; and the rest produce certain truisms with which they compare, quite illegitimately, the most speculative theories, and then say they have demonstrated the latter: our eyes tell us there are altars to the Gods; therefore there must be Gods; that is the sort of thing.

*Hermetimus*: How unkindly you treat me, *Lycinus*, turning my treasure into ashes; I suppose all these years are to have been lost labour.

*Lycinus*: At least your chagrin will be considerably lessened by the thought that you are not alone in your disappointment; practically all who pursue philosophy do no more than disquiet themselves in vain. Who could conceivably go through all the stages I have rehearsed? you admit the impossibility yourself. As to your present mood, it is that of the man who cries and curses his luck because he cannot climb the sky, or plunge into the depths of the sea at Sicily and come up at Cypris, or soar on wings and fly within the day from Greece to India; what is responsible for his discontent is his basing of hopes on a dream-vision or his own wild fancy, without ever asking whether his aspirations were reasonable or consistent with humanity. You too, my friend, have been having a long and marvellous dream; and now reason has stuck a pin into you and started you out of your sleep; your eyes are only half open yet, you are reluctant to shake off a sleep which has shown you such fair visions, and so you sulk. It is just the condition of the day-dreamer; he is rolling in gold, digging up treasure, sitting on his throne, or somehow at the summit of bliss; for dame *How-I-wish* is a lavish facile Goddess, that will never turn a deaf ear to her votary, though he have a mind to fly, or change statures with Colossus, or strike a gold-reef; well, in the middle of all this, in comes his servant with some every-day question, wanting to know where he is to get bread, or what he shall say to the landlord, tired of waiting for his rent; and then he flies into a temper, as though the intrusive questioner had robbed him of all his bliss, and is ready to bite the poor fellow's nose off.

As you love me, do not treat me like that. I see you digging up treasure, spreading your wings, nursing extravagant ideas, indulging impossible hopes; and I love you too well to leave you to the company of a life-long dream—a pleasant one, if you will, but yet a dream; I beseech you to get up and take to some every-day business, such as may direct the rest of your life's course by common sense. Your acts and your thoughts up to now have been no more than Centaurs, Chimeras, Gorgons, or what else is figured by dreams and poets and painters, chartered liberties all, who reek not of what has been or may be. Yet the common folk believe them, bewitched by tale and picture just because they are strange and monstrous.

I fancy you hearing from some teller of tales how there is a certain lady of perfect beauty, beyond the Graces

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themselves or the Heavenly Aphrodite, and then, without ever an inquiry whether his tale is true, and such a person to be found on earth, falling straight in love with her, like Medea in the story enamoured of a dream-Jason. And what most drew you on to love, you and the others who worship the same phantom, was, if I am not mistaken, the consistent way in which the inventor of the lady added to his picture, when once he had got your ear. That was the only thing you all looked to, with that he turned you about as he would, having got his first hold upon you, averring that he was leading you the straight way to your beloved. After the first step, you see, all was easy; none of you ever looked round when he came to the entrance, and inquired whether it was the right one, or whether he had accidentally taken the wrong; no, you all followed in your predecessors' footsteps, like sheep after the bell-wether, whereas the right thing was to decide at the entrance whether you should go in.

Perhaps an illustration will make my meaning clearer; when one of those audacious poets affirms that there was once a three-headed and six-handed man, if you accept that quietly without questioning its possibility, he will proceed to fill in the picture consistently--six eyes and ears, three voices talking at once, three mouths eating, and thirty fingers instead of our poor ten all told; if he has to fight, three of his hands will have a buckler, wicker large, or shield apiece, while of the other three one swings an axe, another hurls a spear, and the third wields a sword. It is too late to carp at these details, when they come; they are consistent with the beginning; it was about that that the question ought to have been raised whether it was to be accepted and passed as true. Once grant that, and the rest comes flooding in, irresistible, hardly now susceptible of doubt, because it is consistent and accordant with your initial admissions. That is just your case; your love-yearning would not allow you to look into the facts at each entrance, and so you are dragged on by consistency; it never occurs to you that a thing may be self-consistent and yet false; if a man says twice five is seven, and you take his word for it without checking the sum, he will naturally deduce that four times five is fourteen, and so on *ad libitum*. This is the way that weird geometry proceeds: it sets before beginners certain strange assumptions, and insists on their granting the existence of inconceivable things, such as points having no parts, lines without breadth, and so on, builds on these rotten foundations a superstructure equally rotten, and pretends to go on to a demonstration which is true, though it starts from premisses which are false.

Just so you, when you have granted the principles of any school, believe in the deductions from them, and take their consistency, false as it is, for a guarantee of truth. Then with some of you, hope travels through, and you die before you have seen the truth and detected your deceivers, while the rest, disillusioned too late, will not turn back for shame: what, confess at their years that they have been abused with toys all this time? so they hold on desperately, putting the best face upon it and making all the converts they can, to have the consolation of good company in their deception; they are well aware that to speak out is to sacrifice the respect and superiority and honour they are accustomed to; so they will not do it if it may be helped, knowing the height from which they will fall to the common level. Just a few are found with the courage to say they were deluded, and warn other aspirants. Meeting such a one, call him a good man, a true and an honest; nay, call him philosopher, if you will; to my mind, the name is his or no one's; the rest either have no knowledge of the truth, though they think they have, or else have knowledge and hide it, shamefaced cowards clinging to reputation.

But now for goodness' sake let us drop all this, cover it up with an amnesty, and let it be as if it had not been said; let us, assume that the Stoic philosophy, and no other, is correct; then we can examine whether it is practicable and possible, or its disciples wasting their pains; it makes wonderful promises, I am told, about the Happiness in store for those who reach the summit; for none but they shall enter into full possession of the true Good. The next point you must help me with--whether you have ever met such a Stoic, such a pattern of Stoicism, as to be unconscious of pain, untempted by pleasure, free from wrath, superior to envy, contemptuous of wealth, and, in one word, Happy, such should the example and model of the Virtuous life be; for any one who falls short in the slightest degree, even though he is better than other men at all points, is not complete, and in that case not yet Happy.

*Hermetimus.* I never saw such a man.

*Lycinus.* I am glad you do not palter with the truth. But what are your hopes in pursuing philosophy, then? You see that neither your own teacher, nor his, nor his again, and so on to the tenth generation, has been absolutely wise and so attained Happiness. It will not serve you to say that it is enough to get near Happiness; that is no good; a person on the doorstep is just as much outside and in the air as another a long way off, though with the difference that the former is tantalized by a nearer view. So it is to get into the neighbourhood of Happiness--I will grant you so much--that you toil like this, wearing yourself away, letting this great portion of your life slip from you, while you are sunk in dullness and wakeful weariness; and you are to go on with it for twenty more years at the least, you tell me, to take your place

when you are eighty--always assuming some one to assure you that length of days--in the ranks of the not yet Happy. Or perhaps you reckon on being the exception; you are to crown your pursuit by attaining what many a good man before you, swifter far, has pursued and never overtaken.

Well, overtake it, if that is your plan, grasp it and have it whole, this something, mysterious to me, of which the possession is sufficient reward for such toils; this something which I wonder how long you will have the enjoyment of, old man that you will be, past all pleasure, with one foot in the grave; ah, but perhaps, like a brave soul, you are getting ready for another life, that you may spend it the better when you come to it, having learned how to live: as though one should take so long preparing and elaborating a superlative dinner that he fainted with hunger and exhaustion!

However, there is another thing I do not think you have observed: Virtue is manifested, of course, in action, in doing what is just and wise and manly; but you--and when I say you, I mean the most advanced philosophers--you do not seek these things and ensue them, but spend the greater part of your life coming over miserable sentences and demonstrations and problems; it is the man who does best at these that you hail a glorious victor. And I believe that is why you admire this experienced old professor of yours: he nonplusses his associates, knows how to put crafty questions and inveigle you into pitfalls; so you pay no attention to the fruit--which consists in action--but are extremely busy with the husks, and smother each other with the leaves in your debates; come now, Hermetimus, what else are you about from morning to night?

*Hermetimus.* Nothing: that is what it comes to.

*Lycinus.* Is it wronging you to say that you hunt the shadow or the snake's dead slough, and neglect the solid body or the creeping thing itself? You are no better than a man pouring water into a mortar and braying it with an iron pestle; he thinks he is doing a necessary useful job, whereas, let him bray till all's blue (excuse the slang), the water is as much water as ever it was.

And here let me ask you whether, putting aside his discourse, you would choose to resemble your master, and be as passionate, as sordid, as quarrelsome, ay, and as addicted to pleasure (though that trait of his is not generally known). Why no answer, Hermetimus? Shall I tell you a plea for philosophy which I lately heard? It was from the mouth of an old, old man, who has quite a company of young disciples. He was angrily demanding his fees from one of these; they were long overdue, he said; the day stated in the agreement was the first of the month, and it was now the fifteenth.

The youth's uncle was there, a rustic person without any notion of your refinements; and by way of stiling the storm, "Come, come, sir," says he, "you need not make such a fuss because we have bought words of you and not yet settled the bill. As to what you have sold us, you have got it still; your stock of learning is none the less; and in what I really sent the boy to you for, you have not improved him a bit; he has carried off and seduced neighbour Echebrates' daughter, and there would have been an action for assault, only Echebrates is a poor man; but the prank cost me a couple of hundred. And the other day he struck his mother; she had tried to stop him when he was smuggling wine out of the house, for one of his club-dimmers, I suppose. As to temper and conceit and impudence and brass and lying, he was not half so bad twelve months ago as he is now. That is where I should have liked him to profit by your teaching; and we could have done, without his knowing the stuff he reels of at table every day: 'a crocodile seized hold of a baby,' says he, 'and promised to give it back if its father could answer--the Lord knows what; or how, 'day being, night cannot be'; and sometimes his worship twists round what we say somehow or other, till there we are with horns on our heads! We just laugh at it--most of all when he stuffs up his ears and repeats to himself what he calls temperaments and conditions and conceptions and impressions, and a lot more like that. And he tells us God is not in heaven, but goes about in everything, wood and stone and animals--the meanest of them, too, and if his mother asks him why he talks such stuff, he laughs at her and says if once he gets the 'stuff' pat off, there will be nothing to prevent him from being the only rich man, the only king, and counting every one else slaves and offscourings."

When he had finished, mark the reverend philosopher's answer. "You should consider", he said, "that if he had never come to me, he would have behaved far worse--very possibly he keeps to the gallows. As it is, philosophy and the respect he has for it have been a check upon him, so that you find he comes within bounds and is not quite unbearable; the philosophic system and name tutor him with their presence, and the thought of disgracing them shames him. I should be quite justified in taking your money, if not for any positive improvement I have effected, yet for the abstentions due to his respect for philosophy; the very nurses will tell you as much: children should go to school,

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because, even if they are not old enough to learn, they will at least be out of mischief there. My conscience is quite easy about him; if you like to select any of your friends who is acquainted with Stoicism and bring him here to-morrow, you shall see how the boy can question and answer, how much he has learnt, how many books he has read on axioms, syllogisms, conceptions, duty, and all sorts of subjects. As for his hitting his mother or seducing girls, what have I to do with that? am I his keeper?"

A dignified defence of philosophy for an old man! Perhaps you will say too that it is a good enough reason for pursuing it, if it will keep us from worse employments. Were our original expectations from philosophy at all of a different nature, by the way? did they contemplate anything beyond a more decent behaviour than the average? Why this obstinate silence?

*Hermotimus.* Oh, why but that I could cry like a baby? It cuts me to the heart, it is all so true; it is too much for me, when I think of my wretched, wasted years--paying all that money for my own labour, too! I am sober again after a debauch, I see what the object of my maudlin affection is like, and what it has brought upon me.

*Lycinus.* No need for tears, dear fellow; that is a very sensible fable of Aesop's. A man sat on the shore and counted the waves breaking; missing count, he was excessively annoyed. But the fox came up and said to him: 'Why vex yourself, good sir, over the past ones? you should let them go, and begin counting afresh.' So you, since this is your mind, had better reconcile yourself now to living like an ordinary man; you will give up your extravagant haughty hopes and put yourself on a level with the commonalty; if you are sensible, you will not be ashamed to muleam in your old age, and change your course for a better.

Now I beg you not to fancy that I have said all this as an anti-Stoic, moved by any special dislike of your school; my arguments hold against all schools. I should have said just the same if you had chosen Plato or Aristotle, and condemned the others unheard. But, as Stoicism was your choice, the argument has seemed to be aimed at that, though it had no such special application.

*Hermotimus.* You are quite right. And now I will be off to metamorphose myself. When we next meet, there will be no long, shaggy beard, no artificial composure; I shall be natural, as a gentleman should. I may go as far as a fashionable coat, by way of publishing my renunciation of nonsense. I only wish there were an emetic that would purge out every doctrine they have instilled into me; I assure you, if I could reverse Chrystippus's plan with the heliobore, and drink forgetfulness, not of the world but of Stoicism, I would not think twice about it. Well, Lycinus, I owe you a debt indeed; I was being swept along in a rough turbid torrent, unresisting, drifting with the stream; when lo, you stood there and fished me out, a true *deus ex machina*. I have good enough reason, I think, to shave my head like the people who get clear off from a wreck; for I am to make votive offerings to-day for the dispersion of that thick cloud which was over my eyes. Henceforth, if I meet a philosopher on my walks (and it will not be with my will), I shall turn aside and avoid him as I would a mad dog.

## ICAROMENIPPUS, AN AERIAL EXPEDITION

### *Menippus and a Friend*

*Menippus.* Let me see, now. First stage, Earth to Moon, 350 miles. Second stage, up to the Sun, 500 leagues. Then the third, to the actual Heaven and Zeus's citadel, might be put at a day's journey for an eagle in light marching order.

*Friend.* In the name of goodness, Menippus, what are these astronomical sums you are doing under your breath? I have been dogging you for some time, listening to your suns and moons, queerly mixed up with common earthly stages and leagues.

*Menippus.* Ah, you must not be surprised if my talk is rather exalted and ethereal; I was making out the mileage of my journey.

*Friend.* Oh, I see, using stars to steer by, like the Phoenicians?

*Menippus.* Oh no, travelling among them.

*Friend.* Well, to be sure, it must have been a longish dream, if you lost yourself in it for whole leagues.

*Menippus.* Dream, my good man? I am just come straight from Zeus. Dream, indeed!

*Friend.* How? What? Our Menippus a literal godsend from Heaven?

*Menippus.* 'Tis even so; from very Zeus I come this day, eyes and ears yet full of wonders. Oh, doubt, if you will. That my fortune should pass belief makes it only the more gratifying.

*Friend.* Nay, my worshipful Olympian, how should I, a man begotten, treading this poor earth, doubt him who transcends the clouds, a 'denizen of Heaven,' as Homer says? But vouchsafe to tell me how you were uplifted, and where you got your mighty tail ladder. There is hardly enough of Ganymede in your looks to suggest that you were carried off by the eagle for a cupbearer.

*Menippus.* I see you are bent on making a jest of it. Well, it is extraordinary; you could not be expected to see that it is not a romance. The fact is, I needed neither ladder nor amorous eagle; I had wings of my own.

*Friend.* Stranger and stranger! this beats Daedalus. What, you turned into a hawk or a crow on the sly?

*Menippus.* Now that is not a bad shot; it was Daedalus's wing trick that I tried.

*Friend.* Well, talk of foolhardiness! did you like the idea of falling into the sea, and giving us a \_Mare Menippeum\_ after the precedent of the \_Icarium\_?

*Menippus.* No fear. Icarus's feathers were fastened with wax, and of course, directly the sun warmed this, he moulted and fell. No wax for me, thank you.

*Friend.* How did you manage, then? I declare I shall be believing you soon, if you go on like this.

*Menippus.* Well, I caught a fine eagle, and also a particularly powerful vulture, and cut off their wings above the shoulder--joint.... But no, if you are not in a hurry, I may as well give you the enterprise from the beginning.

*Friend.* Do, do; I am rapt aloft by your words already, my mouth open for your \_bonne bouche\_ ; as you love me, leave me not in those upper regions bung up by the ears!

*Menippus.* Listen, then; it would be a sorry sight, a friend deserted, with his mouth open, and \_sus\_ per aures.--Well, a very short survey of life had convinced me of the absurdity and meanness and insecurity that pervade all human objects, such as wealth, office, power. I was filled with contempt for them, realized that to care for them was to lose all chance of what deserved care, and determined to grovel no more, but fix my gaze upon the great All. Here I found my first problem in what wise men call the universal order; I could not tell how it came into being, who made it, what was its beginning, or what its end. But my next step, which was the examination of details, landed me in yet worse perplexity. I found the stars dotted quite casually about the sky, and I wanted to know what the sun was. Especially the phenomena of the moon struck me as extraordinary, and quite passed my comprehension; there must be some mystery to account for those many phases, I conjectured. Nor could I feel any greater certainty about such things as the passage of lightning, the roll of thunder, the descent of rain and snow and hail.

In this state of mind, the best I could think of was to get at the truth of it all from the people called philosophers; they of course would be able to give it me. So I selected the best of them, if solemnity of visage, pallor of complexion and length of beard are any criterion--for there could not be a moment's doubt of their soaring words and heaven-high thoughts--and in their hands I placed myself. For a considerable sum down, and more to be paid when they should have perfected me in wisdom, I was to be made an airy metaphysician and instructed in the order of the universe.

Unfortunately, so far from dispelling my previous ignorance, they perplexed me more and more, with their daily drenches of beginnings and ends, atoms and voids, matters and forms. My greatest difficulty was that, though they differed among themselves, and all they said was full of inconsistency and contradiction, they expected me to believe them, each pulling me in his own direction.

*Friend.* How absurd that wise men should quarrel about facts, and hold different opinions on the same things!

*Menippus.* Ah, but keep your laughter till you have heard something of their pretentious mystifications. To begin with, their feet are on the ground; they are no taller than the rest of us 'men that walk the earth'; they are no sharper-sighted than their neighbours, some of them purblind, indeed, with age or indolence; and yet they say they can distinguish the limits of the sky, they measure the sun's circumference, take their walks in the supra-lunar regions, and specify the sizes and shapes of the stars as though they had fallen from them; often one of them could not tell you correctly the number of miles from Megara to Athens, but has no hesitation about the distance in feet from the sun to the moon. How high the atmosphere is, how deep the sea, how far it is round the earth-- they have the figures for all that; and moreover, they have only to draw some circles, arrange a few triangles and squares, add certain complicated spheres, and lo, they have the cubic contents of Heaven.

Then, how reasonable and modest of them, dealing with subjects so debatable, to issue their views without a hint of uncertainty; thus it must be and it shall be; \_contra gentes\_ they will have it so; they will tell you on oath the sun is a molten mass, the moon inhabited, and the stars water-drinkers, moisture being drawn up by the sun's rope and bucket and equitably distributed among them.

How their theories conflict is soon apparent; next-door neighbours? no, they are miles apart. In the first place, their views of the world differ. Some say it had no beginning, and cannot end; others boldly talk of its creator and his procedure; what particularly entertained me was that these latter set up a contriver of the universe, but fail to mention where he came from, or what he stood on while about his elaborate task, though it is by no means obvious how there could be place or time before the universe came into being.

*Friend.* You really do make them out very audacious conjurers.

*Menippus.* My dear fellow, I wish I could give you their lucubrations on ideas and incorporeals, on finite and infinite. Over that point, now, there is fierce battle, and cannot end; others will have it unlimited. At the same time they declare for a plurality of worlds, and speak scornfully of others who make only one. And there is a bellicose person who maintains that war is the father of the universe. [Footnote: Various attributed to Heraclitus, who denies the possibility of repose, and insists that all things are in a state of flux; and to Empedocles, who makes all change and becoming depend on the interaction of the two principles, attraction and repulsion.]

As to Gods, I need hardly deal with that question. For some of them God is a number; some swear by dogs and geese and plane-trees. [Footnote: Socrates made a practice of substituting these for the names of Gods in his oaths.] Some again banish all other Gods, and attribute the control of the universe to a single one; I got rather depressed on learning how small the supply of divinity was. But I was comforted by the lavish souls who not only make many, but classify; there was a First God, and second and third classes of divinity. Yet again, some regard the divine nature as unsubstantial and without form, while others conceive it as a substance. Then they were not all disposed to recognize a Providence; some relieve the Gods of all care, as we relieve the superannuated of their civic duties; in fact, they treat them exactly like supernumeraries on the stage. The last step is also taken, of saying that Gods do not exist at all, and leaving the world to drift along without a master or a guiding hand.

Well, when I heard all this, I dared not disbelieve people whose voices and beards were equally suggestive of Zeus. But I knew not where to turn for a theory that was not open to exception, nor combated by one as soon as propounded by another. I found myself in the state Homer has described; many a time I would vigorously start believing one of these gentlemen;

But then came second thoughts.

So in my distress I began to despair of ever getting any knowledge about these things on earth; the only possible escape from perplexity would be to take to myself wings and go up to Heaven. Partly the wish was father to the

thought; but it was confirmed by Aesop's Fables, from which it appears that Heaven is accessible to eagles, beetles, and sometimes camels. It was pretty clear that I could not possibly develop feathers of my own. But if I were to wear vulture's or eagle's wings--the only kinds equal to a man's weight--I might perhaps succeed. I caught the birds, and effectually amputated the eagle's right, and the vulture's left wing. These I fastened together, attached them to my shoulders with broad thick straps, and provided grips for my hands near the end of the quill-feathers. Then I made experiments, first jumping up and helping the jump by flapping my hands, or imitating the way a goose raises itself without leaving the ground and combines running with flight. Finding the machine obedient, I next made a bolder venture, went up the Acropolis, and launched myself from the cliff right over the theatre.

Getting safely to the bottom that time, my aspirations shot up aloft. I took to starting from Parnes or Hymettus, flying to Geranea, thence to the top of the Acrocorinthus, and over Pholoe and Erymanthus to Taygeus. The training for my venture was now complete; my powers were developed, and equal to a lofty flight; no more fledgeing essays for me. I went up Olympus, provisioning myself as lightly as possible. The moment was come; I soared skywards, giddy at first with that great void below, but soon conquering this difficulty. When I approached the Moon, long after parting from the clouds, I was conscious of fatigue, especially in the left or vulture's wing. So I alighted and sat down to rest, having a bird's-eye view of the Earth, like the Homeric Zeus.

Surveying now the Thracian horsemen's land, Now Mysia,

and again, as the fancy took me, Greece or Persia or India. From all which I drew a manifold delight.

*Friend.* Oh well, Menippus, tell me all about it. I do not want to miss a single one of your travel experiences; if you picked up any stray information, let me have that too. I promise myself a great many facts about the shape of the Earth, and how everything on it looked to you from your point of vantage.

*Menippus.* And you will not be disappointed there, friend. So do your best to get up to the Moon, with my story for travelling companion and showman of the terrestrial scene.

Imagine yourself first descrying a tiny Earth, far smaller than the Moon looks; on turning my eyes down, I could not think for some time what had become of our mighty mountains and vast sea. If I had not caught sight of the Colossus of Rhodes and the Pharos tower, I assure you I should never have made out the Earth at all. But their height and projection, with the faint shimmer of Ocean in the sun, showed me it must be the Earth I was looking at. Then, when once I had got my sight properly focused, the whole human race was clear to me, not merely in the shape of nations and cities, but the individuals, sailing, fighting, ploughing, going to law; the women, the beasts, and in short every breed 'that feedeth on earth's foison.'

*Friend.* Most unconvincing and contradictory. Just now you were searching for the Earth, it was so diminished by distance, and if the Colossus had not betrayed it, you would have taken it for something else; and now you develop suddenly into a Lynceus, and distinguish everything upon it, the men, the beasts, one might almost say the great swarms. Explain, please.

*Menippus.* Why, to be sure! how did I come to leave out so essential a particular? I had made out the Earth, you see, but could not distinguish any details; the distance was so great, quite beyond the scope of my vision; so I was much chagrined and baffled. At this moment of depression--I was very near tears--who should come up behind me but Empedocles the physicist? His complexion was like charcoal variegated with ashes, as if he had been baked. I will not deny that I felt some tremors at the sight of him, taking him for some lunar spirit. But he said: 'Do not be afraid, Menippus;

A mortal I, no God; how vain thy dreams.

I am Empedocles the physicist. When I threw myself into the crater in such a hurry, the smoke of Etna whirled me off up here; and now I live in the Moon, doing a good deal of high thinking on a diet of dew. So I have come to help you out of your difficulty; you are distressed, I take it, at not being able to see everything on the Earth.' 'Thank you so much, you good Empedocles,' I said; 'as soon as my wings have brought me back to Greece, I will remember to pour libations to you up the chimney, and salute you on the first of every month with three moonward yawns.' 'Endymion be my witness,' he replied, 'I had no thought of such a bargain; I was touched by the sight of your distress. Now, what

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do you think is the way to sharpen your sight?"

"I have no idea, unless you were to remove the mist from my eyes for me: the sight seems quite bleared." "Oh, you can do without me; the thing that gives sharp sight you have brought with you from Earth." "Unconsciously, then; what is it?" "Why, you know that you have on an eagle's right wing." "Of course I do; but what have wings and eyes to do with one another?" "Only this," he said; "the eagle is far the strongest-eyed of all living things, the only one that can look straight at the sun; the test of the true royal eagle is, his meeting its rays without blinking." "So I have heard; I wish I had taken out my own eyes when I was starting, and substituted the eagle's. I am an imperfect specimen now I am here, not up to the royal standard at all, but like the rejected bastards." "Well, you can very soon acquire one royal eye. If you will stand up for a minute, keep the vulture wing still, and work the other, your right eye, corresponding to that eye, will gain strength. As for the other, its dimness cannot possibly be obviated, as it belongs to the inferior member." "Oh, I shall be quite content with aquiline vision for the right eye only," I said; "I have often observed that carpenters in ruling their wood find one better than two." So saying, I proceeded to carry out my instructions at once. Empedocles began gradually to disappear, and at last vanished in smoke.

I had no sooner flapped the wing than a flood of light enveloped me, and things that before I had not even been aware of became perfectly clear. I turned my eyes down earthwards, and with ease discerned cities, men, and all that was going on, not merely in the open, but in the fancied security of houses. There was Ptolemy in his sister's arms, the son of Lysimachus plotting against his father, Seleucus's son Antiochus making signs to his step-mother Stratonice, Alexander of Phrae being murdered by his wife, Antigonus corrupting his daughter-in-law, the son of Atalua putting the poison in his cup; Arsaces was in the act of slaying his mistress, while the eunuch Artabaces drew his sword upon him; the guards were dragging Spatinus the Mede out from the banquet by the foot, with the lump on his brow from the golden cup. Similar sights were to be seen in the palaces of Libya and Scythia and Thrace-- adulteries, murders, treasons, robberies, perjuries, suspicions, and monstrous betrayals.

Such was the entertainment afforded me by royalty; private life was much more amusing; for I could make that out too. I saw Hermodorus the Epicurean perjuring himself for 40 pounds, Agathocles the Stoic suing a pupil for his fees, lawyer Clinias stealing a bowl from the temple of Asclepius, and Heroniphus the cynic sleeping in a brothel. Not to mention the multitude of burglars, litigants, usurers, duns; oh, it was a fine representative show!

*Friend.* I must say, Menippus, I should have liked the details here too; it all seems to have been very much to your taste.

*Menippus.* I could not go through the whole of it, even to please you; to take it in with the eyes kept one busy. But the main divisions were very much what Homer gives from the shield of Achilles: here jumble and marriages, there courts and councils, in another compartment a sacrifice, and hard by a mourning. If I glanced at Getica, I would see the Getae at war; at Scythia, there were the Scythians wandering about on their waggon; half a turn in another direction gave me Egyptians at the plough, or Phoenicians chaffering, Cilician pirates, Spartan flagellants, Athenians at law.

All this was simultaneous, you understand; and you must try to conceive what a queer jumble it all made. It was as if a man were to collect a number of choristers, or rather of choruses, [Footnote: The Greek chorus combined singing with dancing.] and then tell each individual to disregard the others and start a strain of his own; if each did his best, went his own way, and tried to drown his neighbour, can you imagine what the musical effect would be?

*Friend.* A very ridiculous confusion.

*Menippus.* Well, friend, such are the earthly dancers; the life of man is just such a discordant performance; not only are the voices jangled, but the steps are not uniform, the motions not concerted, the objects not agreed upon--until the impresario dismisses them one by one from the stage, with a 'not wanted.' Then they are all alike, and quiet enough, confounding no longer their undisciplined rival strains. But as long as the show lasts in its marvellous diversity, there is plenty of food for laughter in its vagaries.

The people who most amused me, however, were those who dispute about boundaries, or pride themselves on cultivating the plain of Sicyon, or holding the Oenoe side of Marathon, or a thousand acres at Acharnae. The whole of Greece, as I then saw it, might measure some four inches; how much smaller Athens on the same scale. So I realized

what sort of sized basis for their pride remains to our rich men. The widest-acred of them all, methought, was the proud cultivator of an Epicurean atom. Then I looked at the Peloponnesse, my eyes fell on the Cynurian district, and the thought occurred that it was for this little plot, no broader than an Egyptian lentil, that all those Argives and Spartans fell in a single day. Or if I saw a man puffed up by the possession of seven or eight gold rings and half as many gold cups, again my lungs would begin to crow, why, Pangaesus with all its mines was about the size of a grain of millet.

*Friend.* You lucky man! what a rare sight you had! And how big, now, did the towns and the people look from there?

*Menippus.* You must often have seen a community of ants, some of them a seething mass, some going abroad, others coming back to town. One is a scavenger, another a bustling porter loaded with a bit of bean-pod or half a wheat grain. They no doubt have, on their modest myrmec scale, their architects and politicians, their magistrates and composers and philosophers. At any rate, what men and cities suggested to me was just so many ant-hills. If you think the similitude too disparaging, look into the Thessalian legends, and you will find that the most warlike tribe there was the Myrmidons, or ants turned men. Well, when I had had enough of contemplation and laughter, I roused myself and soared

To join the Gods, where dwells the Lord of storms.

I had only flown a couple of hundred yards, when Selene's feminine voice reached me: 'Menippus, do me an errand to Zeus, and I will wish you a pleasant journey.' 'You have only to name it,' I said, 'provided it is not something to carry.' 'It is a simple message of entreaty to Zeus. I am tired to death, you must know, of being slandered by these philosophers; they have no better occupation than impertinent curiosity about me--What am I? how big am I? why am I halved? why am I gibbous? I am just a mirror hung over the sea; I am--whatever their latest fancy suggests. It is the last straw when they say my light is stolen, sham, imported from the sun, and keep on doing their best to get up jealousy and ill feeling between brother and sister. They might have been contented with making \_him\_ out a stone or a red-hot lump.'

These gentry who in the day look so stern and manly, dress so gravely, and are so revered by common men, would be surprised to learn how much I know of their vile nightly abominations. I see them all, though I never tell; it would be too indecent to make revelations, and show up the contrast between their nighty doings and their public performances; so, if I catch one of them in adultery or theft or other nocturnal adventure, I pull my cloud veil over me; I do not want the vulgar to see old men disgracing their long beards and their virtuous calling. But they go on giving tongue and worrying me all the same, and, so help me Night, I have thought many a time of going a long, long way off, out of reach of their impertinent tongues. Will you remember to tell Zeus all this? and you may add that I cannot remain at my post unless he will pulverize the physicists, muzzle the logicians, raze the Porch, burn the Academy, and put an end to strolling in the Lyceum. That might secure me a little peace from these daily mensurations.'

I will remember, said I, and resumed my upward flight to Heaven, through

A region where nor ox nor man had wrought

For the Moon was soon but a small object, with the Earth entirely hidden behind it. Three days' flight through the stars, with the Sun on my right hand, brought me close to Heaven; and my first idea was to go straight in as I was; I should easily pass unobserved in virtue of my half-eagleship; for of course the eagle was Zeus's familiar; on second thoughts, though, my vulture wing would very soon betray me. So, thinking it better not to run any risks, I went up to the door and knocked. Hermes opened, took my name, and hurried off to inform Zeus. After a brief wait I was asked to step in; I was now trembling with apprehension, and I found that the Gods, who were all seated together, were not quite easy themselves. The unexpected nature of the visit was slightly disturbing to them, and they had visions of all mankind arriving at my heels by the same conveyance.

But Zeus bent upon me a Titanic glance, awful, penetrating, and spoke:

Who art thou? where thy city? who thy kin?

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At the sound, I nearly died of fear, but remained upright, though mute and paralysed by that thunderous voice. I gradually recovered, began at the beginning, and gave a clear account of myself--how I had been possessed with curiosity about the heavens, had gone to the philosophers, found their accounts conflicting, and grown tired of being logically rent in twain; so I came to my great idea, my wings, and ultimately to Heaven: I added Selene's message. Zeus smiled and slightly nubent his brow. 'What of Onus and Ephialtes now?' he said, 'here is Menippus scaling Heaven! Well, well, for to-day consider yourself our guest. To-morrow we will treat with you of your business, and send you on your way.' And therewith he rose and walked to the acoustic centre of Heaven, it being prayer time.

As he went, he put questions to me about earthly affairs, beginning with, 'What was wheat a quarter in Greece? how we suffered much from cold last winter? and did the vegetables want more rain? Then he wished to know whether any of Phidias's kin were alive, why there had been no Diasia at Athens all these years, whether his Olympieum was ever going to be completed, and had the robbers of his temple at Dodona been caught? I answered all these questions, and he proceeded.--'Tell me, Menippus, what are men's feelings towards me?' 'What should they be, Lord, but those of absolute reverence, as to the King of all Gods?' 'Now, now, claffing as usual,' he said: 'I know their fickleness very well, for all your dissimulation. There was a time when I was their prophet, their healer, and their all,

And Zeus filled every street and gaitering-place.

In those days Dodona and Pisa were glorious and far-famed, and I could not get a view for the clouds of sacrificial steam. But now Apollo has set up his oracle at Delphi, Asclepius his temple of health at Pergamum, Bendis and Anubis and Artemis their shrines in Thrace, Egypt, Ephesus; and to these all run; their the festal gatherings and the hecatombs. As for me, I am superannuated; they think themselves very generous if they offer me a victim at Olympia at four-year intervals. My altars are cold as Plato's Laws, or Chrysisippus's Syllogisms.

So talking, we reached the spot where he was to sit and listen to the prayers. There was a row of openings with lids like well-covers, and a chair of gold by each. Zeus took his seat at the first, lifted off the lid and inclined his ear. From every quarter of Earth were coming the most various and contradictory petitions; for I too bent down my head and listened. Here are specimens. 'O Zeus, that I might be king!' 'O Zeus, that my onions and garlic might thrive!' 'Ye Gods, a speedy death for my father!' Or again, 'Would that I might succeed to my wife's property!' 'Grant that my plot against my brother be not detected.' 'Let me win my suit.' 'Give me an Olympic garland.' Of those at sea, one prayed for a north, another for a south wind; the farmer asked for rain, the fuller for sun. Zeus listened, and gave each prayer careful consideration, but without promising to grant them all;

Our Father this bestowed, and that withheld.

Righteous prayers he allowed to come up through the hole, received and laid them down at his right, while he sent the unholly ones packing with a downward puff of breath, that Heaven might not be defiled by their entrance. In one case I saw him puzzled; two men praying for opposite things and promising the same sacrifices, he could not tell which of them to favour, and experienced a truly Academic suspense of judgement, showing a reserve and equilibrium worthy of Pyrho himself.

The prayers disposed of, he went on to the next chair and openings, and attended to oaths and their takers. These done with, and Hermodorus the Epicurean annihilated, he proceeded to the next chair to deal with omens, prophetic voices, and auguries. Then came the turn of the sacrifice aperture, through which the smoke came up and communicated to Zeus the name of the devotee it represented. After that, he was free to give his wind and weather orders.--Rain for Scythia to-day, a thunderstorm for Libya, snow for Greece. The north wind he instructed to blow in Lydia, the west to raise a storm in the Adriatic, the south to take a rest; a thousand bushels of hail to be distributed over Cappadocia.

His work was now pretty well completed, and as it was just dinner time, we went to the banquet hall. Hermes received me, and gave me my place next to a group of Gods whose alien origin left them in a rather doubtful position--Pan, the Corybants, Attis, and Sabazius. I was supplied with bread by Demeter, wine by Dionysus, meat by Heracles, myrtle-blossoms by Aphrodite, and sprats by Posidon. But I also got a sly taste of ambrosia and nectar; good-natured Ganymede, as often as he saw that Zeus's attention was engaged elsewhere, brought round the nectar and indulged me with a half-pint or so. The Gods, as Homer (who I think must have had the same opportunities of observation as myself) somewhere says, neither eat bread nor drink the ruddy wine; they heap their plates with

ambrosia, and are nectar-bibbers; but their choicest dainties are the smoke of sacrifice ascending with rich fumes, and the blood of victims poured by their worshippers round the altars. During dinner, Apollo harped, Silenus danced his wild measures, the Muses uprose and sang to us from Hesiod's Birth of Gods, and the first of Pindar's odes. When we had our fill and had well drunken, we slumbered, each where he was.

Slept all the Gods, and men with plumed helmets, That livelong night; but me kind sleep forsook;

for I had much upon my mind; most of all, how came it that Apollo, in all that time, had never grown a beard? and how was night possible in Heaven, with the sun always there taking his share of the good cheer? So I had but a short nap of it. And in the morning Zeus arose, and bade summon an assembly.

When all were gathered, he thus commenced.--'The immediate occasion of my summoning you is the arrival of this stranger yesterday. But I have intended to take counsel with you regarding the philosophers, and now, urged by Selene and her complaints, I have determined to defer the consideration of the question no longer. There is a class which has recently become conspicuous among men; they are idle, quarrelsome, vain, irritable, lickerish, silly, puffed up, arrogant, and, in Homeric phrase, vain cumberers of the earth. These men have divided themselves into bands, each dwelling in a separate word-maze of its own construction, and call themselves Stoics, Epicureans, Peripatetics, and more farcical names yet. Then they take to themselves the holy name of Virtue, and with uplifted brows and flowing beards exhibit the deceitful semblance that bides immoral lives; their model is the tragic actor, from whom if you strip off the mask and the gold-spangled robe, there is nothing left but a paltry fellow hired for a few shillings to play a part.

Nevertheless, quite undeterred by their own characters, they scorn the human and travesty the divine; they gather a company of guileless youths, and feed them with solemn chatter upon Virtue and quibbling verbal puzzles; in their pupils' presence they are all for fortitude and temperance, and have no words bad enough for wealth and pleasure; when they are by themselves, there is no limit to their gluttony, their lechery, their flogging of dirty pence. But the head and front of their offending is this: they neither work themselves nor help others' work; they are useless drones,

Of no avail in council nor in war;

which notwithstanding, they censure others; they store up poisoned words, they con invectives, they leap their neighbours with reproaches; their highest honours are for him who shall be loudest and most overbearing and boldest in abuse.

'Ask one of these brawling bawling censors, And what do you do? in God's name, what shall we call your contribution to progress? and he would reply, if conscience and truth were anything to him: I consider it superfluous to sail the sea or till the earth or fight for my country or follow a trade; but I have a loud voice and a dirty body; I eschew warm water and go barefoot through the winter; I am a Momus who can always pick holes in other people's coats; if a rich man keeps a costly table or a mistress, I make it my business to be properly horrified; but if my familiar friend is lying sick, in need of help and care, I am not aware of it. Such, your Godheads, is the nature of this vermin.

There is a special insolence in those who call themselves Epicureans; these go so far as to lay their hands on our character; we take no interest in human affairs, they say, and in fact have nothing to do with the course of events. And this is a serious question for you; if once they infect their generation with this view, you will learn what hunger means. Who will sacrifice to you, if he does not expect to profit by it? As to Selene's complaints, you all heard them yesterday from this stranger's lips. And now decide upon such measures as shall advantage mankind and secure your own safety.'

Zeus had no sooner closed his speech than clamour prevailed, all crying at once: Blast! burn! annihilate! to the pit with them! to Tartarus! to the Giants! Zeus ordered silence again, and then, 'Your wishes,' he said, 'shall be executed; they shall all be annihilated, and their logic with them. But just at present chastisement is not lawful; you are aware that we are now in the four months of the long vacation; the formal notice has lately been issued. In the spring of next year, the baleful levin-bolt shall give them the fate they deserve.'

He spake, and sealed his word with lowering brows.

'As to Menippus,' he added, 'my pleasure is this. He shall be deprived of his wings, and so incapacitated for repeating his visit, but shall to-day be conveyed back to Earth by Hermes.' So saying, he dismissed the assembly. The Cylitian accordingly lifted me up by the right ear, and yesterday evening deposited me in the Ceramicus. And now, friend, you have all the latest from Heaven. I must be off to the Poecile, to let the philosophers loitering there know the luck they are in.

## Plato, *Protagoras*

[320b]And there are a great many others whom I could mention to you as having never succeeded, though virtuous themselves, in making anyone else better, either of their own or of other families. I therefore, Protagoras, in view of these facts, believe that virtue is not teachable: but when I hear you speak thus, I am swayed over, and suppose there is something in what you say, because I consider you to have gained experience in many things and to have learnt many, besides finding out some for yourself. So if you can demonstrate to us more explicitly that virtue is teachable, [320c] do not grudge us your demonstration.No, Socrates, I will not grudge it you; but shall I, as an old man speaking to his juniors, put my demonstration in the form of a fable, or of a regular exposition?Many of the company sitting by him instantly bade him treat his subject whichever way he pleased.Well then, he said, I fancy the more agreeable way is for me to tell you a fable.

There was once a time when there were gods, but no mortal creatures.[320d] And when to these also came their destined time to be created, the gods moulded their forms within the earth, of a mixture made of earth and fire and all substances that are compounded with fire and earth. When they were about to bring these creatures to light, they charged Prometheus and Epimetheus to deal to each the equipment of his proper faculty. Epimetheus besought Prometheus that he might do the dealing himself; "And when I have dealt," he said, "you shall examine." [320e] Having thus persuaded him he dealt; and in dealing he attached strength without speed; to some, while the weaker he equipped with speed; and some he armed, while devising for others, along with an unarmed condition, some different faculty for preservation. To those which he invested with smallness he dealt a winged escape or an underground habitation; those which he increased in largeness he preserved [321a] by this very means; and he dealt all the other properties on this plan of compensation. In contriving all this he was taking precaution that no kind should be extinguished; and when he had equipped them with avoidances of mutual destruction, he devised a provision against the seasons ordained by Heaven, in clothing them about with thick-set hair and solid hides, sufficient to ward off winter yet able to shield them also from the heats, and so that on going to their lairs they might find in these same things a bedding of their own that was native to each; and some he shod with hoofs,[321b] others with claws and solid, bloodless hides. Then he proceeded to furnish each of them with its proper food, some with pasture of the earth, others with fruits of trees, and others again with roots; and to a certain number for food he gave other creatures to devour: to some he attached a paucity in breeding, and to others, which were being consumed by these, a plenteous brood, and so procured survival of their kind.

Now Epimetheus, being not so wise as he might be, [321c] heedlessly squandered his stock of properties on the brutes; he still had left unequipped the race of men, and was at a loss what to do with it. As he was casting about, Prometheus arrived to examine his distribution, and saw that whereas the other creatures were fully and suitably provided, man was naked, unshod, unbedded, unarmed; and already the destined day was come, whereon man like the rest should emerge from earth to light. Then Prometheus, in his perplexity as to what preservation he could devise for man, stole from Hephaestus and Athena wisdom in the arts [321d] together with fire--since by no means without fire could it be acquired or helpfully used by any--and he handed it there and then as a gift to man. Now although man acquired in this way the wisdom of daily life, civic wisdom he had not, since this was in the possession of Zeus; Prometheus could not make so free as to enter the citadel which is the dwelling-place of Zeus, and moreover the guards of Zeus were terrible: but he entered unobserved the building shared by Athena and Hephaestus[321e] for the pursuit of their arts, and stealing Hephaestus's fiery art and all Athena's also he gave them to man, and hence it is[322a] that man gets facility for his livelihood, but Prometheus, through Epimetheus' fault, later on (the story goes) stood his trial for theft.

And now that man was partaker of a divine portion,<sup>1</sup> he, in the first place, by his nearness of kin to deity, was the only creature that worshipped gods, and set himself to establish altars and holy images; and secondly, he soon was enabled by his skill to articulate speech and words, and to invent dwellings,

clothes, sandals, beds, and the foods that are of the earth. Thus far provided, men dwelt separately in the beginning, and cities there were none; [322b] so that they were being destroyed by the wild beasts, since these were in all ways stronger than they; and although their skill in handiwork was a sufficient aid in respect of food, in their warfare with the beasts it was defective; for as yet they had no civic art, which includes the art of war. So they sought to band themselves together and secure their lives by founding cities.

Now as often as they were banded together they did wrong to one another through the lack of civic art, [322c] and thus they began to be scattered again and to perish. So Zeus, fearing that our race was in danger of utter destruction, sent Hermes to bring respect and right among men, to the end that there should be regulation of cities and friendly ties to draw them together. Then Hermes asked Zeus in what manner then was he to give men right and respect: "Am I to deal them out as the arts have been dealt? That dealing was done in such wise that one man possessing medical art is able to treat many ordinary men, and so with the other craftsmen. Am I to place among men right and respect in this way also, or deal them out to all?"[322d] "To all," replied Zeus; "let all have their share: for cities cannot be formed if only a few have a share of these as of other arts. And make thereto a law of my ordaining, that he who cannot partake of respect and right shall die the death as a public pest." Hence it comes about, Socrates, that people in cities, and especially in Athens, consider it the concern of a few to advise on cases of artistic excellence or good craftsmanship, [322e] and if anyone outside the few gives advice they disallow it, as you say, and not without reason, as I think: but when they meet for a consultation on civic art,[323a] where they should be guided throughout by justice and good sense, they naturally allow advice from everybody, since it is held that everyone should partake of this excellence, or else that states cannot be. This, Socrates, is the explanation of it.

And that you may not think you are mistaken, to show how all men verily believe that everyone partakes of justice and the rest of civic virtue, I can offer yet a further proof. In all other excellences, as you say, when a man professes to be good at flute-playing or any other art in which he has no such skill, they either laugh him to scorn or are annoyed with him, and his people come and reprove him for being so mad:[323b] but where justice or any other civic virtue is involved, and they happen to know that a certain person is unjust, if he confesses the truth about his conduct before the public, that truthfulness which in the former arts they would regard as good sense they here call madness. Everyone, they say, should profess to be just, whether he is so or not, and whoever does not make some pretension to justice is mad.

Prot.,322a,n1. i.e., of arts originally apportioned to gods alone.

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THE  
TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY

ELLA ISABEL HARRIS, PH.D. (YALE)

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200  
185



3

PA 661  
Traged

Hated, an exile, heaven's air denied,  
Though late, she will at last succumb to ills. 1070

*Electra.* Grant death.

*Ægisthus.* If thou wouldst shun it, I would grant.  
Who puts an end to punishment by death  
Is skill-less tyrant.

*Electra.* Is aught worse than death?  
*Ægisthus.* Life, if thou long'st for death. Slaves,  
seize the maid

And having carried her afar from here, 1075  
Beyond Mycenæ, to the realm's last bound,  
Chain her within a cavern fenced about  
With gloomy night, that so imprisonment  
May finally subdue the restless maid.

*Clytemnestra.* The captive mistress, the king's con-  
cubine, 1080

Shall pay the penalty of death; away!  
Drag her away, that she may follow still  
The husband torn from me.

*Cassandra.* Nay drag me not,  
I will myself precede thee, for I haste 1085  
To be the first who to my Phrygian friends  
Shall bear the news: the sea with wreckage strewn,  
Mycenæ taken, and the king who led  
A thousand leaders dead by his wife's hand,  
Cut down by lust and fraud. I would not stay.  
Oh, snatch me hence! I thank you and rejoice 1090  
That I have lived so long beyond the fall  
Of dear-loved Troy.

*Clytemnestra.* Peace, raging one.  
*Cassandra.* Like rage  
Shall fall on thee.

## THYESTES

# THYESTES.

## ACT I

### SCENE I

*Spirit of Tantalus, Megæra.*

*Spirit.* Who drags me from my place among the shades,

Where with dry lips I seek the flying waves  
What hostile god again shows Tantalus

His hated palace? Has some worse thing come  
Than thirst amid the waters or the pangs

Of ever-gnawing hunger? Must the stone,

The slippery burden borne by Sisyphus,  
Weigh down my shoulders, or Ixion's wheel

Carry my limbs around in its swift course,  
Or must I fear Tityus' punishment?

Stretched in a lofty cave he feeds dun birds

Upon his vitals which they tear away,  
And night renews whatever day destroyed,

And thus he offers them full feast again.  
Against what evil have I been reserved?

Stern judge of Hades, whose'er thou art  
Who metest to the dead due penalties,

If something can be added more than pain,  
Seek that at which the grim custodian

Of this dark prison must himself feel fear,

### DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ATREUS.

THYESTES.

SPIRIT OF THE ELDER TANTALUS.

PLISTHENES,

TANTALUS, } Sons of Thyestes.

A BOY,

MEGÆRA.

MESSENGER.

SERVANT.

CHORUS OF MEN OF MYCENÆ.

SCENE: *Before the Palace of Atreus.*

Something from which sad Acheron shall shrink,  
 Before whose horror I myself must fear ;  
 For many sprung from me, who shall outsin  
 Their house, who, daring deeds undared by me, 25  
 Make me seem innocent, already come.  
 Whatever impious deed this realm may lack  
 My house will bring ; while Pelops' line remains  
 Minos shall never be unoccupied.

*Magera.* Go, hated shade, and drive thy sin-  
 stained home

To madness ; let the sword try every crime, 30  
 And pass from hand to hand ; nor let there be  
 Limit to rage and shame ; let fury blind  
 Urge on their thoughts ; let parents' hearts be hard  
 Through madness, long iniquity be heaped 35  
 Upon the children, let them never know  
 Leisure to hate old crimes, let new ones rise,  
 Many in one ; let sin while punished grow ;  
 From the proud brothers let the throne depart,  
 Then let it call the exiled home again.

Let the dark fortunes of a violent house 40  
 Among unstable kings be brought to naught.  
 Let evil fortune on the mighty fall,  
 The wretched come to power ; let chance toss  
 The kingdom with an ever-changing tide  
 Where'er it will. Exiled because of crime, 45  
 When god would give them back their native land  
 Let them through crime reach home, and let them  
 hate

Themselves as others hate them. Let them deem  
 No crime forbidden when their passions rage ;  
 Let brother greatly fear his brother's hand, 50  
 Let parents fear their sons, and let the sons

Feel fear of parents, children wretched die,  
 More wretchedly be born ; let wife rebel  
 Against her husband, wars pass over seas,  
 And every land be wet with blood poured forth ; 55  
 Let lust, victorious, o'er great kings exult  
 And basest deeds be easy in thy house ;  
 Let right and truth and justice be no more  
 'Twixt brothers. Let not heaven be immune—

Why shine the stars within the firmament 60  
 To be a source of beauty to the world ?  
 Let night be different, day no more exist.

O'erthrow thy household gods, bring hatred, death,  
 Wild slaughter, with thy spirit fill the house,  
 Deck the high portals, let the gates be green 65  
 With laurel, fires for thy advent meet

Shall glow, crimes worse than Thracian shall be done.  
 Why idle lies the unclé's stern right hand ?

Thyestes has not yet bewept his sons ;  
 When will they be destroyed ? Lo, even now 70  
 Upon the fire the brazen pot shall boil,

The members shall be broken into parts,  
 The father's hearth with children's blood be wet,  
 The feast shall be prepared. Thou wilt not come  
 Guest at a feast whose crime is new to thee : 75

To-day we give thee freedom ; satisfy  
 Thy hunger at those tables, end thy fast.

Blood mixed with wine shall in thy sight be drunk,  
 Food have I found that even thou wouldst shun.  
 Stay ! Whither dost thou rush ?

*Spirit.*

To stagnant pools, 80  
 Rivers and waters ever slipping by,  
 To the fell trees that will not give me food.  
 Let me go hence to my dark prison-house,

Let me, if all too little seems my woe,  
 Seek other shores; within thy channels' midst 85  
 And by thy floods of fire hemmed about,  
 O Phlegethon, permit me to be left.  
 O ye who suffer by the fates' decree  
 Sharp penalties, O thou who, filled with fear,  
 Within the hallowed cave dost wait the fall 90  
 Of the impending mountain, thou who dreadst  
 The ravening lion's open jaws, the hand  
 Of cruel furies that encompass thee,  
 Thou who, half burned, dost feel their torch applied,  
 Hear ye the voice of Tantalus who knows: 95  
 Love ye your penalties! Ah, woe is me,  
 When shall I be allowed to flee to hell?

*Megara.* First into dread confusion throw thy  
 house,

Bring with thee battle and the sword and love,  
 Strike thou the king's wild heart with frantic rage. 100  
*Spiriti.* 'Tis right that I should suffer punishment,  
 But not that I myself be punished.

Like a death-dealing vapor must I go  
 Out of the riven earth, or like a plague 105  
 Most grievous to the people, or a pest  
 Widespread, I bring my children's children crime.  
 Great father of the gods, our father too—  
 However much our sonship cause thee shame—  
 Although my too loquacious tongue should pay  
 Due punishment for sin, yet will I speak: 110  
 Stain not, my kinsmen, holy hands with blood,  
 The altars with unholy sacrifice  
 Pollute not. I will stay and ward off crime.

[*To Megæra.*] Why dost thou terrify me with thy  
 torch,

And fiercely threaten with thy writhing snakes? 115  
 Why dost thou stir the hunger in my reins?  
 My heart is burning with the fire of thirst,  
 My parched veins feel the flame.

*Megara.* Through all thy house  
 Scatter this fury; thus shall they, too, rage,  
 And, mad with anger, thirst by turns to drink 120  
 Each other's blood. Thy house thy coming feels  
 And trembles at thy execrable touch.

It is enough; depart to hell's dark caves  
 And to thy well-known river. Earth is sad  
 And burdened by thy presence. Backward forced,  
 Seest thou not the waters leave the streams, 126  
 How all the banks are dry, how fiery winds  
 Drive the few scattered clouds? The foliage pales,  
 And every branch is bare, the fruits are fled.

And where the Isthmus has been wont to sound 130  
 With the near waters, roaring on each side,  
 And cutting off the narrow strip of land,  
 Far from the shore is heard the sound remote.

Now Lerna's waters have been backward drawn,  
 Sacred Alpheus' stream is seen no more, 135  
 Cithæron's summit stands untouched with snow,  
 And Argos fears again its former thirst.  
 Lo, Titan's self is doubtful—shall he drive  
 His horses upward, bring again the day?  
 It will but rise to die. 140

## SCENE II

*Chorus.*

If any god still cherish love for Greece,  
 Argos, and Pisa for her chariots famed,

If any cherishes the Isthmian realm,  
 And the twin havens, and the parted seas,  
 If any love Taygetus' bright snows 145  
 That shine afar, which northern winter lays  
 Upon its highest summits and the breath  
 Of summer trade winds welcome to the sails  
 Melts, let him whom Alpheus' ice-cold stream  
 Touches, well known for his Olympic course, 150  
 Wield the calm influence of his heavenly power,  
 Nor suffer crimes in constant series come.  
 Let not a grandson, readier for that crime  
 E'en than his father's father, follow him,  
 Nor let the father's error please the sons. 155  
 Let thirsty Tantalus' base progeny,  
 Wearied at length, give up their fierce attempts;  
 Enough of crime! No more is right of worth,  
 And common wrongs of little moment seem;  
 The traitor Myrtilus betrayed his lord 160  
 And slew him—by such faith as he had shown  
 Himself dragged down, he gave the sea a name;  
 To ships on the Ægean never tale  
 Was better known. Met by the cruel sword,  
 Even while he ran to gain his father's kiss, 165  
 The little son was slain; he early fell  
 A victim to the hearth, by thy right hand,  
 O Tantalus, cut off that thou mightst spread  
 Such feasts before the gods. Eternal thirst  
 And endless famine followed on the feast;  
 Nor can a worthier punishment be found  
 For savage feast like that. With empty maw  
 Stands weary Tantalus, above his head  
 Hangs ready food, more swift to take its flight  
 Than Phineus' birds; on every side it hangs; 175

The tree beneath the burden of its fruit  
 Bending and trembling, shuns his open mouth;  
 He though so eager, brooking no delay,  
 Yet oft deceived, neglects to touch the tree,  
 And drops his head and presses close his lips, 180  
 And shuts his hunger in behind clenched teeth.  
 The ripe fruit taunts him from the languid boughs,  
 And whets his hunger till it urges him  
 To stretch again his hand oft stretched in vain.  
 Then the whole harvest of the bended boughs 185  
 Is lifted out of reach. Thirst rises then,  
 More hard to bear than hunger, when his blood  
 Is hot within him and his eyes aflame;  
 Wretched he stands striving to touch his lips  
 To the near waters, but the stream retreats, 190  
 Forsakes him when he strives to follow it,  
 And leaves him in dry sands; his eager lips  
 Drink but the dust.

A wrong is not avenged but by worse wrong.  
 What deed can be so wild 'tis worse than his?  
 Does he lie humbled? Does he feel content <sup>220</sup>  
 When fortune smiles, or tranquil when she frowns?  
 I know the tameless spirit of the man,  
 Not to be bent but broken, therefore seek  
 Revenge before he makes himself secure,  
 Renews his strength, lest he should fall on me <sup>225</sup>  
 When I am unaware. Or kill, or die!  
 Crime is between us to be seized by one.

*Slave.* Fearest thou not the people's hostile words?  
*Atreus.* Herein is greatest good of royal power:  
 The populace not only must endure  
 Their master's deeds, but praise them. <sup>230</sup>

*Slave.* Fear shall make  
 Those hostile who were first compelled to praise;  
 But he who seeks the fame of true applause  
 Would rather by the heart than voice be praised.  
*Atreus.* The lowly oft enjoy praise truly meant, <sup>235</sup>  
 The mighty ne'er know aught but flattery.  
 The people oft must will what they would not.

*Slave.* The king should wish for honesty and right;  
 Then there is none who does not wish with him.  
*Atreus.* When he who rules must wish for right  
 alone <sup>240</sup>

He hardly rules, except on sufferance.  
*Slave.* When reverence is not, nor love of law,  
 Nor loyalty, integrity, nor truth,  
 The realm is insecure.

*Atreus.* Integrity,  
 Truth, loyalty, are private virtues; kings <sup>245</sup>  
 Do as they will.

*Slave.* O deem it wrong to harm

## ACT II

## SCENE I

*Atreus, Slave.*

*Atreus.* O slothful, indolent, weak, unavenged <sup>195</sup>  
 (This last I deem for tyrants greatest wrong  
 In great affairs), after so many crimes,  
 After thy brother's treachery to thee,  
 After the breaking of all laws of right,  
 Dost thou, O angry Atreus, waste the time  
 In idle lamentations? All the world <sup>200</sup>  
 Should echo with the uproar of thy arms,  
 And either sea should bear thy ships of war;  
 The fields and cities should be bright with flame;  
 The flashing sword should everywhere be drawn;  
 All Greece shall with our horsemen's tread resound; <sup>205</sup>  
 Woods shall not hide the foe nor towers built  
 Upon the highest summits of the hills;  
 Mycenæ's citizens shall leave the town  
 And sing the warsong; he shall die hard death  
 Who gives that hated head a hiding-place. <sup>210</sup>  
 This palace even, noble Pelops' home,  
 Shall fall, if it must be, and bury me  
 If only on my brother too it fall.  
 Up, do a deed which none shall e'er approve,  
 But one whose fame none shall e'er cease to speak. <sup>215</sup>  
 Some fierce and bloody crime must now be dared,  
 Such as my brother seeing shall wish his.

A brother, even though he be most base.

*Atreus.* No deed that is unlawful to be done  
Against a brother but may lawfully

Be done against this man. What has he left 250

Untainted by his crime? Where has he spared

To do an impious deed? He took my wife

Adulterously, he took my realm by stealth,

The earnest of the realm he gained by fraud,

By fraud he brought confusion to my home. 255

There is in Pelops' stalls a noble sheep,

A magic ram, lord of the fruitful herd;

O'er all his body hangs the golden fleece.

In him each king sprung from the royal line

Of Tantalus his golden scepter holds, 260

Who has the ram possesses too the realm,

The fortunes of the palace follow him.

As fits a sacred thing, he feeds apart,

In a safe meadow which a wall surrounds

Hiding the pasture with its fateful stones. 265

The faithless one, daring a matchless crime,

Stole him away and with him took my wife,

Accomplice in his sin. From this has flowed

Every disaster; exiled and in fear

I've wandered through my realm; no place is safe 270

From brother's plots; my wife has been defiled,

The quiet of my realm has been disturbed,

My house is troubled, and the ties of blood

Are insecure, of nothing am I sure

Unless it be my brother's enmity. 275

Why hesitate? At length be strong to act.

Look upon Tantalus, on Pelops look;

To deeds like theirs these hands of mine are called.

Tell me, how shall I slay that cursed one?

*Slave.* Slain by the sword let him spew forth his  
soul.

*Atreus.* Thou tellest the end of punishment, I wish 280  
The punishment itself. Mild tyrants slay;  
Death is a longed-for favor in my realm.

*Slave.* Hast thou no piety?

*Atreus.* If e'er it dwelt  
Within our home, let piety depart. 285

Let the grim company of Furies come,

Jarring Erinnyes and Megæra dread

Shaking their torches twain. My breast burns not

With anger hot enough. I fain would feel

Worse horrors.

*Slave.* What new exile dost thou plot, 290  
In thy mad rage?

*Atreus.* No deed that keeps the bounds

Of former evils, I will leave no crime

Untried, and none is great enough for me.

*Slave.* The sword?

*Atreus.* 'Tis poor.

*Slave.* Or fire?

*Atreus.* 'Tis not enough.

*Slave.* What weapon then shall arm such hate as

thine? 295

*Atreus.* Thyestes' self.

*Slave.* This ill is worse than hate.

*Atreus.* I own it. In my breast a tumult reigns;

It rages deep within, and I am urged

I know not whither, yet it urges me.

Earth from its lowest depths sends forth a groan, 300

It thunders though the daylight is serene,

The whole house shakes as though the house were rent,

The trembling Lares turn away their face.

This shall be done, this evil shall be done,  
Which, gods, ye fear.

*Slave.* What is it thou wilt do? 305

*Atræus.* I know not what great passion in my heart,  
Wildier than I have known, beyond the bounds  
Of human nature, rises, urges on

My slothful hands. I know not what it is,  
'Tis something great. Yet be it what it may, 310

Make haste, my soul! Fit for Thyestes' hand  
This crime would be; 'tis worthy Atræus, too,  
And both shall do it. Tereus' house has seen  
Such shocking feasts. I own the crime is great,  
And yet it has been done; some greater crime 315

Let grief invent. Inspire thou my soul  
O Daulian Procne, thou wast sister too;  
Our cause is like, assist, impel my hand.

The father, hungrily, with joy shall tear  
His children, and shall eat their very flesh;  
'Tis well, it is enough. This punishment  
Is so far pleasing. But where can he be?  
And why is Atræus so long innocent?  
Already all the sacrifice I see, 320

As in a picture, see the morsels placed  
Within the father's mouth. Wherefore, my soul,  
Art thou afraid? Why fail before the deed?  
Forward! It must be done. Himself shall do  
What is in such a deed the greater crime.

*Slave.* But captured by what wiles, will he consent  
To put his feet within our toils? He deems 331  
That all are hostile.

*Atræus.* 'Twere not possible  
To capture him but that he'd capture me.  
He hopes to gain my kingdom; through this hope

He will make haste to meet the thunderbolts  
Of threatening Jove, in this hope will endure 335  
The swelling whirlpool's threats, and dare to go  
Within the Lybian Syrtes' doubtful shoals,  
To see again his brother, last and worst

Of evils deemed; this hope shall lead him on. 340  
*Slave.* Who shall persuade him he may come in  
peace?

Whose word will he believe?

*Atræus.*

Malicious hope

Is credulous, yet I will give my sons

A message they shall to their uncle bear:

'The wandering exile, leaving chance abodes, 345  
May for a kingdom change his misery,  
May reign in Argos, sharer of my throne.'

But if Thyestes sternly spurn my prayers,

His artless children, wearied by their woes

And easily persuaded, with their plea

Will overcome him; his old thirst for rule, 350

Beside sad poverty and heavy toil,  
With weight of evil, will subdue his soul

However hard it be.

*Slave.*

Time will have made

His sorrow light.

*Atræus.* Thou errest; sense of ills 355

Increases daily. To endure distress

Is easy, but to bear it to the end

Is hard.

*Slave.* Choose others for thy messengers  
In this dread plan.

*Atræus.*

Youth freely dares the worst.

*Slave.* What now thou teachest them in enmity 360  
Against their uncle, they may later do

Against their father ; evil deeds return  
Full oft upon their author.

*Atræus.*

If they learned  
The way of treachery and crime from none,  
Possession of the throne would teach it them. 365  
Art thou afraid their natures will grow base?  
So were they born. That which thou callest wild  
And cruel, and deemst hardly to be done,  
Ruthless, nor showing honor for god's laws,  
Perchance is even now against ourselves 370  
Attempted.

*Slave.* Shall thy sons know what they do ?

*Atræus.* Discretion is not found with so few years.  
They might perhaps discover all the guile ;  
Silence is learned through long and evil years.

*Slave.* The very ones through whom thou wouldst  
deceive 375

Another thou deceivest ?

*Atræus.*

That themselves  
May be exempt from crime or fault of mine ;  
Why should I mix my children in my sins ?  
My hatred shall unfold itself in me.

Yet say not so, thou doest ill, my soul ;  
If thine thou sparest, thou sparest also his. 380

My minister shall Agamemnon be,  
And know my plan, and Menelaus too  
Shall know his father's plans and further them.  
Through this crime will I prove if they be mine ; 385  
If they refuse the contest nor consent  
To my revenge, but call him uncle, then  
I'll know he is their father. It shall be.  
But oft a frightened look lays bare the heart,  
Great plans may be unwillingly betrayed ; 390

They shall not know how great affairs they aid.  
Hide thou our undertaking.

*Slave.*

Scarce were need  
That I should be admonished ; in my breast  
Both fear and loyalty will keep it hid,  
But loyalty the rather. 395

## SCENE II

*Chorus.*

The ancient race of royal Inachus  
At last has laid aside fraternal threats.  
What madness drove you, that by turns you shed  
Each other's blood and sought to mount the throne  
By crime ? You know not, eager for high place, 400  
What kingly station means. It is not wealth  
That makes the king, nor robes of Tyrian dye,  
'Tis not the crown upon the royal brow,  
Nor gates made bright with gold ; a king is he  
Whose hard heart has forgotten fear and pain, 405  
Whom impotent ambition does not move,  
Nor the inconstant favor of the crowd,  
Who covets nothing that the west affords,  
Nor aught that Tagus' golden waves wash up  
From its bright channels, nor the grain thrashed out  
Upon the glowing Libyan threshing-floors, 411  
Who neither fears the falling thunderbolt,  
Nor Eurus stirring all the sea to wrath,  
Nor windy Adriatic's swelling rage ;  
Who is not conquered by a soldier's lance, 415  
Nor the drawn sword ; who seated on safe heights,  
Sees everything beneath him ; who makes haste

194  
262

Freely to meet his fate, nor grieves to die.  
 Let kings who vex the scattered Scythians come,  
 Who hold the Red Sea's shore, the pearl-filled sea,  
 Or who entrenched upon the Caspian range <sup>421</sup>  
 To bold Sarmatians close the way, who breast  
 The Danube's waves, or those who dare pursue  
 And spoil the noble Seres where'er they dwell.  
 The mind a kingdom is; there is no need <sup>425</sup>  
 Of horse, or weapon, or the coward dart  
 Which from afar the Parthian hurls and flees—  
 Or seems to flee, no need to overthrow  
 Cities with engines that hurl stones afar,  
 When one possesses in himself his realm. <sup>430</sup>  
 Whoever will may on the slippery heights  
 Of empire stand, but I with sweet repose  
 Am satisfied, rejoice in gentle ease,  
 And, to my fellow citizens unknown,  
 My life shall flow in calm obscurity, <sup>435</sup>  
 And when, untouched by storm, my days have passed,  
 Then will I die, a common citizen,  
 In good old age. Death seemeth hard to him  
 Who dies but too well known to all the world,  
 Yet knowing not himself. <sup>440</sup>

## ACT III

## SCENE I

*Thyestes, Plisthenes, Tantalus, A boy.*

*Thyestes.* The longed-for dwelling of my native land  
 And, to the wretched exile greatest boon,  
 Rich Argos and a stretch of native soil,  
 And, if there yet be gods, my country's gods <sup>445</sup>  
 I see at last; the Cyclop's sacred towers,  
 Of greater beauty than the work of man;  
 The celebrated race-course of my youth  
 Where oft, well known, I drove my father's car  
 And carried off the palm. Argos will come <sup>450</sup>  
 To meet me, and the people come in crowds,  
 Perchance my brother Atreus too will come!  
 Rather return to exile in the woods  
 And mountain pastures, live the life of brutes  
 Among them. This bright splendor of the realm <sup>455</sup>  
 With its false glitter shall not blind my eyes.  
 Look on the giver, not the gift alone.  
 In fortunes which the world deemed hard I lived  
 Joyous and brave, now am I forced to fear,  
 My courage fails me, fain would I retreat,  
 Unwillingly I go.

*Tantalus.* What see I here? <sup>460</sup>  
 With hesitating step my father goes,  
 He seems uncertain, turns away his head.

*Thyestes.* Why doubt, my soul? or why so long revolve

Deliberations easy to conclude ?

In most uncertain things dost thou confide 365

And in thy brother's realm, and stand in fear

Of ills already conquered and found mild ?

Dost fly the troubles thou hast learned to bear ?

Now to be wretched with the shades were joy,

Turn while thou yet hast time.

*Tantalus.*

Why turn away ? 470

From thy loved country ? Why deny thyself

So much of happiness ? His wrath forgot,

Thy brother gives thee back the kingdom's half

And to the jarring members of his house

Brings peace, restores thee once more to thyself. 475

*Thyestes.* Thou askest why I fear ; I do not know.

I see not aught to fear and yet I fear.

Fain would I go and yet with slothful feet

I waver and am borne unwillingly

Whither I would not ; thus the ship propelled 480

By oar and sail is driven from its course

By the opposing tide.

*Tantalus.* Whatever thwarts

Or hinders thee, o'ercome ; see what rewards

Are waiting thy return. Thou mayst be king.

*Thyestes.* Since I can die.

*Tantalus.*

The very highest power—

*Thyestes.* Is naught, if thou hast come to wish 486

for naught.

*Tantalus.* Thy sons shall be thy heirs.

*Thyestes.*

No realm can have

Two kings.

*Tantalus.* Does one who might be happy choose

Unhappiness ?

*Thyestes.* Believe me, with false name

Does power deceive ; and vain it is to fear

Laborious fortunes. High in place, I feared, 490

Yea, feared the very sword upon my side.

How good it is to be the foe of none,

To lie upon the ground, in safety eat.

Crime enters not the cottage ; without fear 495

May food be eaten at the humble board,

Poison is drunk from gold. I speak known truth—

Ill fortune is to be preferred to good.

The humble citizen fears not my house :

It is not on the mountain summit placed, 500

Its high roofs do not shine with ivory ;

No watchman guards my sleep ; we do not fish

With fleets, nor drive the ocean from its bed

With massive walls, nor feed vile gluttony

With tribute from all peoples ; not for me 505

Are harvested the fields beyond the Getes

And Parthians ; men do not honor me

With incense, nor are altars built for me

Instead of Jove ; upon my palace roofs

No forests nod, no hot pools steam for me ; 510

Day is not spent in sleep nor night in crime

And watching. Aye, none fears me and my home,

Although without a weapon, is secure.

Great peace attends on humble circumstance ;

He has a kingdom who can be content 515

Without a kingdom.

*Tantalus.* If a favoring god

Give thee a realm, it should not be refused,

Nor should it be desired. Thy brother begs

That thou wouldst rule.

*Thyestes.*

He begs ? Then I must fear.

He seeks some means whereby he may betray. 520

*Tantalus.* Full often loyalty that was withdrawn  
Is given back, and true affection gains  
Redoubled strength.

*Thyestes.* And shall his brother love

*Thyestes?* Rather shall the ocean wet .

The northern Bear, and the rapacious tides

Of the Sicilian waters stay their waves,

The harvest ripen in Ionian seas,

And black night give the earth the light of day ;

Rather shall flame with water, life with death,

The winds with ocean join in faithful pact.

*Tantalus.* What fraud dost thou still fear ?

*Thyestes.* All. Where may end

My cause for fear ? His hate is a his power.

*Tantalus.* What power has he to harm thee ?

*Thyestes.* For myself

I do not fear ; my sons, for you I dread

My brother Atreus.

*Tantalus.* Dost thou fear deceit ?

*Thyestes.* It is too late to seek security

When one is in the very midst of ill.

Let us begone. This one thing I affirm :

I follow you, not lead.

*Tantalus.* God will behold

With favor thy design ; boldly advance.

SCENE II

*Atreus, Thyestes, Plisthenes, Tantalus, A boy.*

*Atreus.* [*Aside.*] At last the wild beast is within  
my toils :

Lo, I behold him with his hated brood.

My vengeance now is sure, into my hands  
Thyestes has completely fall'n ; my joy

Scarce can I temper, scarcely curb my wrath.

Thus when the cunning Umbrian hound is held

In leash, and tracks his prey, with lowered nose

Searching the ground, when from afar he scents

By slightest clue the bear, he silently

Explores the place, submitting to be held,

But when the prey is nearer, then he fights

To free himself, and with impatient voice

Calls the slow huntsman, straining at the leash.

When passion hopes for blood it will not own

Restraint ; and yet my wrath must be restrained !

See how his heavy, unkempt hair conceals

His face, how loathsome lies his beard. Ah, well !

Faith shall be kept. [*To Thyestes.*] To see my brother's  
face

How glad I am ! All former wrath is past.

From this day loyalty to family ties

Shall be maintained, from this day let all hate

Be banished from our hearts.

*Thyestes.* [*Aside.*] O wert thou not

Such as thou art, all could be put aside.

[*To Atreus.*] Atreus, I own, I own that I have done

All thou believest ; this day's loyalty

Makes me seem truly base : he sins indeed

Who sins against a brother good as thou.

Tears must wash out my guilt. See at thy feet

These hands are clasped in prayer that ne'er before

Entreated any. Let all anger cease,

Let swelling rage forever be dispelled ;

Receive these children, pledges of my faith.

*Atreus.* No longer clasp my knees, nay, rather seek

197  
265

My warm embrace. Ye, too, the props of age,  
So young, my children, cling about my neck. 575  
And thou, put off thy raiment mean and coarse;  
Oh, spare my sight, put on these royal robes  
Like mine, and gladly share thy brother's realm.  
This greater glory shall at last be mine: 580

To my illustrious brother I give back

His heritage. One holds a throne by chance,  
To give it up is noble.

*Thyestes.* May the gods

Give thee, my brother, fair return for all

Thy benefits. Alas, my wretchedness

Forbids me to accept the royal crown, 585

My guilty hand shrinks from the scepter's weight;

Let me in lesser rank unnoted live.

*Atræus.* This realm recovers its two kings.

*Thyestes.* I hold,

O brother, all of thine the same as mine.

*Atræus.* Who would refuse the gifts that fortunegives?

*Thyestes.* He who has learned how swiftly they  
depart. 591

*Atræus.* Wouldst thou refuse thy brother such  
renown?

*Thyestes.* Thy glory is fulfilled, but mine still waits:  
Firm is my resolution to refuse  
The kingdom.

*Atræus.* I relinquish all my power 595  
Unless thou hast thy part.

*Thyestes.* I take it then.

I'll wear the name of king, but law and arms

And I shall be thy slaves, for evermore.

*Atræus.* Wear then upon thy head the royal crown.

I'll give the destined victim to the gods. 600

## SCENE III

*Chorus.*

Who would believe it? Atræus, fierce and wild,  
Savage and tameless, shrank and was amazed  
When he beheld his brother. Stronger bonds  
Than nature's laws exist not. Wars may last  
With foreign foes, but true love still will bind 605  
Those whom it once has bound. When wrath, aroused.  
By some great quarrel, has dissevered friends  
And called to arms, when the light cavalry  
Advance with ringing bridles, here and there  
Shines the swift sword which, seeking fresh-shed  
blood, 610

The raging war-god wields with frequent blows;

But love and loyalty subdue the sword,

And in great peace unite unwilling hearts.

What god gave sudden peace from so great war?

Throughout Mycænæ rang the crash of arms 615

As though in civil strife, pale mothers held

Their children to their bosoms, and the wife

Feared for her steel-armed husband, when the sword,

Stained with the rust acquired in long peace,

Unwillingly obeyed his hand. One sped 620

To strengthen falling walls, to build again

The tottering towers, to make fast the gates

With iron bars; and on the battlements

The pale watch waked through all the anxious night.

The fear of war is worse than war itself. 625

But threatenings of the cruel sword have ceased,

The trumpet's deep-toned voice at last is stilled,

The braying of the strident horn is hushed,

198  
286

And to the joyous city peace returns.  
 So when the northwest wind beats up the sea  
 And from the deep the swelling waves roll in,  
 Scylla from out her smitten caverns roars  
 And sailors in the havens fear the flood  
 That ravening Charybdis vomits forth,  
 And the fierce Cyclops, dwelling on the top  
 Of fiery Ætna, dreads his father's rage,  
 Lest whelmed beneath the waves, the fires that roar  
 Within his immemorial chimney's throat  
 Should be profaned, and poor Laertes thinks,  
 Since Ithaca is shaken, that his realm  
 May be submerged; then, if the winds subside,  
 More quiet than a pool the ocean lies,  
 Scattered on every side gay little skiffs  
 Stretch the fair canvas of their spreading sails  
 Upon the sea which, late, ships feared to cut;  
 And there where, shaken by the hurricane,  
 The Cyclades were fearful of the deep,  
 The fishes play. No fortune long endures:  
 Sorrows and pleasures each in turn depart,  
 But pleasure soonest; from the fairest heights  
 An hour may plunge one to the lowest depths;  
 He who upon his forehead wears a crown,  
 Who nods and Medians lay aside the sword,  
 Indians, too, near neighbors of the sun,  
 And Dacians that assail the Parthian horse,  
 He holds his scepter with an anxious hand,  
 Foresees the overthrow of all his joy,  
 And fears uncertain time and fickle chance.  
 Ye whom the ruler of the earth and sea  
 Has given power over life and death,  
 Be not so proud, a stronger threatens you

630

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With whatsoever ills the weaker fears  
 From you; each realm is by a greater ruled.  
 Him whom the rising sun beholds in power  
 The setting sees laid low. Let none confide  
 Too much in happiness, let none despair  
 When he has fallen from his high estate,  
 For Clotho blends the evil with the good;  
 She turns about all fortunes on her wheel;  
 None may abide. Such favoring deities  
 No one has ever found that he may trust  
 To-morrow; on his flying wheel a god  
 Spins our swift changing fortunes.

665

670

Who it may be, but which. Now quickly tell. 695  
*Messenger.* Upon the heights a part of Pelops' house  
 Faces the south; the further side of this  
 Lifts itself upward like a mountain top.  
 And overlooks the city; thence their kings  
 May hold the stubborn people 'neath their sway. 700  
 Here shines the great hall that might well contain  
 An army, vari-colored columns bear  
 Its golden architraves; behind the room  
 Known to the vulgar, where the people come,  
 Stretch chambers rich and wide, and far within 705  
 Lies the arcana of the royal house,  
 The sacred penetralia; here no tree  
 Of brilliant foliage grows, and none is trimmed;  
 But yews and cypress and black ilex trees  
 Bend in the gloomy wood, an ancient oak 710  
 Rises above the grove and, eminent  
 Over the other trees, looks down on all  
 From its great height. Here the Tantalides  
 Are consecrated kings, and here they seek  
 Aid in uncertain or untoward events 715  
 Here hang their votive offerings, clear-toned trumps,  
 And broken chariots, wreckage of the sea,  
 And wheels that fell a prey to treachery,  
 And evidence of every crime the race  
 Has done. Here Trojan Pelops' crown is hung, 720  
 Here the embroidered robe from barbarous foes  
 Won. In the shade trickles a sluggish rill  
 That in the black swamp lingers lazily,  
 Like the unsightly waters of black Styx  
 By which the gods make oath. 'Tis said that here 725  
 The gods of the infernal regions sigh  
 Through all the dark night, that the place resounds

## ACT IV

## SCENE I

*Messenger, Chorus.*

*Messenger.* Oh, who will bear me headlong through  
 the air,

Like a swift wind, and hide me in thick cloud 675  
 That I no longer may behold such crime?  
 O house dishonored, whose base deeds disgrace  
 Pelops and Tantalus!

*Chorus.* What news is thine?

*Messenger.* What region can it be that I behold? 680  
 Argos and Sparta to which fate assigned  
 Such loving brothers? Corinth or the shores  
 Of the two seas? The Danube that compels  
 The fierce Alani frequently to flee?  
 Hyrcania underneath eternal snows?  
 Is it the wandering Scythians' changing home? 685  
 What land is this that knows such monstrous deeds?

*Chorus.* Speak and declare the ill whate'er it be.

*Messenger.* If I have courage, if cold fear relax  
 Its hold upon my members. Still I see  
 Th' accomplished slaughter. Bear me far from hence,  
 O driving whirlwind; whither day is borne 691  
 Bear me, torn hence!

*Chorus.*

Control thy fear, wrung heart,  
 What is the deed that makes thee quake with fear?  
 Speak and declare its author, I ask not

With rattling chains, and spirits of the dead  
 Go wailing up and down. Here may be seen  
 All dreadful things; here wanders the great throng  
 Of spirits of the ancient dead sent forth  
 From antique tombs, and monsters fill the place  
 Greater than have been known, and oft the wood  
 With threefold baying echoes, oftentimes  
 The house is terrible with mighty forms. 735  
 Nor does the daylight put an end to fear,  
 Night is eternal in the grove, and here  
 The sanctity of the infernal world  
 Reigns in the midst of day. Here sure response  
 Is given those who seek the oracle; 740  
 From the adytum with a thundering noise  
 The fatal utterance finds a passage out,  
 And all the grot reëchoes the god's voice.  
 Here raging Atreus entered, dragging in  
 His brother's sons; the altars were adorned— 745  
 Ah, who can tell the tale? The noble youths  
 Have their hands bound behind them and their brows  
 Bound with the purple fillet; incense too  
 Is there, and wine to Bacchus consecrate,  
 And sacrificial knife, and salted meal; 750  
 All things are done in order, lest such crime  
 Should be accomplished without fitting rites.

*Chorus.* Whose hand took up the sword?

*Messenger.* He is himself

The priest: He sang himself with boisterous lips  
 The sacrificial song, those given to death  
 He placed, he took the sword and wielded it;  
 Nothing was lacking to the sacrifice.

Earth trembled, all the grove bent down its head,  
 The palace nodded, doubtful where to fling

Its mighty weight, and from the left there shot  
 A star from heaven, drawing a black train. 760  
 The wine poured forth upon the fire was changed  
 And flowed red blood; the royal diadem  
 Fell twice, yea thrice; within the temple walls  
 The ivory statues wept: all things were moved. 765  
 At such a deed; himself alone unmoved,  
 Atreus stood firm and faced the threatening gods.  
 And now delay at last was put aside;  
 He stood before the altar, sidelong, fierce  
 In gaze. As by the Ganges, in the woods, 770  
 The hungry tiger stands between two bulls,  
 Uncertain which one first shall feel his teeth—  
 Eager for both, now here now there he turns  
 His eyes and in such doubt is hungry still—  
 So cruel Atreus gazes on the heads 775  
 Devoted sacrifices to his rage:  
 He hesitates which one shall first be slain,  
 And which be immolated afterward;  
 It matters not and yet he hesitates,  
 And in the order of his cruel crime 780  
 Takes pleasure.

*Chorus.* Which is first to feel the sword?

*Messenger.* Lest he should seem to fail in loyalty  
 First place is given to his ancestor—  
 The one named Tantalus is first to fall.

*Chorus.* What courage showed the youth? How  
 bore he death? 785

*Messenger.* He stood unmoved, no useless prayers  
 were heard.

That cruel one hid in the wound the sword,  
 Pressing it deep within the victim's neck,  
 Then drew it forth; the corpse was upright still:

It hesitated long which way to fall,  
 Then fell against the uncle. Atreus then,  
 Dragging before the altar Plisthenes,  
 Hurried him to his brother : with one blow  
 He cut away the head ; the lifeless trunk  
 Fell prone and with a whispered sound the head  
 Rolled downward. 790

*Chorus.* Double murder thus complete,  
 What did he then ? Spared he the other boy ?  
 Or did he heap up crime on crime ?

*Messenger.* Alas !

As crested lion in Armenian woods  
 Attacks the herd, nor lays aside his wrath  
 Though sated, but with jaws that drip with blood  
 Follows the bulls, and satisfied with food  
 Threatens the calves but languidly ; so threats  
 Atreus, so swells his wrath, and holding still  
 The sword with double murder wet, forgets  
 Whom he attacks ; with direful hand he drives  
 Right through the body and the sword, received  
 Within the breast, passes straight through the back.  
 He falls and with his blood puts out the fires ;  
 By double wound he dies. 800

*Chorus.* O savage crime !  
*Messenger.* Art horrified ? If there the work had  
 ceased,

It had been pious.

*Chorus.* Could a greater crime  
 Or more atrocious be by nature borne ?

*Messenger.* And dost thou think this was the end of  
 crime ?

'Twas its beginning.

*Chorus.* What more could there be ? 810

Perchance he threw the bodies to wild beasts  
 That they might tear them, kept from funeral fire ?  
*Messenger.* Would he had kept, would that no grave  
 might hide

The dead, no fire burn them, would the birds  
 And savage beasts might feast on such sad food ! 820  
 That which were torment else is wished for here.  
 Would father's eyes unburied sons might see !  
 O crime incredible to every age !

O crime which future ages shall deny !  
 The entrails taken from the living breast 825  
 Tremble, the lungs still breathe, the timid heart  
 Throbs, but he tears its fibre, ponders well  
 What it foretells and notes its still warm veins.  
 When he at last has satisfied himself

About the victims, of his brother's feast 830  
 He makes secure. The mangled forms he cuts,  
 And from the trunk he separates the arms  
 As far as the broad shoulders, savagely

Lays bare the joints and cleaves apart the bones ;  
 The heads he spares and the right hands they gave 835  
 In such good faith. He puts the severed limbs  
 Upon the spits and roasts them by slow fire ;  
 The other parts into the glowing pot  
 He throws to boil them. From the food the fire

Leaps back, is twice, yea thrice, replaced and forced  
 At last reluctantly to do its work. 841  
 The liver on the spit emits shrill cries,

I cannot tell whether the flesh or flame  
 Most deeply groaned. The troubled fire smoked,  
 The smoke itself, a dark and heavy cloud, 845  
 Rose not in air nor scattered readily ;  
 The ugly cloud obscured the household gods.

202  
270

O patient Phœbus, thou hast backward fled  
 And, breaking off the light of day at noon, 850  
 Submerged the day, but thou didst set too late.  
 The father mangles his own sons, and eats  
 Flesh of his flesh, with sin polluted lips;  
 His locks are wet and shine with glowing oil;  
 Heavy is he with wine; the morsels stick  
 Between his lips. Thyestes, this one good 855  
 Amid thy evil fortunes still remains:  
 Thou knowest it not. But this good too shall die.  
 Let Titan, turning backward on his path,  
 Lead back his chariot and with darkness hide  
 This foul new crime, let blackest night arise 860  
 At midday, yet the deed must come to light.  
 All will be manifest.

## SCENE II

*Chorus.*

Oh, whither, father of the earth and sky,  
 Whose rising puts the glory of the night  
 To flight, oh, whither dost thou turn thy path, 865  
 That light has fled at midday? Phœbus, why  
 Hast thou withdrawn thy beams? The evening star,  
 The messenger of darkness, has not yet  
 Called forth the constellations of the night,  
 Not yet the westward turning course commands 870  
 To free thy horses that have done their work,  
 The trumpet has not yet its third call given,  
 The signal of declining day, new night.  
 The plowman is amazed at the swift fall  
 Of supper-time, his oxen by the plow 875

Are yet unwearied; from thy path in heaven  
 What drives thee, O Apollo? What the cause  
 That forces from their wonted way thy steeds?  
 Though conquered, do the giants strive again  
 In war, hell's prison being opened wide? 880  
 Or does Tityus in his wounded breast  
 Renew his ancient wrath? The mountains rent,  
 Does Titan's son, Typhœus, stretch again  
 His giant body? Is a pathway built  
 By Macedonian giants to the sky, 885  
 On Thracian Ossa is Mount Pelion piled?  
 The ancient order of the universe  
 Has perished! rise and setting will not be!  
 Eos, the dewy mother of the dawn,  
 Wont to the god of day to give the reins, 890  
 Sees with amaze her kingdom overthrown,  
 She knows not how to bathe the wearied steeds,  
 Nor dip the smoking horses in the sea.  
 The setting sun himself, amazed, beholds  
 Aurora, and commands the darkness rise 895  
 Ere night is ready, the bright stars rise not,  
 Nor do the heavens show the faintest light,  
 Nor does the morn dissolve the heavy shades.  
 Whate'er it be would it were only night!  
 Shaken with mighty fear my bosom quakes, 900  
 Lest all the world to ruin should be hurled,  
 And formless chaos cover gods and men,  
 And nature once again enfold and hide  
 The land and sea and starry firmament.  
 With the upspringing of its deathless torch  
 Bringing the seasons, never more shall come  
 The king of stars and give the waiting world  
 Changes of summer and of winter's cold;

No more shall Luna meet the sun's bright flame  
 And take away the terror of the night, 910  
 And running through a briefer circuit pass  
 His brother's car; into one gulf shall fall  
 The heaped-up throng of gods.  
 The zodiac, pathway of the sacred stars,  
 Which cuts the zones obliquely, shall behold 915  
 The falling stars and fall itself from heaven.  
 Aries, who comes again in early spring  
 And with warm zephyr swells the sails, shall fall  
 Headlong into the sea through which he bore  
 Timorous Hella; and the Bull, that wears 920  
 The Hyades upon its shining brow,  
 Shall with himself drag down the starry Twins  
 And Cancer's claws; the Lion, glowing hot,  
 That Hercules once conquered, shall again  
 Fall from the skies; and to the earth she left 925  
 The Virgin too shall fall, and the just Scales,  
 And with them drag the churlish Scorpion.  
 Old Chiron, who holds fixed the feathered dart  
 In the Thessalian bow, shall loose his shaft  
 From the snapped bowstring, and cold Capricorn 930  
 Who brings the winter's cold shall fall, and break  
 For thee, who'er thou art, thy water-jug,  
 Thou Water-bearer; with thee too shall fall  
 The Fishes, last of stars; and Charles's Wain,  
 That never yet has sunk below the sea, 935  
 Falling shall plunge beneath the ocean wave.  
 The slippery Dragon, that between the Bears  
 Winds like a winding river, shall descend;  
 And, with the Dragon joined, the Lesser Bear  
 So icy cold, and slow Boötes too, 940  
 Already tottering to his overthrow,

Shall fall from heaven with his heavy wain.  
 Out of so many do we seem alone  
 Worthy to be beneath the universe  
 Buried, when heaven itself is overthrown? 945  
 In our day has the end of all things come?  
 Created were we for a bitter fate,  
 Whether we've banished or destroyed the sun.  
 Let lamentation cease, depart base fear;  
 Eager for life is he who would not die 950  
 Even though with him all the world should fall.

204  
272

This is the recompense of all my toil.  
 I do not wish to see his wretchedness  
 Save as it grows upon him. The wide hall  
 Is bright with many a torch; supine he lies  
 On gold and purple, his left hand supports  
 His head that is so heavy now with wine; 980  
 He vomits. Mightiest of the gods am I,  
 And king of kings! my wish has been excelled!  
 Full is he, in the silver cup he lifts  
 The wine. Spare not to drink, there still remains 985  
 Some of the victims' blood, the old wine's red  
 Conceals it; with this cup the feast shall end.  
 His children's blood mixed with the wine he drinks;  
 He would have drunken mine. Lo, now he sings,  
 Sings festal songs, his mind is dimmed with wine. 990

## ACT V

## SCENE I

*Atrous.*

High above all and equal to the stars  
 I move, my proud head touches heaven itself;  
 At last I hold the crown, at last I hold  
 My father's throne. Now I abandon you, 955  
 Ye gods, for I have touched the highest point  
 Of glory possible. It is enough.  
 Ev'n I am satisfied. Why satisfied?  
 No shame withholds me, day has been withdrawn;  
 Act while the sky is dark. Would I might keep 960  
 The gods from flight, and drag them back by force  
 That all might see the feast that gives revenge.  
 It is enough the father shall behold.  
 Though daylight be unwilling to abide,  
 Yet will I take from thee the dark that hides 965  
 Thy miseries; too long with merry look  
 Thou liest at thy feast: enough of wine,  
 Enough of food, Thyestes. There is need,  
 In this thy crowning ill, thou be not drunk  
 With wine. Slaves, open wide the temple doors, 970  
 And let the house of feasting open lie.  
 I long to see his color when he sees  
 His dead sons' heads, to hear his words that flow  
 With the first shock of sorrow, to behold  
 How, stricken dumb, he sits with rigid form. 975

## SCENE II

*Atrous, Thyestes.*

*Thyestes.* By long grief dulled, put by thy cares, my  
 heart,  
 Let fear and sorrow fly and bitter need,  
 Companion of thy timorous banishment,  
 And shame, hard burden of afflicted souls.  
 Whence thou hast fallen profits more to know 995  
 Than whither; great is he who with firm step  
 Moves on the plain when fallen from the height;  
 He who, oppressed by sorrows numberless  
 And driven from his realm, with unbent neck  
 Carries his burdens, not degenerate 1000  
 Or conquered, who stands firm beneath the weight  
 Of all his burdens, he is great indeed.

Now scatter all the clouds of bitter fate,  
 Put by all signs of thy unhappy days,  
 In happy fortunes show a happy face,  
 Forget the old Thyestes. Ah, this vice  
 Still follows misery: never to trust  
 In happy days; though better fortunes come,  
 Those who have borne afflictions find it hard  
 To joy in better days. What holds me back,  
 Forbids me celebrate the festal tide?  
 What cause of grief, arising causelessly,  
 Bids me to weep? What art thou that forbids  
 That I should crown my head with festal wreath?  
 It does forbid, forbid! Upon my head 1015  
 The roses languish, and my hair that drips  
 With ointment rises as with sudden fear,  
 My face is wet with showers of tears that fall  
 Unwillingly, and groans break off my song.  
 Grief loves accustomed tears, the wretched feel 1020  
 That they must weep. I would be glad to make  
 Most bitter lamentation, and to wail,  
 And rend this robe with Tyrian purple dyed.  
 My mind gives warning of some coming grief,  
 Presages future ills. The storm that smites 1025  
 When all the sea is calm weighs heavily  
 Upon the sailor. Fool! What grief, what storm,  
 Dost thou conceive? Believe thy brother now.  
 Be what it may, thou fearest now too late,  
 Or causelessly. I do not wish to be 1030  
 Unhappy, but vague terror smites my breast?  
 No cause is evident and yet my eyes  
 O'erflow with sudden tears. What can it be,  
 Or grief, or fear? Or has great pleasure tears?

## SCENE III

*Atræus, Thyestes.*

*Atræus.* Brother, let us together celebrate  
 This festal day: this day it is which makes 1035  
 My scepter firm, which binds the deathless pact  
 Of certain peace.

*Thyestes.* Enough of food and wine!  
 This only could augment my happiness,  
 If with my own I might enjoy my bliss. 1040

*Atræus.* Believe thy sons are here in thy embrace.  
 Here are they and shall be, no single part  
 Of thy loved offspring shall be lost to thee.  
 Ask and whate'er thou wishest I will give,  
 I'll satisfy the father with his sons; 1045  
 Fear not, thou shalt be more than satisfied.  
 Now with my own thy young sons lengthen out  
 The joyous feast: they shall be sent for; drink  
 The wine, it is an heirloom of our house.

*Thyestes.* I take my brother's gift. Wine shall be  
 poured 1050

First to our fathers' gods, then shall be drunk.  
 But what is this? My hands refuse to lift -  
 The cup, its weight increases and holds down  
 My right hand, from my lips the wine retreats,  
 Around my mouth it flows and will not pass 1055  
 Within my lips, and from the trembling earth  
 The tables leap, the fire scarce gives light,  
 The air is heavy and the light is dim  
 As between day and darkness. What is this?  
 The arch of heaven trembles more and more, 1060  
 To the dense shadows ever thicker mist

206  
278

Is added, night withdraws in blacker night,  
The constellations flee. Whate'er it is,  
I pray thee spare my sons, let all the storm  
Break over my vile head. Give back my sons! 1065  
*Atræus.* Yea, I will give them back, and never more  
Shalt thou be parted from them. [*Exit.*]

## SCENE IV

*Thyestes.*

Seizes my reins? Why shake my inward parts?  
I feel a burden that will forth, my breast  
Groans with a groaning that is not my own. 1070  
Come, children, your unhappy father calls;  
Come, might I see you all this woe would flee.  
Whence come these voices? What distress

## SCENE V

*Atræus, Thyestes, Slave bearing a covered charger.*

*Atræus.* Father, spread wide thy arms, they come,  
they come.

Dost thou indeed now recognize thy sons? 1075  
[*charger is uncovered.*]

*Thyestes.* I recognize my brother: Canst thou bear  
Such deeds, O earth? O Styx, wilt thou not break  
Thy banks and whelm in everlasting night  
Both king and kingdom, bearing them away  
By a dread path to chaos' awful void? 1080  
And, plucking down thy houses,allest thou not,  
O city of Mycenæ, to the ground?

We should already be with Tantalus!  
Earth, ope thy prisons wide on every side;  
If under Tartarus, below the place 1085  
Where dwell our kinsmen, rests a lower deep,  
Within thy bosom let a chasm yawn  
Thitherward, under all of Acheron  
Hide us; let guilty souls roam o'er our heads  
Let Phlegethon that bears its fiery sands 1090  
Down through its glowing channels, flow o'er me!  
Yet earth unmoved lies but a heavy weight,  
The gods have fled.

*Atræus.* Take, rather, willingly  
Those whom thou hast so long desired to see;  
Thy brother does not hinder thee. Rejoice; 1095  
Kiss them, divide thy love between the three.

*Thyestes.* This is thy compact? This thy brother's  
faith?

Is this thy favor? Layst thou thus aside  
Thy hate? I do not ask to see my sons  
Unharm'd; what wickedness and deathless hate 1100  
May give, a brother asks: grant to my sons  
Burial; give them back, thou shalt behold  
Straightway their burning. Lo, I ask thee naught,  
The father will not have but lose his sons.

*Atræus.* Thou hast whate'er remains, whate'er is  
lost.

*Thyestes.* And do they furnish food for savage birds?  
Are they destroyed by monsters, fed to beasts?

*Atræus.* Thyself hast banqueted upon thy sons,  
An impious feast.

*Thyestes.* 'Tis this that shamed the gods!  
This backward drove the daylight whence it came!  
Me miserable! What cry shall I make, 1111

207  
~~275~~

What wailing? What words will suffice my woe?  
 I see the severed heads, the hands cut off,  
 Greedy and hungry, these I did not eat!  
 I feel their flesh within my bowels move; 1115  
 Prisoned, the dread thing struggles, tries to flee,  
 But has no passage forth; give me the sword,  
 Brother, it has already drunk my blood:  
 The sword shall give a pathway to my sons. 1120  
 It is denied? Then rending blows shall sound  
 Upon my breast. Unhappy one, refrain  
 Thy hand, oh, spare the dead! Who e'er beheld  
 Such hideous crime? Not wandering tribes that dwell  
 On the unkindly Caucasus' rough cliffs, 1125  
 Or fierce Procrustes, dread of Attica.  
 Behold, the father feasts upon his sons,  
 The sons lie heavy in him—is there found  
 No limit to thy base and impious deeds?  
*Atreus.* Crime finds a limit when the crime is done, 1130  
 Not when avenged. Even this is not enough.  
 Into thy mouth I should have poured the blood  
 Warm from the wounds; thou shouldst have drunk  
 the blood  
 Of living sons. My hate betrayed itself  
 Through too much haste. I smote them with the sword,  
 I slew them at the altar, sacrificed 1135  
 A votive offering to the household gods,  
 From the dead trunks I cut away the heads,  
 And into tiniest pieces tore the limbs;  
 Some in the boiling pot I plunged, and some  
 I bade should be before a slow flame placed; 1140  
 I cut the flesh from the still living limbs,  
 I saw it roar upon the slender spit,  
 And with my own right hand I plied the fire.

All this the father might have better done:  
 All of my vengeance falls in nothingness! 1145  
 He ate his sons with impious lips indeed,  
 Alas, nor he nor they knew what he did!  
*Thyestes.* Hear, O ye seas, stayed by inconstant  
 shores;  
 Ye too, ye gods, wherever ye have fled,  
 Hear what a deed is done! Hear, gods of Hell, 1150  
 Hear, Earth, and heavy Tartarean night  
 Dark with thick cloud! Oh, listen to my cry!  
 Thine am I, Hell, thou only seest my woe,  
 Thou also hast no star. I do not make  
 Presumptuous prayer, naught for myself I ask— 1155  
 What could be given me? I make my prayer  
 For you, my sons. Thou ruler of the heavens,  
 Thou mighty king of the ethereal courts,  
 Cover the universe with horrid clouds,  
 Let winds contend on every side, send forth 1160  
 Thy thunders everywhere; not with light hand,  
 As when thou smitest with thy lesser darts  
 Innocent homes; but as when mountains fell  
 And with their threefold ruin overwhelmed  
 The Giants—use such power, send forth such fires, 1166  
 Avenge the banished day, where light has fled  
 Fill up the darkness with thy thunderbolts.  
 Each one is evil,—do not hesitate—  
 Yet if not both, I sure am base; seek me  
 With triple dart, through this breast send this brand:  
 If I would give my sons a funeral pyre 1171  
 And burial, I must give myself to flames.  
 If nothing moves the gods, if none will send  
 His darts against this sinful head, let night,  
 Eternal night, abide and hide the crime 1175

In everlasting shadows. If thou, Sun,  
No longer shinest, I have naught to ask.

*Atræus.* Now in my work I glory, now indeed  
I hold the victor's palm. I would have lost  
My crime's reward unless thou thus wert grieved. 1180  
I now believe my sons were truly mine—  
Now may I trust again in a chaste bed.

*Thyestes.* What evil have my children done to thee?  
*Atræus.* They were thy sons.

*Thyestes.* The children of their sire—

*Atræus.* Undoubted sons; 'tis this that makes me  
glad. 1185

*Thyestes.* I call upon the gods who guard the right  
To witness.

*Atræus.* Why not call upon the gods  
Who guard the marriage-bed?

*Thyestes.* Who punishes

A crime with crime?

*Atræus.* I know what makes thee mourn :  
Another first accomplished the grim deed, 1190  
For this thou mournest ; thou art not distressed  
Because of thy dread feast, thou feelest grief  
That thou hast not prepared such feast for me.  
This mind was in thee : to provide like food

For thy unconscious brother, and to slay 1195  
My children with their mother's aid. One thing  
Withheld thee—thou believedst they were thine.

*Thyestes.* Th' avenging gods will come and punish  
thee ;

To them my prayers commit thee.

*Atræus.* To thy sons

I give thee over for thy punishment. 1200

## HERCULES ON CETA

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## Oedipus Rex

By Sophocles

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### Oedipus Rex

By Sophocles  
Translated by F. Storr

#### Dramatis Personae

OEDIPUS  
THE PRIEST OF ZEUS  
CREON  
CHORUS OF THEBAN ELDERS  
TEIRESIAS  
JOCASTA  
MESSENGER  
HERD OF LAIUS

#### Scene

Thebes. Before the Palace of Oedipus. Suppliants of all ages are seated round the altar at the palace doors, at their head a PRIEST OF ZEUS. To them enter OEDIPUS.

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#### OEDIPUS

My children, latest born to Cadmus old,  
Why sit ye here as suppliants, in your hands  
Branches of olive filleted with wool?  
What means this reek of incense everywhere,  
And everywhere laments and litanies?  
Children, it were not meet that I should learn  
From others, and am hither come, myself,  
I Oedipus, your world-renowned king.  
Ho! aged sire, whose venerable locks  
Proclaim thee spokesman of this company,  
Explain your mood and purport. Is it dread  
Of ill that moves you or a boon ye crave?  
My zeal in your behalf ye cannot doubt;  
Ruthless indeed were I and obdurate  
If such petitioners as you I spurned.

#### PRIEST

Yea, Oedipus, my sovereign lord and king,  
Thou seest how both extremes of age besiege  
Thy palace altars--fledglings hardly winged,  
And greybeards bowed with years, priests, as am I  
Of Zeus, and these the flower of our youth.

Meanwhile, the common folk, with wreathed  
boughs  
Crowd our two market-places, or before  
Both shrines of Pallas congregate, or where  
Ismenus gives his oracles by fire.  
For, as thou seest thyself, our ship of State,  
Sore buffeted, can no more lift her head,  
Foundered beneath a weltering surge of blood.  
A blight is on our harvest in the ear,  
A blight upon the grazing flocks and herds,  
A blight on wives in travail; and withal  
Armed with his blazing torch the God of Plague  
Hath swooped upon our city emptying  
The house of Cadmus, and the murky realm  
Of Pluto is full fed with groans and tears.  
Therefore, O King, here at thy hearth we sit,  
I and these children; not as deeming thee  
A new divinity, but the first of men;  
First in the common accidents of life,  
And first in visitations of the Gods.  
Art thou not he who coming to the town  
Of Cadmus freed us from the tax we paid  
To the fell songstress? Nor hadst thou received

Prompting from us or been by others schooled;  
 No, by a god inspired (so all men deem,  
 And testify) didst thou renew our life.  
 And now, O Oedipus, our peerless king,  
 All we thy votaries beseech thee, find  
 Some succor, whether by a voice from heaven  
 Whispered, or haply known by human wit.  
 Tried counselors, methinks, are aptest found  
 To furnish for the future pregnant rede.  
 Upraise, O chief of men, upraise our State!  
 Look to thy laurels! for thy zeal of yore  
 Our country's savior thou art justly hailed:  
 O never may we thus record thy reign:--  
 "He raised us up only to cast us down."  
 Uplift us, build our city on a rock.  
 Thy happy star ascendant brought us luck,  
 O let it not decline! If thou wouldst rule  
 This land, as now thou reignest, better sure  
 To rule a peopled than a desert realm.  
 Nor battlements nor galleys aught avail,  
 If men to man and guards to guard them tail.

**OEDIPUS**

Ah! my poor children, known, ah, known too well,  
 The quest that brings you hither and your need.  
 Ye sicken all, well wot I, yet my pain,  
 How great soever yours, outtops it all.  
 Your sorrow touches each man severally,  
 Him and none other, but I grieve at once  
 Both for the general and myself and you.  
 Therefore ye rouse no sluggard from day-dreams.  
 Many, my children, are the tears I've wept,  
 And threaded many a maze of weary thought.  
 Thus pondering one clue of hope I caught,  
 And tracked it up; I have sent Menoeceus' son,  
 Creon, my consort's brother, to inquire  
 Of Pythian Phoebus at his Delphic shrine,  
 How I might save the State by act or word.  
 And now I reckon up the tale of days  
 Since he set forth, and marvel how he fares.  
 'Tis strange, this endless tarrying, passing strange.  
 But when he comes, then I were base indeed,  
 If I perform not all the god declares.

**PRIEST**

Thy words are well timed; even as thou speakest  
 That shouting tells me Creon is at hand.

**OEDIPUS**

O King Apollo! may his joyous looks  
 Be presage of the joyous news he brings!

**PRIEST**

As I surmise, 'tis welcome; else his head  
 Had scarce been crowned with berry-laden bays.

**OEDIPUS**

We soon shall know; he's now in earshot  
 range. *Enter CREON.*  
 My royal cousin, say, Menoeceus' child,  
 What message hast thou brought us from the god?

**CREON**

Good news, for e'en intolerable ills,  
 Finding right issue, tend to naught but good.

**OEDIPUS**

How runs the oracle? thus far thy words  
 Give me no ground for confidence or fear.

**CREON**

If thou wouldst hear my message publicly,  
 I'll tell thee straight, or with thee pass within.

**OEDIPUS**

Speak before all; the burden that I bear  
 Is more for these my subjects than myself.

**CREON**

Let me report then all the god declared.  
 King Phoebus bids us straitly extirpate  
 A fell pollution that infests the land,  
 And no more harbor an inveterate sore.

**OEDIPUS**

What expiation means he? What's amiss?

**CREON**

Banishment, or the shedding blood for blood.  
 This stain of blood makes shipwreck of our state.

**OEDIPUS**

Whom can he mean, the miscreant thus  
 denounced?

**CREON**

Before thou didst assume the helm of State,  
 The sovereign of this land was Laius.

**OEDIPUS**

I heard as much, but never saw the man.

**CREON**

He fell; and now the god's command is plain:  
Punish his takers-off, whoe'er they be.

**OEDIPUS**

Where are they? Where in the wide world to find  
The far, faint traces of a bygone crime?

**CREON**

In this land, said the god; "who seeks shall find;  
Who sits with folded hands or sleeps is blind."

**OEDIPUS**

Was he within his palace, or afield,  
Or traveling, when Laius met his fate?

**CREON**

Abroad; he started, so he told us, bound  
For Delphi, but he never thence returned.

**OEDIPUS**

Came there no news, no fellow-traveler  
To give some clue that might be followed up?

**CREON**

But one escape, who flying for dear life,  
Could tell of all he saw but one thing sure.

**OEDIPUS**

And what was that? One clue might lead us far,  
With but a spark of hope to guide our quest.

**CREON**

Robbers, he told us, not one bandit but  
A troop of knaves, attacked and murdered him.

**OEDIPUS**

Did any bandit dare so bold a stroke,  
Unless indeed he were suborned from Thebes?

**CREON**

So 'twas surmised, but none was found to avenge  
His murder mid the trouble that ensued.

**OEDIPUS**

What trouble can have hindered a full quest,  
When royalty had fallen thus miserably?

**CREON**

The riddling Sphinx compelled us to let slide  
The dim past and attend to instant needs.

**OEDIPUS**

Well, I will start afresh and once again  
Make dark things clear. Right worthy the concern  
Of Phoebus, worthy thine too, for the dead;  
I also, as is meet, will lend my aid  
To avenge this wrong to Thebes and to the god.  
Not for some far-off kinsman, but myself,  
Shall I expel this poison in the blood;  
For whoso slew that king might have a mind  
To strike me too with his assassin hand.  
Therefore in righting him I serve myself.  
Up, children, haste ye, quit these altar stairs,  
Take hence your suppliant wands, go summon  
hither  
The Theban commons. With the god's good help  
Success is sure; 'tis ruin if we fail.

*Exeunt OEDIPUS and CREON.*

**PRIEST**

Come, children, let us hence; these gracious words  
Forestall the very purpose of our suit.  
And may the god who sent this oracle  
Save us withal and rid us of this pest.

*Exeunt PRIEST and SUPPLIANTS.*

**CHORUS**

*strophe 1*

Sweet-voiced daughter of Zeus from thy  
gold-paved Pythian shrine  
Wafted to Thebes divine,  
What dost thou bring me? My soul is racked and  
shivers with fear.  
Healer of Delos, hear!  
Hast thou some pain unknown before,  
Or with the circling years renewest a penance  
of yore?  
Offspring of golden Hope, thou voice immortal, O  
tell me.

*antistrophe 1*

First on Athene I call; O Zeus-born goddess,  
defend!  
Goddess and sister, befriend,

Artemis, Lady of Thebes, high-throned in the  
 midst of our mart!  
 Lord of the death-winged dart!  
 Your threefold aid I crave  
 From death and ruin our city to save.  
 If in the days of old when we nigh had perished,  
 ye drave  
 From our land the fiery plague, be near us now and  
 defend us!

*strophe 2*

Ah me, what countless woes are mine!  
 All our host is in decline;  
 Weaponless my spirit lies.  
 Earth her gracious fruits denies;  
 Women wail in barren throes;  
 Life on life downstricken goes,  
 Swifter than the wind bird's flight,  
 Swifter than the Fire-God's might,  
 To the westering shores of Night.

*antistrophe 2*

Wasted thus by death on death  
 All our city perisheth.  
 Corpses spread infection round;  
 None to tend or mourn is found.  
 Wailing on the altar stair  
 Wives and grandams rend the air--  
 Long-drawn moans and piercing cries  
 Blent with prayers and litanies.  
 Golden child of Zeus, O hear  
 Let thine angel face appear!

*strophe 3*

And grant that Ares whose hot breath I feel,  
 Though without targe or steel  
 He stalks, whose voice is as the battle shout,  
 May turn in sudden rout,  
 To the unharbored Thracian waters sped,  
 Or Amphitrite's bed.  
 For what night leaves undone,  
 Smit by the morrow's sun  
 Perisheth. Father Zeus, whose hand  
 Doth wield the lightning brand,  
 Slay him beneath thy levin bold, we pray,  
 Slay him, O slay!

*antistrophe 3*

O that thine arrows too, Lycean King,  
 From that taut bow's gold string,  
 Might fly abroad, the champions of our rights;  
 Yea, and the flashing lights  
 Of Artemis, wherewith the huntress sweeps

Across the Lycian steeps.  
 Thee too I call with golden-snooded hair,  
 Whose name our land doth bear,  
 Bacchus to whom thy Maenads Evox shout;  
 Come with thy bright torch, rout,  
 Blithe god whom we adore,  
 The god whom gods abhor.

*Enter OEDIPUS.*

**OEDIPUS**

Ye pray; 'tis well, but would ye hear my words  
 And heed them and apply the remedy,  
 Ye might perchance find comfort and relief.  
 Mind you, I speak as one who comes a stranger  
 To this report, no less than to the crime;  
 For how unaided could I track it far  
 Without a clue? Which lacking (for too late  
 Was I enrolled a citizen of Thebes)  
 This proclamation I address to all:--  
 Thebans, if any knows the man by whom  
 Laius, son of Labdacus, was slain,  
 I summon him to make clean shrift to me.  
 And if he shrinks, let him reflect that thus  
 Confessing he shall 'scape the capital charge;  
 For the worst penalty that shall befall him  
 Is banishment--unscathed he shall depart.  
 But if an alien from a foreign land  
 Be known to any as the murderer,  
 Let him who knows speak out, and he shall have  
 Due recompense from me and thanks to boot.  
 But if ye still keep silence, if through fear  
 For self or friends ye disregard my hest,  
 Hear what I then resolve; I lay my ban  
 On the assassin whosoe'er he be.  
 Let no man in this land, whereof I hold  
 The sovereign rule, harbor or speak to him;  
 Give him no part in prayer or sacrifice  
 Or lustral rites, but hound him from your homes.  
 For this is our defilement, so the god  
 Hath lately shown to me by oracles.  
 Thus as their champion I maintain the cause  
 Both of the god and of the murdered King.  
 And on the murderer this curse I lay  
 (On him and all the partners in his guilt):--  
 Wretch, may he pine in utter wretchedness!  
 And for myself, if with my privity  
 He gain admittance to my hearth, I pray  
 The curse I laid on others fall on me.  
 See that ye give effect to all my hest,

For my sake and the god's and for our land,  
 A desert blasted by the wrath of heaven.  
 For, let alone the god's express command,  
 It were a scandal ye should leave unpurged  
 The murder of a great man and your king,  
 Nor track it home. And now that I am lord,  
 Successor to his throne, his bed, his wife,  
 (And had he not been frustrate in the hope  
 Of issue, common children of one womb  
 Had forced a closer bond twixt him and me,  
 But Fate swooped down upon him), therefore I  
 His blood-avenger will maintain his cause  
 As though he were my sire, and leave no stone  
 Unturned to track the assassin or avenge  
 The son of Labdacus, of Polydore,  
 Of Cadmus, and Agenor first of the race.  
 And for the disobedient thus I pray:  
 May the gods send them neither timely fruits  
 Of earth, nor teeming increase of the womb,  
 But may they waste and pine, as now they waste,  
 Aye and worse stricken; but to all of you,  
 My loyal subjects who approve my acts,  
 May Justice, our ally, and all the gods  
 Be gracious and attend you evermore.

**CHORUS**

The oath thou profferest, sire, I take and swear.  
 I slew him not myself, nor can I name  
 The slayer. For the quest, 'twere well, methinks  
 That Phoebus, who proposed the riddle, himself  
 Should give the answer--who the murderer was.

**OEDIPUS**

Well argued; but no living man can hope  
 To force the gods to speak against their will.

**CHORUS**

May I then say what seems next best to me?

**OEDIPUS**

Aye, if there be a third best, tell it too.

**CHORUS**

My liege, if any man sees eye to eye  
 With our lord Phoebus, 'tis our prophet, lord  
 Teiresias; he of all men best might guide  
 A searcher of this matter to the light.

**OEDIPUS**

Here too my zeal has nothing lagged, for twice  
 At Creon's instance have I sent to fetch him,  
 And long I marvel why he is not here.

**CHORUS**

I mind me too of rumors long ago--  
 Mere gossip.

**OEDIPUS**

Tell them, I would fain know all.

**CHORUS**

'Twas said he fell by travelers.

**OEDIPUS**

So I heard,  
 But none has seen the man who saw him fall.

**CHORUS**

Well, if he knows what fear is, he will quail  
 And flee before the terror of thy curse.

**OEDIPUS**

Words scare not him who blenches not at deeds.

**CHORUS**

But here is one to arraign him. Lo, at length  
 They bring the god-inspired seer in whom  
 Above all other men is truth inborn.

*Enter TEIRESIAS, led by a boy.*

**OEDIPUS**

Teiresias, seer who comprehendest all,  
 Lore of the wise and hidden mysteries,  
 High things of heaven and low things of the earth,  
 Thou knowest, though thy blinded eyes see naught,  
 What plague infects our city; and we turn  
 To thee, O seer, our one defense and shield.  
 The purport of the answer that the God  
 Returned to us who sought his oracle,  
 The messengers have doubtless told thee--how  
 One course alone could rid us of the pest,  
 To find the murderers of Laius,  
 And slay them or expel them from the land.  
 Therefore begrudging neither augury  
 Nor other divination that is thine,  
 O save thyself, thy country, and thy king,  
 Save all from this defilement of blood shed.  
 On thee we rest. This is man's highest end,

To others' service all his powers to lend.

**TEIRESIAS**

Alas, alas, what misery to be wise  
When wisdom profits nothing! This old lore  
I had forgotten; else I were not here.

**OEDIPUS**

What ails thee? Why this melancholy mood?

**TEIRESIAS**

Let me go home; prevent me not; 'twere best  
That thou shouldst bear thy burden and I mine.

**OEDIPUS**

For shame! no true-born Theban patriot  
Would thus withhold the word of prophecy.

**TEIRESIAS**

Thy words, O king, are wide of the mark, and I  
For fear lest I too trip like thee...

**OEDIPUS**

Oh speak,  
Withhold not, I adjure thee, if thou know'st,  
Thy knowledge. We are all thy suppliants.

**TEIRESIAS**

Aye, for ye all are witless, but my voice  
Will ne'er reveal my miseries--or thine.

**OEDIPUS**

What then, thou knowest, and yet willst not speak!  
Wouldst thou betray us and destroy the State?

**TEIRESIAS**

I will not vex myself nor thee. Why ask  
Thus idly what from me thou shalt not learn?

**OEDIPUS**

Monster! thy silence would incense a flint.  
Will nothing loose thy tongue? Can nothing  
melt thee,  
Or shake thy dogged taciturnity?

**TEIRESIAS**

Thou blam'st my mood and seest not thine own  
Wherewith thou art mated; no, thou taxest me.

**OEDIPUS**

And who could stay his choler when he heard  
How insolently thou dost flout the State?

**TEIRESIAS**

Well, it will come what will, though I be mute.

**OEDIPUS**

Since come it must, thy duty is to tell me.

**TEIRESIAS**

I have no more to say; storm as thou willst,  
And give the rein to all thy pent-up rage.

**OEDIPUS**

Yea, I am wroth, and will not stint my words,  
But speak my whole mind. Thou methinks thou  
art he,  
Who planned the crime, aye, and performed it too,  
All save the assassination; and if thou  
Hadst not been blind, I had been sworn to boot  
That thou alone didst do the bloody deed.

**TEIRESIAS**

Is it so? Then I charge thee to abide  
By thine own proclamation; from this day  
Speak not to these or me. Thou art the man,  
Thou the accursed polluter of this land.

**OEDIPUS**

Vile slanderer, thou blurtest forth these taunts,  
And think'st forsooth as seer to go scot free.

**TEIRESIAS**

Yea, I am free, strong in the strength of truth.

**OEDIPUS**

Who was thy teacher? not methinks thy art.

**TEIRESIAS**

Thou, goading me against my will to speak.

**OEDIPUS**

What speech? repeat it and resolve my doubt.

**TEIRESIAS**

Didst miss my sense wouldst thou goad me on?

**OEDIPUS**

I but half caught thy meaning; say it again.

**TEIRESIAS**

I say thou art the murderer of the man  
Whose murderer thou pursuest.

**OEDIPUS**

Thou shalt rue it  
Twice to repeat so gross a calumny.

**TEIRESIAS**

Must I say more to aggravate thy rage?

**OEDIPUS**

Say all thou wilt; it will be but waste of breath.

**TEIRESIAS**

I say thou livest with thy nearest kin  
In infamy, unwitting in thy shame.

**OEDIPUS**

Think'st thou for aye unscathed to wag thy tongue?

**TEIRESIAS**

Yea, if the might of truth can aught prevail.

**OEDIPUS**

With other men, but not with thee, for thou  
In ear, wit, eye, in everything art blind.

**TEIRESIAS**

Poor fool to utter gibes at me which all  
Here present will cast back on thee ere long.

**OEDIPUS**

Offspring of endless Night, thou hast no power  
O'er me or any man who sees the sun.

**TEIRESIAS**

No, for thy weird is not to fall by me.  
I leave to Apollo what concerns the god.

**OEDIPUS**

Is this a plot of Creon, or thine own?

**TEIRESIAS**

Not Creon, thou thyself art thine own bane.

**OEDIPUS**

O wealth and empire and skill by skill  
Outwitted in the battlefield of life,  
What spite and envy follow in your train!  
See, for this crown the State conferred on me.  
A gift, a thing I sought not, for this crown  
The trusty Creon, my familiar friend,  
Hath lain in wait to oust me and suborned  
This mountebank, this juggling charlatan,  
This tricky beggar-priest, for gain alone  
Keen-eyed, but in his proper art stone-blind.  
Say, sirrah, hast thou ever proved thyself  
A prophet? When the riddling Sphinx was here  
Why hadst thou no deliverance for this folk?  
And yet the riddle was not to be solved  
By guess-work but required the prophet's art;  
Wherein thou wast found lacking; neither birds  
Nor sign from heaven helped thee, but I came,  
The simple Oedipus; I stopped her mouth  
By mother wit, untaught of auguries.  
This is the man whom thou wouldst undermine,  
In hope to reign with Creon in my stead.  
Methinks that thou and thine abettor soon  
Will rue your plot to drive the scapegoat out.  
Thank thy grey hairs that thou hast still to learn  
What chastisement such arrogance deserves.

**CHORUS**

To us it seems that both the seer and thou,  
O Oedipus, have spoken angry words.  
This is no time to wrangle but consult  
How best we may fulfill the oracle.

**TEIRESIAS**

King as thou art, free speech at least is mine  
To make reply; in this I am thy peer.  
I own no lord but Loxias; him I serve  
And ne'er can stand enrolled as Creon's man.  
Thus then I answer: since thou hast not spared  
To twit me with my blindness--thou hast eyes,  
Yet see'st not in what misery thou art fallen,  
Nor where thou dwellest nor with whom for mate.  
Dost know thy lineage? Nay, thou know'st it not,  
And all unwitting art a double foe.  
To thine own kin, the living and the dead;  
Aye and the dogging curse of mother and sire  
One day shall drive thee, like a two-edged sword,  
Beyond our borders, and the eyes that now  
See clear shall henceforward endless night.  
Ah whither shall thy bitter cry not reach,

What crag in all Cithaeron but shall then  
 Reverberate thy wail, when thou hast found  
 With what a hymeneal thou wast borne  
 Home, but to no fair haven, on the gale!  
 Aye, and a flood of ills thou guessest not  
 Shall set thyself and children in one line.  
 Flout then both Creon and my words, for none  
 Of mortals shall be stricken worse than thou.

**OEDIPUS**

Must I endure this fellow's insolence?  
 A murrain on thee! Get thee hence! Begone  
 Avaunt! and never cross my threshold more.

**TEIRESIAS**

I ne'er had come hadst thou not bidden me.

**OEDIPUS**

I know not thou wouldst utter folly, else  
 Long hadst thou waited to be summoned here.

**TEIRESIAS**

Such am I--as it seems to thee a fool,  
 But to the parents who begat thee, wise.

**OEDIPUS**

What sayest thou--"parents"? Who begat me,  
 speak?

**TEIRESIAS**

This day shall be thy birth-day, and thy grave.

**OEDIPUS**

Thou lov'st to speak in riddles and dark words.

**TEIRESIAS**

In reading riddles who so skilled as thou?

**OEDIPUS**

Twit me with that wherein my greatness lies.

**TEIRESIAS**

And yet this very greatness proved thy bane.

**OEDIPUS**

No matter if I saved the commonwealth.

**TEIRESIAS**

'Tis time I left thee. Come, boy, take me home.

**OEDIPUS**

Aye, take him quickly, for his presence irks  
 And lets me; gone, thou canst not plague me more.

**TEIRESIAS**

I go, but first will tell thee why I came.  
 Thy frown I dread not, for thou canst not harm me.  
 Hear then: this man whom thou hast sought to  
 arrest  
 With threats and warrants this long while, the  
 wretch  
 Who murdered Laius--that man is here.  
 He passes for an alien in the land  
 But soon shall prove a Theban, native born.  
 And yet his fortune brings him little joy;  
 For blind of seeing, clad in beggar's weeds,  
 For purple robes, and leaning on his staff,  
 To a strange land he soon shall grope his way.  
 And of the children, inmates of his home,  
 He shall be proved the brother and the sire,  
 Of her who bare him son and husband both,  
 Co-partner, and assassin of his sire.  
 Go in and ponder this, and if thou find  
 That I have missed the mark, henceforth declare  
 I have no wit nor skill in prophecy.

*Exeunt TEIRESIAS and OEDIPUS.*

**CHORUS***strophe 1*

Who is he by voice immortal named from Pythia's  
 rocky cell,  
 Doer of foul deeds of bloodshed, horrors that no  
 tongue can tell?  
 A foot for flight he needs  
 Fleeter than storm-swift steeds,  
 For on his heels doth follow,  
 Armed with the lightnings of his Sire, Apollo.  
 Like sleuth-hounds too  
 The Fates pursue.

*antistrophe 1*

Yea, but now flashed forth the summons from  
 Parnassus' snowy peak,  
 "Near and far the undiscovered doer of this  
 murder seek!"  
 Now like a sullen bull he roves  
 Through forest brakes and upland groves,  
 And vainly seeks to fly  
 The doom that ever nigh

Flits o'er his head,  
Still by the avenging Phoebus sped,  
The voice divine,  
From Earth's mid shrine.

*strophe 2*

Sore perplexed am I by the words of the master  
seer.  
Are they true, are they false? I know not and bridle  
my tongue for fear,  
Fluttered with vague surmise; nor present nor  
future is clear.  
Quarrel of ancient date or in days still near know  
I none  
Twixt the Labdacidan house and our ruler,  
Polybus' son.  
Proof is there none: how then can I challenge our  
King's good name,  
How in a blood-feud join for an untracked deed of  
shame?

*antistrophe 2*

All wise are Zeus and Apollo, and nothing is hid  
from their ken;  
They are gods; and in wits a man may surpass his  
fellow men;  
But that a mortal seer knows more than I  
know--where  
Hath this been proven? Or how without sign  
assured, can I blame  
Him who saved our State when the winged  
songstress came,  
Tested and tried in the light of us all, like  
gold assayed?  
How can I now assent when a crime is on Oedipus  
laid?

**CREON**

Friends, countrymen, I learn King Oedipus  
Hath laid against me a most grievous charge,  
And come to you protesting. If he deems  
That I have harmed or injured him in aught  
By word or deed in this our present trouble,  
I care not to prolong the span of life,  
Thus ill-reputed; for the calumny  
Hits not a single blot, but blasts my name,  
If by the general voice I am denounced  
False to the State and false by you my friends.

**CHORUS**

This taunt, it well may be, was blurted out

In petulance, not spoken advisedly.

**CREON**

Did any dare pretend that it was I  
Prompted the seer to utter a forged charge?

**CHORUS**

Such things were said; with what intent I know  
not.

**CREON**

Were not his wits and vision all astray  
When upon me he fixed this monstrous charge?

**CHORUS**

I know not; to my sovereign's acts I am blind.  
But lo, he comes to answer for himself.

*Enter OEDIPUS.*

**OEDIPUS**

Sirrah, what mak'st thou here? Dost thou presume  
To approach my doors, thou brazen-faced rogue,  
My murderer and the filcher of my crown?  
Come, answer this, didst thou detect in me  
Some touch of cowardice or witlessness,  
That made thee undertake this enterprise?  
I seemed forsooth too simple to perceive  
The serpent stealing on me in the dark,  
Or else too weak to scotch it when I saw.  
This thou art witless seeking to possess  
Without a following or friends the crown,  
A prize that followers and wealth must win.

**CREON**

Attend me. Thou hast spoken, 'tis my turn  
To make reply. Then having heard me, judge.

**OEDIPUS**

Thou art glib of tongue, but I am slow to learn  
Of thee; I know too well thy venomous hate.

**CREON**

First I would argue out this very point.

**OEDIPUS**

O argue not that thou art not a rogue.

**CREON**

If thou dost count a virtue stubbornness,

Unschool'd by reason, thou art much astray.

**OEDIPUS**

If thou dost hold a kinsman may be wronged,  
And no pains follow, thou art much to seek.

**CREON**

Therein thou judgest rightly, but this wrong  
That thou allegest--tell me what it is.

**OEDIPUS**

Didst thou or didst thou not advise that I  
Should call the priest?

**CREON**

Yes, and I stand to it.

**OEDIPUS**

Tell me how long is it since Laius...

**CREON**

Since Laius...? I follow not thy drift.

**OEDIPUS**

By violent hands was spirited away.

**CREON**

In the dim past, a many years ago.

**OEDIPUS**

Did the same prophet then pursue his craft?

**CREON**

Yes, skilled as now and in no less repute.

**OEDIPUS**

Did he at that time ever glance at me?

**CREON**

Not to my knowledge, not when I was by.

**OEDIPUS**

But was no search and inquisition made?

**CREON**

Surely full quest was made, but nothing learnt.

**OEDIPUS**

Why failed the seer to tell his story then?

**CREON**

I know not, and not knowing hold my tongue.

**OEDIPUS**

This much thou knowest and canst surely tell.

**CREON**

What's mean'st thou? All I know I will declare.

**OEDIPUS**

But for thy prompting never had the seer  
Ascribed to me the death of Laius.

**CREON**

If so he thou knowest best; but I  
Would put thee to the question in my turn.

**OEDIPUS**

Question and prove me murderer if thou canst.

**CREON**

Then let me ask thee, didst thou wed my sister?

**OEDIPUS**

A fact so plain I cannot well deny.

**CREON**

And as thy consort queen she shares the throne?

**OEDIPUS**

I grant her freely all her heart desires.

**CREON**

And with you twain I share the triple rule?

**OEDIPUS**

Yea, and it is that proves thee a false friend.

**CREON**

Not so, if thou wouldst reason with thyself,  
As I with myself. First, I bid thee think,  
Would any mortal choose a troubled reign  
Of terrors rather than secure repose,  
If the same power were given him? As for me,  
I have no natural craving for the name  
Of king, preferring to do kingly deeds,  
And so thinks every sober-minded man.  
Now all my needs are satisfied through thee,

And I have naught to fear; but were I king,  
 My acts would oft run counter to my will.  
 How could a title then have charms for me  
 Above the sweets of boundless influence?  
 I am not so infatuate as to grasp  
 The shadow when I hold the substance fast.  
 Now all men cry me Godspeed! wish me well,  
 And every suitor seeks to gain my ear,  
 If he would hope to win a grace from thee.  
 Why should I leave the better, choose the worse?  
 That were sheer madness, and I am not mad.  
 No such ambition ever tempted me,  
 Nor would I have a share in such intrigue.  
 And if thou doubt me, first to Delphi go,  
 There ascertain if my report was true  
 Of the god's answer; next investigate  
 If with the seer I plotted or conspired,  
 And if it prove so, sentence me to death,  
 Not by thy voice alone, but mine and thine.  
 But O condemn me not, without appeal,  
 On bare suspicion. 'Tis not right to adjudge  
 Bad men at random good, or good men bad.  
 I would as lief a man should cast away  
 The thing he counts most precious, his own life,  
 As spurn a true friend. Thou wilt learn in time  
 The truth, for time alone reveals the just;  
 A villain is detected in a day.

**CHORUS**

To one who walketh warily his words  
 Commend themselves; swift counsels are not sure.

**OEDIPUS**

When with swift strides the stealthy plotter stalks  
 I must be quick too with my counterplot.  
 To wait his onset passively, for him  
 Is sure success, for me assured defeat.

**CREON**

What then's thy will? To banish me the land?

**OEDIPUS**

I would not have thee banished, no, but dead,  
 That men may mark the wages envy reaps.

**CREON**

I see thou wilt not yield, nor credit me.

**OEDIPUS**

None but a fool would credit such as thou.

**CREON**

Thou art not wise.

**OEDIPUS**

Wise for myself at least.

**CREON**

Why not for me too?

**OEDIPUS**

Why for such a knave?

**CREON**

Suppose thou lackedst sense.

**OEDIPUS**

Yet kings must rule.

**CREON**

Not if they rule ill.

**OEDIPUS**

Oh my Thebans, hear him!

**CREON**

Thy Thebans? am not I a Theban too?

**CHORUS**

Cease, princes; lo there comes, and none too soon,  
 Jocasta from the palace. Who so fit  
 As peacemaker to reconcile your feud?

*Enter JOCASTA.*

**JOCASTA**

Misguided princes, why have ye upraised  
 This wordy wrangle? Are ye not ashamed,  
 While the whole land lies stricken, thus to voice  
 Your private injuries? Go in, my lord;  
 Go home, my brother, and forebear to make  
 A public scandal of a petty grief.

**CREON**

My royal sister, Oedipus, thy lord,  
 Hath bid me choose (O dread alternative!)  
 An outlaw's exile or a felon's death.

**OEDIPUS**

Yes, lady; I have caught him practicing  
Against my royal person his vile arts.

**CREON**

May I ne'er speed but die accursed, if I  
In any way am guilty of this charge.

**JOCASTA**

Believe him, I adjure thee, Oedipus,  
First for his solemn oath's sake, then for mine,  
And for thine elders' sake who wait on thee.

**CHORUS**

*strophe 1*

Hearken, King, reflect, we pray thee, but not  
stubborn but relent.

**OEDIPUS**

Say to what should I consent?

**CHORUS**

Respect a man whose probity and troth  
Are known to all and now confirmed by oath.

**OEDIPUS**

Dost know what grace thou cravest?

**CHORUS**

Yea, I know.

**OEDIPUS**

Declare it then and make thy meaning plain.

**CHORUS**

Brand not a friend whom babbling tongues assail;  
Let not suspicion 'gainst his oath prevail.

**OEDIPUS**

Bethink you that in seeking this ye seek  
In very sooth my death or banishment?

**CHORUS**

No, by the leader of the host divine!

*strophe 2*

Witness, thou Sun, such thought was never mine,  
Unblest, unfriended may I perish,  
If ever I such wish did cherish!  
But O my heart is desolate  
Musing on our stricken State,

Doubly fall'n should discord grow  
Twixt you twain, to crown our woe.

**OEDIPUS**

Well, let him go, no matter what it cost me,  
Or certain death or shameful banishment,  
For your sake I relent, not his; and him,  
Where'er he be, my heart shall still abhor.

**CREON**

Thou art as sullen in thy yielding mood  
As in thine anger thou wast truculent.  
Such tempers justly plague themselves the most.

**OEDIPUS**

Leave me in peace and get thee gone.

**CREON**

I go,  
By thee misjudged, but justified by these.

*Exeunt CREON.*

**CHORUS**

*antistrophe 1*

Lady, lead indoors thy consort; wherefore longer  
here delay?

**JOCASTA**

Tell me first how rose the fray.

**CHORUS**

Rumors bred unjust suspicious and injustice  
rankles sore.

**JOCASTA**

Were both at fault?

**CHORUS**

Both.

**JOCASTA**

What was the tale?

**CHORUS**

Ask me no more. The land is sore distressed;  
'Twere better sleeping ills to leave at rest.

**OEDIPUS**

Strange counsel, friend! I know thou mean'st

me well,  
And yet would'st mitigate and blunt my zeal.

**CHORUS**

*antistrophe 2*

King, I say it once again,  
Witless were I proved, insane,  
If I lightly put away  
Thee my country's prop and stay,  
Pilot who, in danger sought,  
To a quiet haven brought  
Our distracted State; and now  
Who can guide us right but thou?

**JOCASTA**

Let me too, I adjure thee, know, O king,  
What cause has stirred this unrelenting wrath.

**OEDIPUS**

I will, for thou art more to me than these.  
Lady, the cause is Creon and his plots.

**JOCASTA**

But what provoked the quarrel? make this clear.

**OEDIPUS**

He points me out as Laius' murderer.

**JOCASTA**

Of his own knowledge or upon report?

**OEDIPUS**

He is too cunning to commit himself,  
And makes a mouthpiece of a knavish seer.

**JOCASTA**

Then thou mayest ease thy conscience on  
that score.  
Listen and I'll convince thee that no man  
Hath scot or lot in the prophetic art.  
Here is the proof in brief. An oracle  
Once came to Laius (I will not say  
'Twas from the Delphic god himself, but from  
His ministers) declaring he was doomed  
To perish by the hand of his own son,  
A child that should be born to him by me.  
Now Laius--so at least report affirmed--  
Was murdered on a day by highwaymen,  
No natives, at a spot where three roads meet.

As for the child, it was but three days old,  
When Laius, its ankles pierced and pinned  
Together, gave it to be cast away  
By others on the trackless mountain side.  
So then Apollo brought it not to pass  
The child should be his father's murderer,  
Or the dread terror find accomplishment,  
And Laius be slain by his own son.  
Such was the prophet's horoscope. O king,  
Regard it not. Whate'er the god deems fit  
To search, himself unaided will reveal.

**OEDIPUS**

What memories, what wild tumult of the soul  
Came o'er me, lady, as I heard thee speak!

**JOCASTA**

What mean'st thou? What has shocked and startled  
thee?

**OEDIPUS**

Methought I heard thee say that Laius  
Was murdered at the meeting of three roads.

**JOCASTA**

So ran the story that is current still.

**OEDIPUS**

Where did this happen? Dost thou know the place?

**JOCASTA**

Phocis the land is called; the spot is where  
Branch roads from Delphi and from Daulis meet.

**OEDIPUS**

And how long is it since these things befell?

**JOCASTA**

'Twas but a brief while were thou wast proclaimed  
Our country's ruler that the news was brought.

**OEDIPUS**

O Zeus, what hast thou willed to do with me!

**JOCASTA**

What is it, Oedipus, that moves thee so?

**OEDIPUS**

Ask me not yet; tell me the build and height

Of Laius? Was he still in manhood's prime?

**JOCASTA**

Tall was he, and his hair was lightly strewn  
With silver; and not unlike thee in form.

**OEDIPUS**

O woe is me! Mehtinks unwittingly  
I laid but now a dread curse on myself.

**JOCASTA**

What say'st thou? When I look upon thee, my king,  
I tremble.

**OEDIPUS**

'Tis a dread presentiment  
That in the end the seer will prove not blind.  
One further question to resolve my doubt.

**JOCASTA**

I quail; but ask, and I will answer all.

**OEDIPUS**

Had he but few attendants or a train  
Of armed retainers with him, like a prince?

**JOCASTA**

They were but five in all, and one of them  
A herald; Laius in a mule-car rode.

**OEDIPUS**

Alas! 'tis clear as noonday now. But say,  
Lady, who carried this report to Thebes?

**JOCASTA**

A serf, the sole survivor who returned.

**OEDIPUS**

Haply he is at hand or in the house?

**JOCASTA**

No, for as soon as he returned and found  
Thee reigning in the stead of Laius slain,  
He clasped my hand and supplicated me  
To send him to the alps and pastures, where  
He might be farthest from the sight of Thebes.  
And so I sent him. 'Twas an honest slave  
And well deserved some better recompense.

**OEDIPUS**

Fetch him at once. I fain would see the man.

**JOCASTA**

He shall be brought; but wherefore summon him?

**OEDIPUS**

Lady, I fear my tongue has overrun  
Discretion; therefore I would question him.

**JOCASTA**

Well, he shall come, but may not I too claim  
To share the burden of thy heart, my king?

**OEDIPUS**

And thou shalt not be frustrate of thy wish.  
Now my imaginings have gone so far.  
Who has a higher claim that thou to hear  
My tale of dire adventures? Listen then.  
My sire was Polybus of Corinth, and  
My mother Merope, a Dorian;  
And I was held the foremost citizen,  
Till a strange thing befell me, strange indeed,  
Yet scarce deserving all the heat it stirred.  
A roisterer at some banquet, flown with wine,  
Shouted "Thou art not true son of thy sire."  
It irked me, but I stomached for the nonce  
The insult; on the morrow I sought out  
My mother and my sire and questioned them.  
They were indignant at the random slur  
Cast on my parentage and did their best  
To comfort me, but still the venom'd barb  
Rankled, for still the scandal spread and grew.  
So privily without their leave I went  
To Delphi, and Apollo sent me back  
Baulked of the knowledge that I came to seek.  
But other grievous things he prophesied,  
Woes, lamentations, mourning, portents dire;  
To wit I should defile my mother's bed  
And raise up seed too loathsome to behold,  
And slay the father from whose loins I sprang.  
Then, lady,--thou shalt hear the very truth--  
As I drew near the triple-branching roads,  
A herald met me and a man who sat  
In a car drawn by colts--as in thy tale--  
The man in front and the old man himself  
Threatened to thrust me rudely from the path,  
Then jostled by the charioteer in wrath  
I struck him, and the old man, seeing this,

Watched till I passed and from his car brought  
 down  
 Full on my head the double-pointed goad.  
 Yet was I quits with him and more; one stroke  
 Of my good staff sufficed to fling him clean  
 Out of the chariot seat and laid him prone.  
 And so I slew them every one. But if  
 Betwixt this stranger there was aught in common  
 With Laius, who more miserable than I,  
 What mortal could you find more god-abhorred?  
 Wretch whom no sojourner, no citizen  
 May harbor or address, whom all are bound  
 To harry from their homes. And this same curse  
 Was laid on me, and laid by none but me.  
 Yea with these hands all gory I pollute  
 The bed of him I slew. Say, am I vile?  
 Am I not utterly unclean, a wretch  
 Doomed to be banished, and in banishment  
 Forgo the sight of all my dearest ones,  
 And never tread again my native earth;  
 Or else to wed my mother and slay my sire,  
 Polybus, who begat me and upreared?  
 If one should say, this is the handiwork  
 Of some inhuman power, who could blame  
 His judgment? But, ye pure and awful gods,  
 Forbid, forbid that I should see that day!  
 May I be blotted out from living men  
 Ere such a plague spot set on me its brand!

**CHORUS**

We too, O king, are troubled; but till thou  
 Hast questioned the survivor, still hope on.

**OEDIPUS**

My hope is faint, but still enough survives  
 To bid me bide the coming of this herd.

**JOCASTA**

Suppose him here, what wouldst thou learn of  
 him?

**OEDIPUS**

I'll tell thee, lady; if his tale agrees  
 With thine, I shall have 'scaped calamity.

**JOCASTA**

And what of special import did I say?

**OEDIPUS**

In thy report of what the herdsman said  
 Laius was slain by robbers; now if he  
 Still speaks of robbers, not a robber, I  
 Slew him not; "one" with "many" cannot square.  
 But if he says one lonely wayfarer,  
 The last link wanting to my guilt is forged.

**JOCASTA**

Well, rest assured, his tale ran thus at first,  
 Nor can he now retract what then he said;  
 Not I alone but all our townsfolk heard it.  
 E'en should he vary somewhat in his story,  
 He cannot make the death of Laius  
 In any wise jump with the oracle.  
 For Loxias said expressly he was doomed  
 To die by my child's hand, but he, poor babe,  
 He shed no blood, but perished first himself.  
 So much for divination. Henceforth I  
 Will look for signs neither to right nor left.

**OEDIPUS**

Thou reasonest well. Still I would have thee send  
 And fetch the bondsman hither. See to it.

**JOCASTA**

That will I straightway. Come, let us within.  
 I would do nothing that my lord dislikes.

*Exeunt OEDIPUS and JOCASTA.*

**CHORUS**

*strophe 1*

My lot be still to lead  
 The life of innocence and fly  
 Irreverence in word or deed,  
 To follow still those laws ordained on high  
 Whose birthplace is the bright ethereal sky  
 No mortal birth they own,  
 Olympus their progenitor alone:  
 Ne'er shall they slumber in oblivion cold,  
 The god in them is strong and grows not old.  
*antistrophe 1*  
 Of insolence is bred  
 The tyrant; insolence full blown,  
 With empty riches surfeited,  
 Scales the precipitous height and grasps the throne.  
 Then topples o'er and lies in ruin prone;  
 No foothold on that dizzy steep.  
 But O may Heaven the true patriot keep  
 Who burns with emulous zeal to serve the State.

God is my help and hope, on him I wait.

*strophe 2*

But the proud sinner, or in word or deed,  
That will not Justice heed,  
Nor reverence the shrine  
Of images divine,  
Perdition seize his vain imaginings,  
If, urged by greed profane,  
He grasps at ill-got gain,  
And lays an impious hand on holiest things.  
Who when such deeds are done  
Can hope heaven's bolts to shun?  
If sin like this to honor can aspire,  
Why dance I still and lead the sacred choir?

*antistrophe 2*

No more I'll seek earth's central oracle,  
Or Abae's hallowed cell,  
Nor to Olympia bring  
My votive offering.  
If before all God's truth be not bade plain.  
O Zeus, reveal thy might,  
King, if thou'rt named aright  
Omnipotent, all-seeing, as of old;  
For Laius is forgot;  
His weird, men heed it not;  
Apollo is forsook and faith grows cold.

*Enter JOCASTA.*

**JOCASTA**

My lords, ye look amazed to see your queen  
With wreaths and gifts of incense in her hands.  
I had a mind to visit the high shrines,  
For Oedipus is overwrought, alarmed  
With terrors manifold. He will not use  
His past experience, like a man of sense,  
To judge the present need, but lends an ear  
To any croaker if he augurs ill.  
Since then my counsels naught avail, I turn  
To thee, our present help in time of trouble,  
Apollo, Lord Lycean, and to thee  
My prayers and supplications here I bring.  
Lighten us, lord, and cleanse us from this curse!  
For now we all are cowed like mariners  
Who see their helmsman dumbstruck in the storm.

*Enter Corinthian MESSENGER.*

**MESSENGER**

My masters, tell me where the palace is  
Of Oedipus; or better, where's the king.

**CHORUS**

Here is the palace and he bides within;  
This is his queen the mother of his children.

**MESSENGER**

All happiness attend her and the house,  
Blessed is her husband and her marriage-bed.

**JOCASTA**

My greetings to thee, stranger; thy fair words  
Deserve a like response. But tell me why  
Thou comest--what thy need or what thy news.

**MESSENGER**

Good for thy consort and the royal house.

**JOCASTA**

What may it be? Whose messenger art thou?

**MESSENGER**

The Isthmian commons have resolved to make  
Thy husband king--so 'twas reported there.

**JOCASTA**

What! is not aged Polybus still king?

**MESSENGER**

No, verily; he's dead and in his grave.

**JOCASTA**

What! is he dead, the sire of Oedipus?

**MESSENGER**

If I speak falsely, may I die myself.

**JOCASTA**

Quick, maiden, bear these tidings to my lord.  
Ye god-sent oracles, where stand ye now!  
This is the man whom Oedipus long shunned,  
In dread to prove his murderer; and now  
He dies in nature's course, not by his hand.

*Enter OEDIPUS.*

**OEDIPUS**

My wife, my queen, Jocasta, why hast thou  
Summoned me from my palace?

**JOCASTA**

Hear this man,  
And as thou hearest judge what has become  
Of all those awe-inspiring oracles.

**OEDIPUS**

Who is this man, and what his news for me?

**JOCASTA**

He comes from Corinth and his message this:  
Thy father Polybus hath passed away.

**OEDIPUS**

What? let me have it, stranger, from thy mouth.

**MESSENGER**

If I must first make plain beyond a doubt  
My message, know that Polybus is dead.

**OEDIPUS**

By treachery, or by sickness visited?

**MESSENGER**

One touch will send an old man to his rest.

**OEDIPUS**

So of some malady he died, poor man.

**MESSENGER**

Yes, having measured the full span of years.

**OEDIPUS**

Out on it, lady! why should one regard  
The Pythian hearth or birds that scream i' the air?  
Did they not point at me as doomed to slay  
My father? but he's dead and in his grave  
And here am I who ne'er unsheathed a sword;  
Unless the longing for his absent son  
Killed him and so I slew him in a sense.  
But, as they stand, the oracles are dead--  
Dust, ashes, nothing, dead as Polybus.

**JOCASTA**

Say, did not I foretell this long ago?

**OEDIPUS**

Thou didst: but I was misled by my fear.

**JOCASTA**

Then let I no more weigh upon thy soul.

**OEDIPUS**

Must I not fear my mother's marriage bed.

**JOCASTA**

Why should a mortal man, the sport of chance,  
With no assured foreknowledge, be afraid?  
Best live a careless life from hand to mouth.  
This wedlock with thy mother fear not thou.  
How oft it chanceth that in dreams a man  
Has wed his mother! He who least regards  
Such brainsick phantasies lives most at ease.

**OEDIPUS**

I should have shared in full thy confidence,  
Were not my mother living; since she lives  
Though half convinced I still must live in dread.

**JOCASTA**

And yet thy sire's death lights out darkness much.

**OEDIPUS**

Much, but my fear is touching her who lives.

**MESSENGER**

Who may this woman be whom thus you fear?

**OEDIPUS**

Merope, stranger, wife of Polybus.

**MESSENGER**

And what of her can cause you any fear?

**OEDIPUS**

A heaven-sent oracle of dread import.

**MESSENGER**

A mystery, or may a stranger hear it?

**OEDIPUS**

Aye, 'tis no secret. Loxias once foretold  
That I should mate with mine own mother, and  
shed  
With my own hands the blood of my own sire.  
Hence Corinth was for many a year to me  
A home distant; and I trove abroad,  
But missed the sweetest sight, my parents' face.

**MESSENGER**

Was this the fear that exiled thee from home?

**OEDIPUS**

Yea, and the dread of slaying my own sire.

**MESSENGER**

Why, since I came to give thee pleasure, King,  
Have I not rid thee of this second fear?

**OEDIPUS**

Well, thou shalt have due guerdon for thy pains.

**MESSENGER**

Well, I confess what chiefly made me come  
Was hope to profit by thy coming home.

**OEDIPUS**

Nay, I will ne'er go near my parents more.

**MESSENGER**

My son, 'tis plain, thou know'st not what thou  
doest.

**OEDIPUS**

How so, old man? For heaven's sake tell me all.

**MESSENGER**

If this is why thou darest to return.

**OEDIPUS**

Yea, lest the god's word be fulfilled in me.

**MESSENGER**

Lest through thy parents thou shouldst be  
accursed?

**OEDIPUS**

This and none other is my constant dread.

**MESSENGER**

Dost thou not know thy fears are baseless all?

**OEDIPUS**

How baseless, if I am their very son?

**MESSENGER**

Since Polybus was naught to thee in blood.

**OEDIPUS**

What say'st thou? was not Polybus my sire?

**MESSENGER**

As much thy sire as I am, and no more.

**OEDIPUS**

My sire no more to me than one who is naught?

**MESSENGER**

Since I begat thee not, no more did he.

**OEDIPUS**

What reason had he then to call me son?

**MESSENGER**

Know that he took thee from my hands, a gift.

**OEDIPUS**

Yet, if no child of his, he loved me well.

**MESSENGER**

A childless man till then, he warmed to thee.

**OEDIPUS**

A foundling or a purchased slave, this child?

**MESSENGER**

I found thee in Cithaeron's wooded glens.

**OEDIPUS**

What led thee to explore those upland glades?

**MESSENGER**

My business was to tend the mountain flocks.

**OEDIPUS**

A vagrant shepherd journeying for hire?

**MESSENGER**

True, but thy savior in that hour, my son.

**OEDIPUS**

My savior? from what harm? what ailed me then?

**MESSENGER**

Those ankle joints are evidence enow.

**OEDIPUS**

Ah, why remind me of that ancient sore?

**MESSENGER**

I loosed the pin that riveted thy feet.

**OEDIPUS**

Yes, from my cradle that dread brand I bore.

**MESSENGER**

Whence thou deriv'st the name that still is thine.

**OEDIPUS**

Who did it? I adjure thee, tell me who  
Say, was it father, mother?

**MESSENGER**

I know not.  
The man from whom I had thee may know more.

**OEDIPUS**

What, did another find me, not thyself?

**MESSENGER**

Not I; another shepherd gave thee me.

**OEDIPUS**

Who was he? Would'st thou know again the man?

**MESSENGER**

He passed indeed for one of Laius' house.

**OEDIPUS**

The king who ruled the country long ago?

**MESSENGER**

The same: he was a herdsman of the king.

**OEDIPUS**

And is he living still for me to see him?

**MESSENGER**

His fellow-countrymen should best know that.

**OEDIPUS**

Doth any bystander among you know  
The herd he speaks of, or by seeing him  
Afield or in the city? answer straight!  
The hour hath come to clear this business up.

**CHORUS**

Methinks he means none other than the hind  
Whom thou anon wert fain to see; but that  
Our queen Jocasta best of all could tell.

**OEDIPUS**

Madam, dost know the man we sent to fetch?  
Is the same of whom the stranger speaks?

**JOCASTA**

Who is the man? What matter? Let it be.  
'Twere waste of thought to weigh such idle words.

**OEDIPUS**

No, with such guiding clues I cannot fail  
To bring to light the secret of my birth.

**JOCASTA**

Oh, as thou carest for thy life, give o'er  
This quest. Enough the anguish I endure.

**OEDIPUS**

Be of good cheer; though I be proved the son  
Of a bondwoman, aye, through three descents  
Triply a slave, thy honor is unsmirched.

**JOCASTA**

Yet humor me, I pray thee; do not this.

**OEDIPUS**

I cannot; I must probe this matter home.

**JOCASTA**

'Tis for thy sake I advise thee for the best.

**OEDIPUS**

I grow impatient of this best advice.

**JOCASTA**

Ah mayst thou ne'er discover who thou art!

**OEDIPUS**

Go, fetch me here the herd, and leave yon woman  
To glory in her pride of ancestry.

**JOCASTA**

O woe is thee, poor wretch! With that last word  
I leave thee, henceforth silent evermore.

*Exit JOCASTA.*

**CHORUS**

Why, Oedipus, why stung with passionate grief  
Hath the queen thus departed? Much I fear  
From this dead calm will burst a storm of woes.

**OEDIPUS**

Let the storm burst, my fixed resolve still holds,  
To learn my lineage, be it ne'er so low.  
It may be she with all a woman's pride  
Thinks scorn of my base parentage. But I  
Who rank myself as Fortune's favorite child,  
The giver of good gifts, shall not be shamed.  
She is my mother and the changing moons  
My brethren, and with them I wax and wane.  
Thus sprung why should I fear to trace my birth?  
Nothing can make me other than I am.

**CHORUS**

*strophe*

If my soul prophetic err not, if my wisdom aught  
avail,  
Thee, Cithaeron, I shall hail,  
As the nurse and foster-mother of our Oedipus  
shall greet  
Ere tomorrow's full moon rises, and exalt thee as  
is meet.  
Dance and song shall hymn thy praises, lover of  
our royal race.  
Phoebus, may my words find grace!

*antistrophe*

Child, who bare thee, nymph or goddess? sure thy  
sure was more than man,  
Haply the hill-roamer Pan.  
Of did Loxias beget thee, for he haunts the  
upland wold;  
Or Cyllene's lord, or Bacchus, dweller on the  
hilltops cold?  
Did some Heliconian Oread give him thee, a  
new-born joy?  
Nymphs with whom he love to toy?

**OEDIPUS**

Elders, if I, who never yet before  
Have met the man, may make a guess, methinks  
I see the herdsman who we long have sought;  
His time-worn aspect matches with the years  
Of yonder aged messenger; besides  
I seem to recognize the men who bring him

As servants of my own. But you, perchance,  
Having in past days known or seen the herd,  
May better by sure knowledge my surmise.

**CHORUS**

I recognize him; one of Laius' house;  
A simple hind, but true as any man.

*Enter HERDSMAN.*

**OEDIPUS**

Corinthian, stranger, I address thee first,  
Is this the man thou meanest!

**MESSENGER**

This is he.

**OEDIPUS**

And now old man, look up and answer all  
I ask thee. Wast thou once of Laius' house?

**HERDSMAN**

I was, a thrall, not purchased but home-bred.

**OEDIPUS**

What was thy business? how wast thou employed?

**HERDSMAN**

The best part of my life I tended sheep.

**OEDIPUS**

What were the pastures thou didst most frequent?

**HERDSMAN**

Cithaeron and the neighboring alps.

**OEDIPUS**

Then there  
Thou must have known yon man, at least by fame?

**HERDSMAN**

Yon man? in what way? what man dost thou  
mean?

**OEDIPUS**

The man here, having met him in past times...

**HERDSMAN**

Off-hand I cannot call him well to mind.

**MESSENGER**

No wonder, master. But I will revive  
 His blunted memories. Sure he can recall  
 What time together both we drove our flocks,  
 He two, I one, on the Cithaeron range,  
 For three long summers; I his mate from spring  
 Till rose Arcturus; then in winter time  
 I led mine home, he his to Laius' folds.  
 Did these things happen as I say, or no?

**HERDSMAN**

'Tis long ago, but all thou say'st is true.

**MESSENGER**

Well, thou mast then remember giving me  
 A child to rear as my own foster-son?

**HERDSMAN**

Why dost thou ask this question? What of that?

**MESSENGER**

Friend, he that stands before thee was that child.

**HERDSMAN**

A plague upon thee! Hold thy wanton tongue!

**OEDIPUS**

Softly, old man, rebuke him not; thy words  
 Are more deserving chastisement than his.

**HERDSMAN**

O best of masters, what is my offense?

**OEDIPUS**

Not answering what he asks about the child.

**HERDSMAN**

He speaks at random, babbles like a fool.

**OEDIPUS**

If thou lack'st grace to speak, I'll loose thy tongue.

**HERDSMAN**

For mercy's sake abuse not an old man.

**OEDIPUS**

Arrest the villain, seize and pinion him!

**HERDSMAN**

Alack, alack!  
 What have I done? what wouldst thou further  
 learn?

**OEDIPUS**

Didst give this man the child of whom he asks?

**HERDSMAN**

I did; and would that I had died that day!

**OEDIPUS**

And die thou shalt unless thou tell the truth.

**HERDSMAN**

But, if I tell it, I am doubly lost.

**OEDIPUS**

The knave methinks will still prevaricate.

**HERDSMAN**

Nay, I confessed I gave it long ago.

**OEDIPUS**

Whence came it? was it thine, or given to thee?

**HERDSMAN**

I had it from another, 'twas not mine.

**OEDIPUS**

From whom of these our townsmen, and what  
 house?

**HERDSMAN**

Forbear for God's sake, master, ask no more.

**OEDIPUS**

If I must question thee again, thou'rt lost.

**HERDSMAN**

Well then--it was a child of Laius' house.

**OEDIPUS**

Slave-born or one of Laius' own race?

**HERDSMAN**

Ah me!  
 I stand upon the perilous edge of speech.

**OEDIPUS**

And I of hearing, but I still must hear.

**HERDSMAN**

Know then the child was by repute his own,  
But she within, thy consort best could tell.

**OEDIPUS**

What! she, she gave it thee?

**HERDSMAN**

'Tis so, my king.

**OEDIPUS**

With what intent?

**HERDSMAN**

To make away with it.

**OEDIPUS**

What, she its mother.

**HERDSMAN**

Fearing a dread weird.

**OEDIPUS**

What weird?

**HERDSMAN**

'Twas told that he should slay his sire.

**OEDIPUS**

What didst thou give it then to this old man?

**HERDSMAN**

Through pity, master, for the babe. I thought  
He'd take it to the country whence he came;  
But he preserved it for the worst of woes.  
For if thou art in sooth what this man saith,  
God pity thee! thou wast to misery born.

**OEDIPUS**

Ah me! ah me! all brought to pass, all true!  
O light, may I behold thee nevermore!  
I stand a wretch, in birth, in wedlock cursed,  
A parricide, incestuously, triply cursed!

*Exit OEDIPUS.*

**CHORUS**

*strophe 1*

Races of mortal man  
Whose life is but a span,  
I count ye but the shadow of a shade!  
For he who most doth know  
Of bliss, hath but the show;  
A moment, and the visions pale and fade.  
Thy fall, O Oedipus, thy piteous fall  
Warns me none born of women blest to call.

*antistrophe 1*

For he of marksmen best,  
O Zeus, outshot the rest,  
And won the prize supreme of wealth and power.  
By him the vulture maid  
Was quelled, her witchery laid;  
He rose our savior and the land's strong tower.  
We hailed thee king and from that day adored  
Of mighty Thebes the universal lord.

*strophe 2*

O heavy hand of fate!  
Who now more desolate,  
Whose tale more sad than thine, whose lot more  
dire?  
O Oedipus, discrowned head,  
Thy cradle was thy marriage bed;  
One harborage sufficed for son and sire.  
How could the soil thy father eared so long  
Endure to bear in silence such a wrong?

*antistrophe 2*

All-seeing Time hath caught  
Guilt, and to justice brought  
The son and sire commingled in one bed.  
O child of Laius' ill-starred race  
Would I had ne'er beheld thy face;  
I raise for thee a dirge as o'er the dead.  
Yet, sooth to say, through thee I drew new breath,  
And now through thee I feel a second death.

*Enter SECOND MESSENGER.*

**SECOND MESSENGER**

Most grave and reverend senators of Thebes,  
What Deeds ye soon must hear, what sights behold  
How will ye mourn, if, true-born patriots,  
Ye reverence still the race of Labdacus!  
Not Ister nor all Phasis' flood, I ween,  
Could wash away the blood-stains from this house,  
The ills it shrouds or soon will bring to light,

Ills wrought of malice, not unwittingly.  
The worst to bear are self-inflicted wounds.

**CHORUS**

Grievous enough for all our tears and groans  
Our past calamities; what canst thou add?

**SECOND MESSENGER**

My tale is quickly told and quickly heard.  
Our sovereign lady queen Jocasta's dead.

**CHORUS**

Alas, poor queen! how came she by her death?

**SECOND MESSENGER**

By her own hand. And all the horror of it,  
Not having seen, yet cannot comprehend.  
Nathless, as far as my poor memory serves,  
I will relate the unhappy lady's woe.  
When in her frenzy she had passed inside  
The vestibule, she hurried straight to win  
The bridal-chamber, clutching at her hair  
With both her hands, and, once within the room,  
She shut the doors behind her with a crash.  
"Laius," she cried, and called her husband dead  
Long, long ago; her thought was of that child  
By him begot, the son by whom the sire  
Was murdered and the mother left to breed  
With her own seed, a monstrous progeny.  
Then she bewailed the marriage bed whereon  
Poor wretch, she had conceived a double brood,  
Husband by husband, children by her child.  
What happened after that I cannot tell,  
Nor how the end befell, for with a shriek  
Burst on us Oedipus; all eyes were fixed  
On Oedipus, as up and down he strode,  
Nor could we mark her agony to the end.  
For stalking to and fro "A sword!" he cried,  
"Where is the wife, no wife, the teeming womb  
That bore a double harvest, me and mine?"  
And in his frenzy some supernal power  
(No mortal, surely, none of us who watched him)  
Guided his footsteps; with a terrible shriek,  
As though one beckoned him, he crashed against  
The folding doors, and from their staples forced  
The wrenched bolts and hurled himself within.  
Then we beheld the woman hanging there,  
A running noose entwined about her neck.  
But when he saw her, with a maddened roar

He loosed the cord; and when her wretched corpse  
Lay stretched on earth, what followed--O 'twas  
dread!

He tore the golden brooches that upheld  
Her queenly robes, upraised them high and smote  
Full on his eye-balls, uttering words like these:  
"No more shall ye behold such sights of woe,  
Deeds I have suffered and myself have wrought;  
Henceforward quenched in darkness shall ye see  
Those ye should ne'er have seen; now blind to  
those

Whom, when I saw, I vainly yearned to know."  
Such was the burden of his moan, whereto,  
Not once but oft, he struck with his hand uplift  
His eyes, and at each stroke the ensanguined orbs  
Bedewed his beard, not oozing drop by drop,  
But one black gory downpour, thick as hail.  
Such evils, issuing from the double source,  
Have whelmed them both, confounding man and  
wife.

Till now the storied fortune of this house  
Was fortunate indeed; but from this day  
Woe, lamentation, ruin, death, disgrace,  
All ills that can be named, all, all are theirs.

**CHORUS**

But hath he still no respite from his pain?

**SECOND MESSENGER**

He cries, "Unbar the doors and let all Thebes  
Behold the slayer of his sire, his mother's--"  
That shameful word my lips may not repeat.  
He vows to fly self-banished from the land,  
Nor stay to bring upon his house the curse  
Himself had uttered; but he has no strength  
Nor one to guide him, and his torture's more  
Than man can suffer, as yourselves will see.  
For lo, the palace portals are unbarred,  
And soon ye shall behold a sight so sad  
That he who must abhorred would pity it.

*Enter OEDIPUS blinded.*

**CHORUS**

Woeful sight! more woeful none  
These sad eyes have looked upon.  
Whence this madness? None can tell  
Who did cast on thee his spell, prowling all thy  
life around,

Leaping with a demon bound.  
 Hapless wretch! how can I brook  
 On thy misery to look?  
 Though to gaze on thee I yearn,  
 Much to question, much to learn,  
 Horror-struck away I turn.

**OEDIPUS**

Ah me! ah woe is me!  
 Ah whither am I borne!  
 How like a ghost forlorn  
 My voice flits from me on the air!  
 On, on the demon goads. The end, ah where?

**CHORUS**

An end too dread to tell, too dark to see.

**OEDIPUS***strophe 1*

Dark, dark! The horror of darkness, like a shroud,  
 Wraps me and bears me on through mist and  
 cloud.

Ah me, ah me! What spasms athwart me shoot,  
 What pangs of agonizing memory?

**CHORUS**

No marvel if in such a plight thou feel'st  
 The double weight of past and present woes.

**OEDIPUS***antistrophe 1*

Ah friend, still loyal, constant still and kind,  
 Thou carest for the blind.  
 I know thee near, and though bereft of eyes,  
 Thy voice I recognize.

**CHORUS**

O doer of dread deeds, how couldst thou mar  
 Thy vision thus? What demon goaded thee?

**OEDIPUS***strophe 2*

Apollo, friend, Apollo, he it was  
 That brought these ills to pass;  
 But the right hand that dealt the blow  
 Was mine, none other. How,  
 How, could I longer see when sight  
 Brought no delight?

**CHORUS**

Alas! 'tis as thou sayest.

**OEDIPUS**

Say, friends, can any look or voice  
 Or touch of love henceforth my heart rejoice?  
 Haste, friends, no fond delay,  
 Take the twice cursed away  
 Far from all ken,  
 The man abhorred of gods, accursed of men.

**CHORUS**

O thy despair well suits thy desperate case.  
 Would I had never looked upon thy face!

**OEDIPUS***antistrophe 2*

My curse on him whoe'er unrived  
 The waif's fell fetters and my life revived!  
 He meant me well, yet had he left me there,  
 He had saved my friends and me a world of care.

**CHORUS**

I too had wished it so.

**OEDIPUS**

Then had I never come to shed  
 My father's blood nor climbed my mother's bed;  
 The monstrous offspring of a womb defiled,  
 Co-mate of him who gendered me, and child.  
 Was ever man before afflicted thus,  
 Like Oedipus.

**CHORUS**

I cannot say that thou hast counseled well,  
 For thou wert better dead than living blind.

**OEDIPUS**

What's done was well done. Thou canst  
 never shake  
 My firm belief. A truce to argument.  
 For, had I sight, I know not with what eyes  
 I could have met my father in the shades,  
 Or my poor mother, since against the twain  
 I sinned, a sin no gallows could atone.  
 Aye, but, ye say, the sight of children joys  
 A parent's eyes. What, born as mine were born?  
 No, such a sight could never bring me joy;  
 Nor this fair city with its battlements,

Its temples and the statues of its gods,  
 Sights from which I, now wretchedst of all,  
 Once ranked the foremost Theban in all Thebes,  
 By my own sentence am cut off, condemned  
 By my own proclamation 'gainst the wretch,  
 The miscreant by heaven itself declared  
 Unclean--and of the race of Laius.  
 Thus branded as a felon by myself,  
 How had I dared to look you in the face?  
 Nay, had I known a way to choke the springs  
 Of hearing, I had never shrunk to make  
 A dungeon of this miserable frame,  
 Cut off from sight and hearing; for 'tis bliss  
 to bide in regions sorrow cannot reach.  
 Why didst thou harbor me, Cithaeron, why  
 Didst thou not take and slay me? Then I never  
 Had shown to men the secret of my birth.  
 O Polybus, O Corinth, O my home,  
 Home of my ancestors (so wast thou called)  
 How fair a nursling then I seemed, how foul  
 The canker that lay festering in the bud!  
 Now is the blight revealed of root and fruit.  
 Ye triple high-roads, and thou hidden glen,  
 Coppice, and pass where meet the  
 three-branched ways,  
 Ye drank my blood, the life-blood these hands  
 spilt,  
 My father's; do ye call to mind perchance  
 Those deeds of mine ye witnessed and the work  
 I wrought thereafter when I came to Thebes?  
 O fatal wedlock, thou didst give me birth,  
 And, having borne me, sowed again my seed,  
 Mingling the blood of fathers, brothers, children,  
 Brides, wives and mothers, an incestuous brood,  
 All horrors that are wrought beneath the sun,  
 Horrors so foul to name them were unmeet.  
 O, I adjure you, hide me anywhere  
 Far from this land, or slay me straight, or cast me  
 Down to the depths of ocean out of sight.  
 Come hither, deign to touch an abject wretch;  
 Draw near and fear not; I myself must bear  
 The load of guilt that none but I can share.

*Enter CREON.*

**CREON**

Lo, here is Creon, the one man to grant  
 Thy prayer by action or advice, for he  
 Is left the State's sole guardian in thy stead.

**OEDIPUS**

Ah me! what words to accost him can I find?  
 What cause has he to trust me? In the past  
 I have been proved his rancorous enemy.

**CREON**

Not in derision, Oedipus, I come  
 Nor to upbraid thee with thy past misdeeds.

*To BYSTANDERS.*

But shame upon you! if ye feel no sense  
 Of human decencies, at least revere  
 The Sun whose light beholds and nurtures all.  
 Leave not thus nakedly for all to gaze at  
 A horror neither earth nor rain from heaven  
 Nor light will suffer. Lead him straight within,  
 For it is seemly that a kinsman's woes  
 Be heard by kin and seen by kin alone.

**OEDIPUS**

O listen, since thy presence comes to me  
 A shock of glad surprise--so noble thou,  
 And I so vile--O grant me one small boon.  
 I ask it not on my behalf, but thine.

**CREON**

And what the favor thou wouldst crave of me?

**OEDIPUS**

Forth from thy borders thrust me with all speed;  
 Set me within some vasty desert where  
 No mortal voice shall greet me any more.

**CREON**

This had I done already, but I deemed  
 It first behooved me to consult the god.

**OEDIPUS**

His will was set forth fully--to destroy  
 The parricide, the scoundrel; and I am he.

**CREON**

Yea, so he spake, but in our present plight  
 'Twere better to consult the god anew.

**OEDIPUS**

Dare ye inquire concerning such a wretch?

**CREON**

Yea, for thyself wouldst credit now his word.

**OEDIPUS**

Aye, and on thee in all humility  
I lay this charge: let her who lies within  
Receive such burial as thou shalt ordain;  
Such rites 'tis thine, as brother, to perform.  
But for myself, O never let my Thebes,  
The city of my sires, be doomed to bear  
The burden of my presence while I live.  
No, let me be a dweller on the hills,  
On yonder mount Cithaeron, famed as mine,  
My tomb predestined for me by my sire  
And mother, while they lived, that I may die  
Slain as they sought to slay me, when alive.  
This much I know full surely, nor disease  
Shall end my days, nor any common chance;  
For I had ne'er been snatched from death, unless  
I was predestined to some awful doom.  
So be it. I reckon not how Fate deals with me  
But my unhappy children--for my sons  
Be not concerned, O Creon, they are men,  
And for themselves, where'er they be, can fend.  
But for my daughters twain, poor innocent maids,  
Who ever sat beside me at the board  
Sharing my viands, drinking of my cup,  
For them, I pray thee, care, and, if thou wilt,  
O might I feel their touch and make my moan.  
Hear me, O prince, my noble-hearted prince!  
Could I but blindly touch them with my hands  
I'd think they still were mine, as when I saw.

*ANTIGONE and ISMENE are led in.*

What say I? can it be my pretty ones  
Whose sobs I hear? Has Creon pitied me  
And sent me my two darlings? Can this be?

**CREON**

'Tis true; 'twas I procured thee this delight,  
Knowing the joy they were to thee of old.

**OEDIPUS**

God speed thee! and as need for bringing them  
May Providence deal with thee kindlier  
Than it has dealt with me! O children mine,  
Where are ye? Let me clasp you with these hands,

A brother's hands, a father's; hands that made  
Lack-luster sockets of his once bright eyes;  
Hands of a man who blindly, recklessly,  
Became your sire by her from whom he sprang.  
Though I cannot behold you, I must weep  
In thinking of the evil days to come,  
The slights and wrongs that men will put upon  
you.

Where'er ye go to feast or festival,  
No merrymaking will it prove for you,  
But oft abashed in tears ye will return.  
And when ye come to marriageable years,  
Where's the bold wooers who will jeopardize  
To take unto himself such disrepute  
As to my children's children still must cling,  
For what of infamy is lacking here?  
"Their father slew his father, sowed the seed  
Where he himself was gendered, and begat  
These maidens at the source wherefrom he  
sprang."  
Such are the gibes that men will cast at you.  
Who then will wed you? None, I ween, but ye  
Must pine, poor maids, in single barrenness.  
O Prince, Menoeceus' son, to thee, I turn,  
With the it rests to father them, for we  
Their natural parents, both of us, are lost.  
O leave them not to wander poor, unwed,  
Thy kin, nor let them share my low estate.  
O pity them so young, and but for thee  
All destitute. Thy hand upon it, Prince.  
To you, my children I had much to say,  
Were ye but ripe to hear. Let this suffice:  
Pray ye may find some home and live content,  
And may your lot prove happier than your sire's.

**CREON**

Thou hast had enough of weeping; pass within.

**OEDIPUS**

I must obey,  
Though 'tis grievous.

**CREON**

Weep not, everything must have its day.

**OEDIPUS**

Well I go, but on conditions.

**CREON**

What thy terms for going, say.

**OEDIPUS**

Send me from the land an exile.

**CREON**

Ask this of the gods, not me.

**OEDIPUS**

But I am the gods' abhorrence.

**CREON**

Then they soon will grant thy plea.

**OEDIPUS**

Lead me hence, then, I am willing.

**CREON**

Come, but let thy children go.

**OEDIPUS**

Rob me not of these my children!

**CREON**

Crave not mastery in all,  
For the mastery that raised thee was thy bane and  
wrought thy fall.

**CHORUS**

Look ye, countrymen and Thebans, this is Oedipus  
the great,  
He who knew the Sphinx's riddle and was  
mightiest in our state.  
Who of all our townsmen gazed not on his fame  
with envious eyes?  
Now, in what a sea of troubles sunk and  
overwhelmed he lies!  
Therefore wait to see life's ending ere thou count  
one mortal blest;  
Wait till free from pain and sorrow he has gained  
his final rest.

**THE END**

## “ULYSSES”

Tennyson

It little profits that an idle king,  
 By this still hearth, among these barren crags,  
 Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole  
 Unequal laws unto a savage race,  
 That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.  
 I cannot rest from travel; I will drink  
 Life to the lees. All times I have enjoy'd  
 Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those  
 That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when  
 Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades  
 Vext the dim sea. I am become a name;  
 For always roaming with a hungry heart  
 Much have I seen and known,-- cities of men  
 And manners, climates, councils, governments,  
 Myself not least, but honor'd of them all,--  
 And drunk delight of battle with my peers,  
 Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.  
 I am a part of all that I have met;  
 Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'  
 Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades  
 For ever and for ever when I move.  
 How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
 To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!  
 As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life  
 Were all too little, and of one to me  
 Little remains; but every hour is saved  
 From that eternal silence, something more,  
 A bringer of new things; and vile it were  
 For some three suns to store and hoard myself,  
 And this gray spirit yearning in desire  
 To follow knowledge like a sinking star,  
 Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,  
 to whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,--  
 Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfill  
 This labor, by slow prudence to make mild  
 A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees  
 Subdue them to the useful and the good.  
 Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere  
 Of common duties, decent not to fail  
 In offices of tenderness, and pay  
 Meet adoration to my household gods,  
 When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail;  
 There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,  
 Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me,--

That ever with a frolic welcome took  
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed  
Free hearts, free foreheads,-- you and I are old;  
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil.  
Death closes all; but something ere the end,  
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,  
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.  
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;  
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep  
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends.  
'T is not too late to seek a newer world.  
Push off, and sitting well in order smite  
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds  
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
Of all the western stars, until I die.  
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;  
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,  
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.  
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'  
We are not now that strength which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are,--  
One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

## "Leda and the Swan"

William B. Yeats

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still  
 Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed  
 By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,  
 He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.  
 How can those terrified vague fingers push  
 The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?  
 And how can body, laid in that white rush,  
 But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?  
 A shudder in the loins engenders there  
 The broken wall, the burning roof and tower  
 And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up,  
 So mastered by the brute blood of the air,  
 Did she put on his knowledge with his power  
 Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

## "Leda"

Mona Van Duyn

*Did she put on his knowledge with his power  
 Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?*

Not even for a moment. He knew, for one thing, what he was.  
 When he saw the swan in her eyes he could let her drop.  
 In the first look of love men find their great disguise,  
 and collecting these are pictures of himself was his life.  
 Her body became the consequence of his juice,  
 while her mind closed on a bird and went to sleep.  
 Later, with the children in school, she opened her eyes  
 and saw her own openness, and felt relief.  
 In men's stories her life ended with his loss.  
 She stiffened under the storm of his wings to a glassy shape,  
 stricken and mysterious and immortal. But the fact is,  
 she was not, for such an ending, abstract enough.

She tried for a while to understand what it was  
that had happened, and then decided to let it drop.  
She married a smaller man with a beaky nose,  
and melted away in the storm of everyday life.

**The mythological background of Leda.**

It is debated whether the incident of Leda and the swan would be best described as a rape, as in the case of the sonnet by Yeats, as a seduction, or as consensual. Zeus, being a god, never asked permission of the human women who were the objects of his affection. There has been a poetic dialogue on the subject of the nature of the encounter, what Leda was aware of, and what she was not aware of. Some other poems that deal with the same topic, some responding to Yeats, some responding to each other, are: "Leda" and "Leda Reconsidered" by Mona Van Duyn, both from *To See, To Take*, "Cygnus cygnus to Leda" by Richard Howard, from *Lining Up*, and "Leda, After the Swan" by Carl Phillips, from *In the Blood*.

Yeats's poem is a sonnet with 14 lines.

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still  
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed  
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,  
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

Yeats pictures this as an encounter with the divine, an overwhelming experience of the kind that could knock off Moses' shoes before the burning bush.

How can those terrified vague fingers push  
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?  
And how can body, laid in that white rush,  
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

He continues to describe the power of the encounter. It is something she can't resist.

A shudder in the loins engenders there  
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower  
And Agamemnon dead.

The last six lines of a sonnet normally have a break from the first 8, which is the case here as well.

"A shudder in the loins" = Zeus has had his orgasm.

"engenders there" = gets her pregnant. Now all that follows is set in motion

"The broken wall, the burning roof and tower" The destruction of Troy will happen because of Helen  
And Agamemnon dead. Agamemnon will die at the hands of Helen's sister Clytemnestra

Being so caught up,  
 So mastered by the brute blood of the air,  
 Did she put on his knowledge with his power  
 Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?  
 Did she know any of this? Did divine knowledge arrive with the divine power?  
 Van Duyn takes up this question in her response to Yeats.

*Did she put on his knowledge with his power  
 Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?*

Not even for a moment. He knew, for one thing, what he was.

When he saw the swan in her eyes he could let her drop.

In the first look of love men find their great disguise,

and collecting these are pictures of himself was his life. Of course she didn't get any special insight from such an experience. How could she?

In Duyn's description, Zeus is more of a lounge lizard than a numinous presence. He loves the first look of love, seeing himself reflected in the eyes of a maiden at a heroic level. He's just not very good at relationships.

He's not so much a great god as a middle-aged man with a mid-life crisis.

Her body became the consequence of his juice,  
 while her mind closed on a bird and went to sleep.

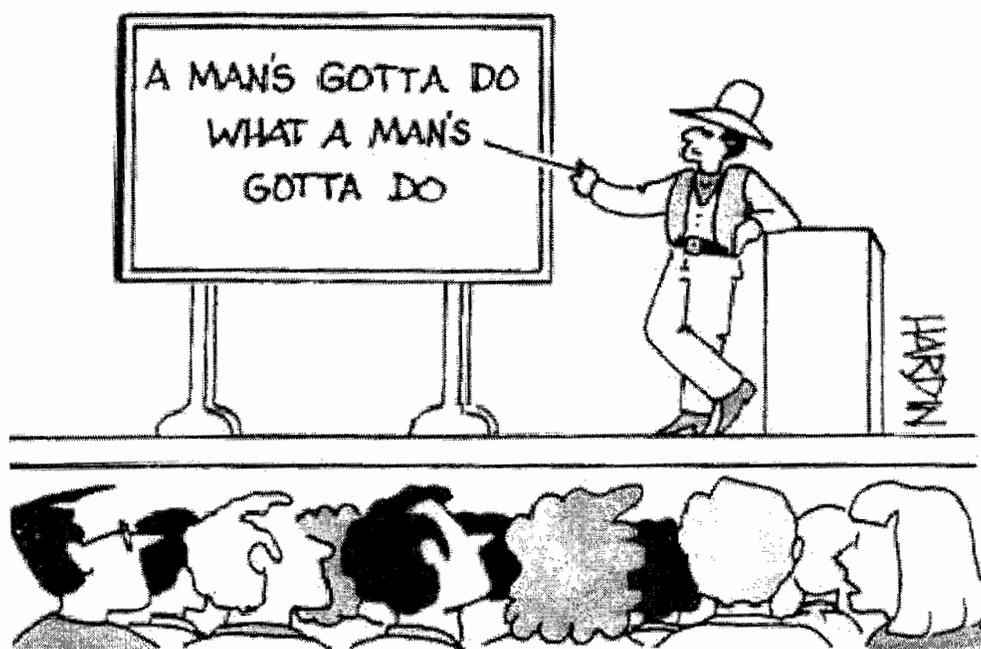
Later, with the children in school, she opened her eyes  
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 stricken and mysterious and immortal. But the fact is,  
 she was not, for such an ending, abstract enough.

Duyn points out the previously unnoticed difference in the ways men & women would look at such a scene. In men's stories, her life stops after her encounter with Zeus. They are following Zeus' exploits, not the lives of the women he encounters. The amphora at the right has the image of Leda & the Swan. with Leda "stiffened. . . to a glassy shape," reduced to art. Duyn talks about the way her life might have progressed - children, marriage, everyday life. But she did marry somebody who reminded her of old Zeus.

She tried for a while to understand what it was  
 that had happened, and then decided to let it drop.  
 She married a smaller man with a beaky nose,  
 and melted away in the storm of everyday life.



"This isn't what I had in mind when I signed up for Western philosophy."