



# The Tragedies of Seneca

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE, TO WHICH HAVE BEEN APPENDED  
COMPARATIVE ANALYSES OF THE CORRESPONDING GREEK  
AND ROMAN PLAYS, AND A MYTHOLOGICAL INDEX

BY

FRANK JUSTUS MILLER

INTRODUCED BY AN ESSAY ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA  
UPON EARLY ENGLISH DRAMA

BY

JOHN MATTHEWS MANLY



CHICAGO  
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1907

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# **The Tragedies of Seneca**

**by**

**Lucius Annaeus Seneca**

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Translator: Frank Justus Miller

The University of Chicago Press, 1907

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TO  
FRANK FROST ABBOTT  
AND  
EDWARD CAPPS  
MY FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES  
THROUGH A SCORE OF YEARS

## PREFACE

The place of the tragedies of Seneca in literature is unique. They stand as the sole surviving representatives, barring a few fragments, of an extensive Roman product in the tragic drama. They therefore serve as the only connecting link between ancient and modern tragedy. They are, moreover, modeled more or less closely after the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; and the Greek and Roman product in literature along parallel lines cannot be better studied than by a comparison of these Senecan plays with their Greek prototypes—a comparison which is not possible in comedy, since, unfortunately, the Greek originals of Plautus and Terence have not come down to us.

These plays are of great value and interest in themselves, first, as independent dramatic literature of no small merit; and second, as an illustration of the literary characteristics of the age of Nero: the florid, rhetorical style, the long, didactic speeches, the tendency to philosophize, the frequent epigram, the pride of mythologic lore.

Popular interest in the tragedies of Seneca has been growing to a considerable extent during the last generation. This has been stimulated in part by Leo's excellent text edition, and by the researches of German and English scholars into Senecan questions, more especially into the influence of Seneca upon the pre-Elizabethan drama; in part also by the fact that courses in the tragedies have been regaining their place, long lost, in college curricula.

The present edition seeks still further to bring Seneca back to the notice of classical scholars, and at the same time to present to the English reader all of the values accruing from a study of these plays, with the single exception of the benefit to be derived from a reading of the original. The influence which the tragedies have had in English literature is brought out in the introduction, which Professor Manly has kindly contributed; the

relation of Seneca to the Greek dramatists is shown by comparative analyses of the corresponding plays, so arranged that the reader may easily observe their resemblances and differences; the wealth of mythological material is at once displayed and made available by an index of mythological characters; finally, it is hoped that the translation itself will prove to be as faithful a reproduction of the original as is possible in a translation, and at the same time to have sufficient literary merit of its own to claim the interest of the general reader.

The text used is that of Leo (Weidmann, Berlin, 1878), except in the instances noted. The line numbers as printed in the translation are identical with those of the original text. The meter employed in the spoken parts is the English blank verse, with the exception of the *Medea*, in which the experiment was tried, not altogether successfully, of reproducing the iambic trimeter of the original. In the lyric parts, the original meters are sometimes used; and, where these did not seem suitable in English, appropriate substitutes have been attempted.

FRANK JUSTUS MILLER

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# **INTRODUCTORY ESSAY**

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA UPON EARLY ENGLISH DRAMA

To appreciate fully the nature and the extent of the influence of Seneca upon English tragedy in the days of Shakespeare and his immediate predecessors, we must bear in mind that the public theaters were not the only places at which plays were then produced. At the universities, at the inns of court (which may be roughly described as combinations of a law school and a very exclusive social club), and at the Court itself plays were an important feature of almost every festival. Even those of us who know these facts are very likely to fail to realize the full meaning of them. We are likely to regard the non-professional performances as having no more significance for the history of the drama than amateur performances at the present day by dramatic clubs and college societies. We are apt to forget that, in the spacious days of great Elizabeth, learning, especially classical learning, had a value, an importance, a dignity, which not even the most academic of us now feels it to have. Our generation, busied above all things with making a living or with accumulating wealth, regards the scholar as, with the poet and the artist, the most unpractical and useless of men at best, tolerated as an ornamental creature whom society can afford to keep if it does not have to pay him more than it pays a butler or a chauffeur. To the men of the Renaissance, scholarship and the scholar had a unique and inestimable value. Ordinary business, in their view, enabled man to provide a living; religion taught him how to save his soul; scholarship, the knowledge of the literature and life of the Greeks and the Romans, enabled him to distinguish his life as a man from that of a beast, to approach as nearly as possible to that ideal type toward which they strove, the *uomo universale*, the perfect gentleman, complete master of his body, of his mind, of his passions. To men of these views and this temper, literature—first, classical literature and then the vernacular literature

produced under the stimulus of it—was of supreme importance, and the drama was perhaps the most important form of literature. The value of literature for those who were then trying to transform the world, to rebuild it and themselves nearer to the heart's desire, was of course best recognized by the finest spirits of the age, men like Erasmus, Thomas More, Walter Raleigh, Edmund Spenser, Philip Sidney. But it seems to have been felt, though in cruder ways, even by the vulgar. An amusing illustration of this is the little record kept by old Simon Forman, a noted mountebank and quack doctor, in 1610 and 1611. It has preserved for us our earliest notices of performances of *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline*, and *A Winter's Tale*; but this is accidental. The doctor's intention was merely to note for his own guidance such lessons as he learned from the plays presented on the stage. Such benefits were, according to the views of wiser men, to be gained chiefly from comedies; tragedy, and classical tragedy in particular, had a finer, a more permanent value. Tragedy was the voice of the wisest men of the world, the ancients, upon the most serious themes of human life; it not only, as Aristotle had said, purified the mind through pity and terror, it fortified the inner life, and both by example and by sententious maxim prepared man to meet the most subtle attacks of fate, the temptations of success, or the discouragements of failure. Tragedy therefore had a unique value for the Elizabethans, and the performances of classical plays, or those written in imitation of the classics, by the universities or the inns of court, did not fall into the abyss which now receives amateur theatricals.

Failure to take account of the value attached to the lessons and the examples of tragedy may perhaps account for the misunderstanding which exists so widely, even among scholars, in regard to the first tragedy in English, *Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex*. Everyone knows that this was written in direct imitation of Seneca, and everyone discusses glibly its Senecan features, the bloody theme, the division into five acts, the use of the chorus, the removal of the action from the view of the spectators, the long speeches; but critics are, without exception, offended to the heart by the fifth act, and especially by the two long disquisitions of Arostus and Eubulus. It is, however, no exaggeration to say that the play exists solely for the sake of these speeches. This was not a mere academic exercise. It was a serious attempt by some of the most thoughtful men of England to move the queen, Elizabeth, to a course of action which they regarded as

absolutely essential to the welfare of the realm. Other attempts to secure the same end were made by her best statesmen throughout the reign. The failure of this effort was not due to the weakness of the tragedy, but, like the failure of all the rest, to some feature of Elizabeth's character or some circumstance in her life which has not yet been fully and convincingly explained. The purpose of the writers is clear. They wished to persuade Elizabeth to marry and settle once for all the succession to the throne of England. They, in common with all thoughtful and patriotic Englishmen, feared the horrors of an unsettled succession or a divided rule. These they tried to impress upon her mind and heart by examples drawn from the history of Gorboduc and his sons, and by maxims and exhortations presented in the most authoritative form known to them, the form of Senecan tragedy. The occasion chosen was a great festival given by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple, one of the most important and influential of the inns of court referred to above.

Classical tragedy had, then, as we can readily see, a prestige to which hardly anything in literature corresponds at the present day. The statesman who should today wish to influence his sovereign to an important course of action would doubtless be puzzled to find any form of literature—academic or unacademic—appropriate to the task in dignity and authority.

It is not strange, therefore, that classical tragedy, the tragedy of the schools and the learned societies, must be taken seriously into account in estimating the forces which shaped the drama of the popular stage. It is true that the English tragedies in classical or Senecan form were none of them written for the public stage. It is even probable that they would not have been successful upon it. It is a mistake to treat them historically and critically, as if they belonged to the direct line of development which resulted in *Faustus* and *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Macbeth* and *Lear* and *Othello*. But none the less the influence of these academic plays was very real and very important.

The ways in which this influence was exercised may be noted, as having some bearing upon the nature and extent of the influence. In the first place, there was in the early days no very rigid line between the academic and the popular performers. The Children of the Chapel Royal were at one time the leading theatrical company in London. When the queen visited Oxford in 1566, there were among the several plays presented by the

university, not only the Latin tragedy, *Progne*, of Dr. James Calphill, but also the English *Palamon and Arcite* of Richard Edwards, Master of Her Majesty's Children and the most popular dramatist of his day. Edwards himself trained the students who produced his play, and it was a great success; according to a contemporary report, "certain courtiers said that it far surpassed *Damon and Pythias*, than which they thought nothing could be better; likewise some said that if the author did any more before his death, he would run mad." Any impressions made upon Edwards by Dr. Calphill's *Progne* were doubtless lost to art, as Edwards died before the end of the year; but this was probably not the first occasion on which the Master of the Chapel Children had visited the university in behalf of the drama, and Edwards himself had been both a scholar and a probationary fellow there. Certainly his famous *Damon and Pythias* shows some evidences of the influence of Seneca.

It is well known also that the most successful writers for the public stage in the years just preceding Shakespeare's advent, the years that determined the forms and the methods of the popular drama, were educated at the universities, and, however clearly they may have recognized the necessity of supplying to the populace story, action, the raw material of life and philosophy, cherished as an ideal the Senecan interest in situation, the Senecan love for broad description, for introspection and reflection, for elaborate monologue, and catchy sententiousness. Such were Greene and Peele and Marlowe; and Thomas Kyd, author of that most popular of plays, *The Spanish Tragedy*, and probable author of the version of *Hamlet* which held the stage for fourteen years before Shakespeare revised it and gave it a new and a different life, though not bred in either university, was more zealous about his Latin and apparently more influenced by Seneca than the university men themselves.

But, says some modern classical scholar, granting that these early dramatists were university men or men, like Kyd and Shakespeare, not trained in the universities but all the more zealous to match their productions with those which bore the official mark of classical scholarship, why should Seneca, a second-rate Roman tragedian, be continually cited in connection with classical influence instead of Aeschylus and Sophocles and Euripides, the supreme masters of ancient tragedy, and Aristotle, the unique expositor of the theory of the drama?

The men of the Renaissance would have had a ready answer. In the first place, they knew very little about the Greek tragedians, or, for that matter, about Greek literature in general; for although the rediscovery of Greek literature was undoubtedly one of the events of that remarkable spurt of the human intellect and spirit which we call the Renaissance, Greek literature and life were, after all, in every country of Europe, far less important than Latin, as models for imitation, as sources of inspiration, as objects which engaged the attention of the moderns and set the pace which they tried to follow. As for tragedy, a few scholars in Italy and France and Germany and England knew Sophocles and Euripides—Aeschylus was almost unknown—but the theory and the practice of tragedy among the classicists were based almost exclusively upon the example of Seneca and the precepts of Horace. Aristotle is, indeed, often cited as the ultimate authority, but, although the voice may be the voice of Aristotle, the opinions are usually those of Scaliger or Minturno or Robortelli or Castelvetro, opinions which reduced to inviolable laws what Aristotle had merely stated as observed practices, and which supplemented these rules by others drawn from the plays of Seneca, who was, according to these critics, the most majestic, the most tragic, the most perfect of the ancient tragedians. That Seneca's majesty seems to critics of today bombast, that his triumph in tragic quality consists in an accumulation of horrors and a consistently unfortunate ending, that his perfection of form is no more than a formal schematism, clear because it is simple and lifeless—all this may be true but is beside the mark. To the best spirits of the Renaissance, whether critical or creative, the ten tragedies which bore the name of Seneca presented the ideal of tragic art toward which modern writers should strive if they would be perfect.

What, then, was the influence of Seneca in England? Two excellent studies of different phases of it have been published, both, unfortunately, less known than they should be.

The purely formal influence, the influence upon dramatic technique and upon composition in the large sense of the term, is the subject of Rudolf Fischer's *Die Kunstentwicklung der englischen Tragödie*, perhaps the most ingenious and adequate scheme ever devised for the analysis of the technical and compositional features of any form of art. Fischer sees in the history of English tragedy before Shakespeare a steady approximation to

the Senecan type. His argument is open to several objections. In the first place, he treats as if they belonged to the same simple line of development plays written for the public stage and the popular taste and those written for special audiences dominated by scholastic ideals. In the second place, as Professor Luick has pointed out, he has disregarded the influence exercised by the original form of the story dramatized upon the dramatic presentation of it. And, furthermore, he, in common with other students of the subject, has proceeded upon the assumption that only tragedy could have had any influence upon tragedy. He has neglected that remark of Ben Jonson's, which phrases the view not of his own time only but of all ages, "The parts of a comedy are the same with a tragedy," and has failed to see that for the structure of English tragedy, Roman comedy and the serious imitations of it by the men of the Renaissance—such as Gnapheus' *Acolastus*, Macropedius' *Asotus* and *Rebelles*, and their anonymous English offspring, *The Nice Wanton*—are no less important than the example of Seneca himself. But his book is interesting and enlightening as few books on any subject are.

Entirely different problems are dealt with in J.W. Cunliffe's little volume on *The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy*, a book which, to the regret of many scholars, has long been out of print, and which the author ought to reprint with such additions as his continued study of the subject may suggest. Mr. Cunliffe is mainly concerned with showing why Seneca appealed to the Elizabethans and with pointing out certain details of theme, of situation, of theatrical effects, and of expression, which the popular playwrights owed to Seneca.

To Seneca and the false Aristotle created by the humanists from the *Poetics*, the precepts of Horace, the definitions and maxims which sifted down through the encyclopaedists of the Middle Ages, and the example of Seneca, not only the men of the Renaissance but even we of today owe some of our most cherished ideas concerning tragedy. First of all, perhaps, is the belief that tragedy must end unhappily. The Greeks—whether creators or critics—had no such theory. It was enough for Sophocles and Aristotle that tragedy should be serious in theme and dignified in characters and in language. In the second place, we ordinarily believe that a tragedy should have five acts, and many of us can draw a diagram to prove it. Shakespeare and his fellows seem to have been dominated by the

same theory, difficult as they sometimes found it to observe. The sacred unities, dominant so long in Italian and French tragedy, though never observed in any English play more notable than Addison's *Cato*, we have learned to disregard and even to decry, though such an attitude in the Elizabethan age awakened the censure of Philip Sidney and doubtless required some hardihood or even recklessness. The chorus also we have long since abandoned, but Greene and Peele and Kyd and Marlowe and Shakespeare and others of their time used it more than once and with good effect. They even, in some instances, combined with it the ghosts and infernal spirits, which beyond a doubt they owed to Seneca, and made this unearthly chorus, not only the commentator, but in some sense the subtle director of the action. Perhaps the most refined form of this is to be seen in the Ghost in *Hamlet*, who, though he does not appear technically as Chorus, yet recalls by his original incitement of the action and his later intervention to renew and direct it, as well as by his language and his attitude, the ghosts of Tantalus, Thyestes, Laius, and Agrippina in Seneca, and the spirits of Andrea and Revenge in *The Spanish Tragedy*. It is perhaps not going too far to find in the dream-setting of Hauptmann's *Elga* some reminiscence of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* and Greene's *James IV*, and consequently, in a remote sense, of Seneca's introductory figures, Tantalus, Thyestes, and the rest.

But these matters and the striking resemblances in situation and in utterance cited so abundantly by Cunliffe and by Munroe (*Journal of Philology*, Vol. VI, pp. 70-79), though they could be increased by many passages in *Macbeth* and *King Lear* as well as in the plays of other dramatists than Shakespeare, are after all not fundamental. Some other features that seem fundamental may be noted.

In the first place, although it is doubtless true that the scanty scenery of the Elizabethan stage is largely the excuse and the reason for the long descriptive passages with which the dramatists of that time delighted themselves and delight us, their modern readers, this is perhaps not the whole of the story. There are passages of exposition, of reflection, of pure declamation, equally long as well as equally beautiful. The Renaissance love of talk, of fine language, of *eloquentia*, may explain this in part; but it is doubtless due in part also to the example of Seneca, who never loses an opportunity for a long passage of description or introspection or reflection



or mere declamation—making them indeed for the Chorus when the situation does not allow them to the ordinary *dramatis personae*.

Then we may note that the thoroughly melodramatic character of Elizabethan tragedy is a natural inheritance from Seneca. Greek tragedy had, to be sure, many melodramatic situations, along with others of a milder type. But the religious element in the tragedy of Aeschylus and Sophocles radically modifies the character and tone of the most poignant and repulsive themes and situations. When Seneca took the most difficult of Greek themes and, following the lead of Euripides, cast away the overruling, compulsive dominance of the Greek theocracy, he produced melodrama. Most moderns have been either content to follow him or compelled to do so for lack of the ability to create striking situations without the aid of villains of melodramatic criminality. A few of the French tragedians have had recourse to the method of the Greeks either by reviving the Greek mythology and theocracy or by resorting to Hebrew history for characters whose deeds, however criminal, were necessary parts of a divine plan. Shakespeare, almost alone, has at his best succeeded in substituting for the gods and fate the inevitable results of human character and the moral law, in presenting the worst deeds of his leading figures as less the results of free intention than of futile efforts to deliver themselves from the web of circumstance which their first crimes or follies have woven about them—the whole career of Macbeth, for example, being the necessary outcome of his attempt to get free of the difficulties and dangers brought upon him by the murder of Duncan.

Speculation as to what the English drama might have been if Sophocles instead of Seneca had been its inspiration and its model is idle. The men of the Renaissance did not understand Sophocles; his stage, the mode of production of his plays, his aim, the whole nature of his art, were beyond the scholarship of their day. And it is doubtful whether they could in any event have made so successful a combination of the Greek and the national or mediaeval drama as they made of Senecan tragedy and the dramatic forms they already possessed.

In one thing, at any rate, the English drama was especially fortunate, that is, in the fact that its form and its content were so largely determined by two such remarkable men as Marlowe and Shakespeare. The conditions in France in the sixteenth century were strikingly similar to those in England,

except for the number of public theaters. M. Petit de Julleville points out that France as well as England possessed every item of the motley list of dramatic types enumerated by Polonius; and he continues: "Rien n'empêchait alors qu'un Shakespeare naquît en France; les circonstances n'étaient-elles pas merveilleusement favorables? Mais, en dépit de certaines théories, les grands hommes ne paraissent pas tout juste au moment où ils sont nécessaires. Il nous fallait un Shakespeare; il naquît un Alexandre Hardy!"

# OEDIPUS

# OEDIPUS

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## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- OEDIPUS* King of Thebes; the son, as he supposed, of Polybus, king of Corinth, and Merope, his wife, but found to be the son of Laius and Jocasta.
- Jocasta* Wife and, as the play develops, found to be also the mother of Oedipus.
- Creon* Theban prince, brother of Jocasta.
- Tiresias* A celebrated prophet of Thebes, now old and blind.
- Manto* His daughter.
- Old Man* Sent from Corinth to announce to Oedipus the death of Polybus.
- Phorbas* Head-shepherd of the royal flocks of Thebes.
- Messenger* Who announces the self-inflicted blindness of Oedipus and the suicide of Jocasta.
- Chorus* Of Theban elders.

THE SCENE is laid before the royal palace of Thebes; the play opens in the early morning of the day within which the tragedy is consummated.

*An oracle once came to Laius, king of Thebes, that he should perish by his own son's hands. When, therefore, a son was born to him, he gave the*

*infant to his chief of shepherds to expose on Mount Cithaeron. But the tenderhearted rustic gave the babe instead to a wandering herdsman of Polybus, the king of Corinth.*

*Years later, a reputed son of Polybus, Oedipus by name, fearing an oracle which doomed him to slay his father and wed his mother, fled from Corinth, that so he might escape this dreadful fate. As he fared northward, he met and slew an old man who imperiously disputed the narrow way with him. Upon arriving at the Theban land, he read the riddle of the Sphinx, and so destroyed that monster which Juno had sent to harass the land which she hated; and for this service, Oedipus was made the husband of Jocasta, the widowed queen of Laius (who had recently been slain upon the road), and set upon the vacant throne.*

*Now other years have passed, and sons and daughters have been born to the royal pair. But now a dreadful pestilence afflicts the state. Oedipus has sent Creon to consult the oracle, to learn the cause and seek the means of deliverance from the scourge. And while he waits his messenger's return, the murky dawn still finds him grieving for his kingdom's wretched plight.*

## ACT I

*Oedipus*: Now night has fled; and with a wavering gleam

Returns the sun; all wrapped in murky clouds  
His beams arise, and with their baleful light  
Shall soon look forth upon our stricken homes,  
And day reveal the havoc of the night.

Oh, who in all this realm is glad? O fate,  
That seemest good, how many ills lie hid  
Behind thy smiling face! As lofty peaks  
Most feel the winds' abuse; and as the cliff,  
That with its rocky front divides the deep,  
The waves of e'en a quiet sea assail;  
So is the loftiest power the most exposed  
To hostile fate's assaults.

5

10

'Twas well conceived  
That I should flee the kingdom of my sire,  
Old Polybus, and from my fears be freed,  
A homeless exile, dauntless, wandering.  
Be heaven and all the gods my witnesses,  
I chanced upon this realm. Yet even now  
The dreadful fear remains that by my hand  
My sire shall die. Thus spoke the Delphic god.  
And still another, greater sin he showed.  
And can there be a blacker crime than this,  
A father slain? Oh, cursed impiety!

15

'Twere shame to tell the hideous oracle:  
For Phoebus warned me of my father's couch,  
And impious wedlock. 'Twas the fear of this  
That drove me headlong from my father's realm.

20

And for no sin I left my native land.  
 All self-distrustful did I well secure  
 Thy sacred laws, O mother Nature; still, 25  
 When in the heart a mighty dread abides,  
 Though well assured it cannot be fulfilled,  
 The fear remains. I fear exceedingly,  
 Nor can I trust myself unto myself.  
 And even now the fates are aimed at me.  
 For what am I to think, when this fell pest,  
 Although it lays its blighting hand on all, 30  
 Spares me alone? For what new horror now  
 Am I reserved? Amidst my city's woes,  
 'Mid funeral pyres that ever must be wet  
 With tears of grief afresh, 'mid heaps of slain,  
 I stand unscathed. And couldst thou hope that thou,  
 A culprit at the bar of God, shouldst gain 35  
 For guilt a wholesome kingdom in return?  
 Nay, rather, I myself infect the air.  
 For now no breeze with its soft breath relieves  
 Our spirits suffocating with the heat;  
 No gentle zephyrs breathe upon the land;  
 But Titan with the dog-star's scorching fires  
 Doth parch us, pressing hard upon the back 40  
 Of Nemea's lion. From their wonted streams  
 The waters all have fled, and from the herbs  
 Their accustomed green. Now Dirce's fount is dry;  
 While to a trickling rill Ismenus' flood  
 Hath shrunk, and barely laves the naked sands.  
 Athwart the sky doth Phoebus' sister glide  
 With paling light, and, 'mid the lowering clouds, 45  
 The darkling heavens fade. No starlight gleams  
 Amid the gloomy silence of the night,  
 But heavy mists brood low upon the earth;  
 And those bright mansions of the heavenly gods  
 Are sicklied over with the hues of hell.  
 The full-grown harvest doth withhold its fruit;  
 And, though the yellow fields stand thick with corn, 50

Upon the stalk the shriveled grain is dead. --  
No class is free from this destructive plague,  
But every age and sex falls equally;  
Where youth with age, and sire with son are joined,  
And wife and husband are together burned. 55  
Now funerals claim no more their wonted grief;  
The magnitude of woe hath dried our eyes;  
And tears, the last resource of woeful hearts,  
Have perished utterly. The stricken sire  
Here bears his son unto the funeral flames; 60  
And there the mother lays her dead child down,  
And hastes to bring another to the pyre.  
Nay, in the midst of grief a new woe springs;  
For, while they minister unto the dead,  
Themselves need funeral rites. Anon they burn  
With others' fires the bodies of their friends.  
The fire is stol'n, for in their wretchedness 65  
No shame remains. No separate tombs receive  
The hallowed bones; mere burning is enough.  
How small a covering their ashes need!  
And yet the land does not suffice for all;  
And now the very woods have failed the pyre.  
Nor prayers nor skill avail to serve the sick,  
For even they who own the healing art  
Are smitten down. The baleful pestilence  
Removes the check that would restrain its force. 70

So, prostrate at the altar, do I fall  
And, stretching suppliant hands, I pray the gods  
To grant a speedy end; that in my death  
I may anticipate my falling throne,  
Nor be myself the last of all to die,  
The sole surviving remnant of my realm.  
O gods of heaven, too hard! O heavy fate! 75  
Is death to be denied to me alone,  
So easy for all else? Come, fly the land  
Thy baleful touch has tainted. Leave thou here  
The grief, the death, the pestilential air,  
Which with thyself thou bring'st. Go speed thy flight



To any land, e'en to thy parents' realm.

80

*Jocasta* [*who has entered in time to hear her husband's last words*]:

What boots it, husband, to augment thy woes  
With lamentations? For I think, indeed,  
This very thing is regal, to endure  
Adversity, and all the more to stand,  
With heart more valiant and with foot more sure,  
When the weight of empire totters to its fall.  
For 'tis not manly to present thy back  
To fortunes's darts.

85

*Oedipus*: Not mine the guilt of fear;

My valor feels no such ignoble throes.  
Should swords be drawn against me, should the power,  
The dreadful power of Mars upon me rush,  
Against the very giants would I stand.  
The Sphinx I fled not when she wove her words  
In mystic measures, but I bore to look  
Upon the bloody jaws of that fell bard,  
And on the ground, all white with scattered bones.  
But when, from a lofty cliff, with threatening mien,  
The baleful creature poised her wings to strike,  
And, like a savage lion, lashed her tail,<sup>[1]</sup>  
In act to spring; still did I dare my fate  
And ask her riddle. Then with horrid sound  
Of deadly jaws together crashed, she spake;  
The while her claws, impatient of delay,  
And eager for my vitals, rent the rock.  
But the close-wrought words of fate with guile entwined,  
And that dark riddle of the wingéd beast  
Did I resolve.

90

95

100

*Jocasta*: What meant'st then thou by these  
Thy maddened prayers for death? Thou mightst have died.  
But no; the very scepter in thy hand  
Is thy reward for that fell Sphinx destroyed.

105

*Oedipus*: Yea that, the artful monster's cruel shade,  
Doth war against me still. Now she alone



For the woolly flock the rich grass cropped  
To its own doom. At the victim's neck  
The priest stood still, in act to strike; 135  
But while his hand still poised the blow,  
Behold, the bull, with gilded horns,  
Fell heavily; whereat his neck,  
Beneath the shock of his huge weight,  
Was broken and asunder yawned.  
No blood the sacred weapon stained,  
But from the wound dark gore oozed forth. 140  
The steed a sudden languor feels,  
And stumbles in his circling course,  
While from his downward-sinking side  
His rider falls.  
The abandoned flocks lie in the fields;  
The bull amid his dying herd 145  
Is pining; and the shepherd fails  
His scanty flock, for he himself  
'Mid his wasting kine is perishing.  
The stag no more fears the ravenous wolf;  
No longer the lion's roar is heard;  
The shaggy bear has lost her rage, 150  
And the lurking serpent his deadly sting;  
For parched and dying now he lies,  
With venom dried.  
No more do the woods, with leafage crowned,  
Spread out their shade in the mountain glens;  
No more are fields with verdure clad; 155  
No vines bend low with laden arms;  
For the very earth has felt the breath  
Of our dire pestilence.  
Through the riven bars of Erebus,  
With torches lit in Tartara, 160  
The raging band of the Furies troop;  
Dark Phlegethon has changed his course,  
And forced the waters of the Styx  
To mingle with our Theban streams.  
Grim Death opens wide his greedy jaws

grim Death opens wide his greedy jaws, 165  
And all his baleful wings outspreads.  
And he who plies that swollen stream  
In his roomy skiff, though his age is fresh  
And hardy, scarce can raise his arms,  
O'erwearied with his constant toil  
And the passage of the endless throng. 170  
'Tis even rumored that the dog  
Hath burst the chains of Taenara,  
And through our fields is wandering.  
Now dreadful prodigies appear:  
The earth gives out a rumbling sound,  
And ghosts go stealing through the groves,  
Larger than mortal forms; and twice 175  
The trees of our Cadmean woods  
Have trembled sore and shed their snows;  
Twice Dirce flowed with streams of blood;  
And in the stilly night we heard  
The baying of Amphion's hounds.  
Oh, cruel, strange new form of death, 180  
And worse than death! The sluggish limbs  
Are with a weary languor seized;  
The sickly cheek with fever burns,  
And all the head with loathsome sores  
Is blotched. Now heated vapors rise  
And scorch with fever's flames the brain  
Within the body's citadel,  
And the throbbing temples swell with blood. 185  
The eyeballs start; the accurséd fire  
Devours the limbs; the ears resound,  
And from the nostrils dark blood drips  
And strains apart the swelling veins.  
Now quick convulsions rend and tear 190  
The inmost vitals.  
Now to their burning hearts they strain  
Cold stones to soothe their agony;  
And they, whom laxer care permits,  
Since they who should control are dead,

The fountains seek, and feed their thirst  
With copious draughts. The smitten throng 195  
All prostrate at the altars lie  
And pray for death; and this alone  
The gods, compliant, grant to them.  
Men seek the sacred fanes, and pray,  
Not that the gods may be appeased,  
But glutted with their feast of death.

[*Creon is seen approaching.*] 200

But who with hasty step the palace seeks?  
Is this our Creon, high in birth and deed,  
Or does my sickened soul see false for true?  
'Tis Creon's self, in answer to our prayer. 205

**FOOTNOTES:**

[1] Reading, *caudam*.

**ACT II**

[*Enter Creon.*]

*Oedipus*: I quake with horror, and I fear to know  
The tendency of fate. My trembling soul  
Strives 'neath a double load; for joy and grief  
Lie mingled still in dark obscurity.  
I shrink from knowing what I long to know.  
Wherefore, O brother of my consort, speak;  
And if to weary hearts thou bring'st relief, 210  
With quickened utterance thy news proclaim.

*Creon*: In dark obscurity the answer lies.

*Oedipus*: Who gives me doubtful succor grants me none.

*Creon*: It is the custom of the Delphic god  
In dark enigmas to conceal the fates. 215

*Oedipus*: Yet speak; however dark the riddle be  
'Tis given to Oedipus alone to solve.

*Creon*: Apollo doth ordain that banishment  
Be meted out to him who slew our king,  
And so our murdered Laius be avenged;  
For only thus shall we again behold  
The day's clear light, and drink safe draughts of air. 220

*Oedipus*: Who was the slayer of the noble king?  
Tell who is designated by the god,  
That he th' allotted punishment may pay.

*Creon*: May it be granted me to tell the things  
To sight and hearing dreadful. At the thought,  
Numb horror holds my limbs, my blood runs cold.  
When to Apollo's hallowed shrine I come

When to Apollo's hallowed shrine I came  
With reverent feet, and pious hands upraised, 225  
Parnassus' double-crested, snowy peak  
Gave forth a fearful crash, the laurels shook,  
And fair Castalia's waters ceased to flow.  
The priestess of the son of Lato then  
Began to spread her bristling locks abroad, 230  
And felt the inspiration of the god.  
Scarce had she reached the sacred inner shrine,  
When with a roar, beyond the voice of man,  
There sounded forth this doubtful oracle:  
"Kind shall the stars return to the Theban city of Cadmus,  
If, O fugitive guest, Ismenian Dirce thou leavest,  
Stained with the blood of a king, from infancy known to Apollo.  
Brief shall be thy joys, the impious joys of slaughter. 235  
With thee war thou bringest, and war to thy children thou  
leavest,  
Foul returned once more to the impious arms of thy mother."

*Oedipus*: What I at heaven's command now meditate,  
Long since should have been rendered to the king, 240  
That none by craft might violate the throne.  
And most doth it become a sceptered king  
To guard the life of kings; for none lament  
The death of him whose safety breedeth fear.

*Creon*: Our care for him a greater fear removed.

*Oedipus*: What fear so great that duty to prevent? 245

*Creon*: The Sphinx and her accurséd riddle's threats.

*Oedipus*: Then now at heaven's command shall be atoned  
That impious deed.  
Whoever of the gods  
Dost look with kindly eye upon our realm;  
And thou, whose hand doth guide the rolling sphere;  
And thou, O glory of the smiling sky,  
Who in thy wandering course dost rule the stars, 250  
And with thy flying wheels dost measure out  
The slow procession of the centuries;

Thou sister of the sun, night-wanderer,  
Who ever dost reflect thy brother's fires;  
And thou, great ruler of the boisterous winds,  
Who o'er the level deep dost drive thy car; 255  
And thou, who dost allot the sunless homes:  
May he, by whose right hand king Laius fell,  
No peaceful home, no trusty lares find;  
And may no land in hospitality  
Receive his cheerless, exiled wanderings.  
O'er shameful marriage may he live to grieve, 260  
And monstrous progeny. May he his sire  
By his own hand destroy; and may he do  
(What doom more dreadful can I imprecate?)  
The deed which by my flight I did not do.  
No room for pardon shall be given him;  
By this my regal scepter do I swear,  
Both by the sway which I as stranger hold,  
And that I left behind; by my household gods, 265  
And thee, O Neptune, who with shorter waves  
And twofold current dost disport thyself  
Upon my native Corinth's double shores.  
And thou thyself be witness to my words,  
Who dost inspire the fate-revealing lips  
Of Cirrha's priestess: so may Polybus, 270  
My royal father, spend a quiet age,  
And end his days in peace upon the throne;  
And so may Merope, my mother, know  
The marriage of her Polybus alone,  
As from my grasp no favoring power shall snatch  
That guilty one, who basely slew the king.  
But tell me, where was that foul murder done?  
In open fight, or was he basely snared? 275

*Creon:* In quest of cool Castalia's sacred fount  
And leafy woods, along the way he fared,  
On either side with tangled thickets hedged.  
'Twas where the road, three-forked, spreads to the plain.  
One leads through Phocian land, to Bacchus dear,



Where high Parnassus, by a gentle slope  
The lowlands leaving, lifts his double peak 280  
Into the heavens; and one leads off to where  
Two oceans bathe the land of Sisyphus;  
A third path, passing through Olenian fields,  
Along a hollow valley's winding way,  
Attains the vagrant waters and divides  
The chilling current of the Elean stream.  
'Twas here he journeyed, safe 'mid general peace, 285  
When on a sudden, lo, a robber band  
Fell on him with the sword and slew him there.

[*Tiresias is seen approaching.*]

But in the nick of time, by Phoebus roused,  
Tiresias, agéd and with trembling limbs,  
Hastes to our presence with what speed he may;  
And, as his faithful comrade, Manto comes,  
Her sightless father leading by the hand. 290

[*Enter Tiresias, led by his daughter Manto.*]

*Oedipus*: O priest of heaven, thou next to Phoebus' self,  
Explain the oracle which he hath sent,  
And tell on whom the penalty is laid.

*Tiresias*: Because my tongue is slow and seeks delay,  
Thou shouldst not wonder, great-souled Oedipus;  
Much truth is hidden when the eye is dimmed. 295  
But when my country, when Apollo calls,  
I will obey. Then let me search the fates.  
If in my veins still flowed the blood of youth,  
I would myself sustain the god and speak.  
Now to the altar drive a pure-white bull,  
A heifer, too, upon whose tender neck 300  
The curvéd yoke of toil hath never pressed.  
And thou, my child, who guid'st my darkened  
steps,  
Describe the omens which Apollo sends.

[*The victims are stationed before the altar as directed.*]

*Manto*: A perfect victim at the altar stands.

*Tiresias*: With prayer invoke the presence of the gods,  
And heap the altar high with frankincense.

305

*Manto*: Lo, on the sacred fire the spice is heaped.

*Tiresias*: What of the flame? Did it with vigor seize  
The generous feast?

*Manto*: With sudden gleam it leaped  
Into the air, and quickly fell again.

*Tiresias*: And did the sacred fire burn bright and clear,  
And point its gleaming summit straight to heaven,  
And, spreading outward, to the breeze unfold;  
Or crawl, with course uncertain, near the ground,  
And, flickering, die away in gloomy smoke?

310

*Manto*: Not one appearance only had the flame.  
As when the tempest-bringing Iris spreads  
Her varying colors on the vault of heaven,  
And with her painted bow adorns the sky;  
So to the sacred fire thou wouldst not tell  
What hue is wanting there and what prevails.  
Dark blue it flickered first, with yellow spots;  
Then bloody red, and then it vanished quite.  
But see! the flame is rent in rival parts,  
And the glowing embers of one sacred pile  
Are cleft in double heaps and fall apart!  
O father, horror fills me as I gaze;  
For, as I pour the sacred liquid forth,  
It changes straight to blood—Oh, horrible!  
And stifling smoke surrounds the royal head.  
And now in denser gloom it settles down  
Upon his face, and, with its veiling cloud,  
It shuts away from him the fading light.  
Oh, speak, and tell us what it doth portend.

315

320

325

*Tiresias*: How can I speak who halting stand amazed

*Tiresias*: How can I speak, who having stand amazed  
Amid conflicting voices of the soul?  
What shall I say? Dire ills are here, indeed,  
But hidden yet in deepest mystery. 330  
With signs well known the wrath of heaven is wont  
To be made manifest: but what is that  
Which now they would disclose, and then, again,  
With changing and destructive purpose hide?  
Some deed so vile, it shameth heaven to tell.  
But quickly set the chosen victims here,  
And sprinkle salted meal upon their heads. 335  
With peaceful face do they endure the rites,  
And hands outstretched to smite?

*Manto*: His lofty head  
The bull uplifted to the eastern sky,  
Then shunned the light of day, and quickly turned  
In terror from the newly risen sun.

*Tiresias*: With one blow, smitten, do they fall to earth? 340

*Manto*: The heifer threw herself upon the steel,  
And with one blow has fallen; but the bull,  
Though smitten by a double deadly blow,  
Distracted wanders here and there in pain,  
And scarce can force his struggling life away.

*Tiresias*: Driven through a narrow opening spurts the blood,  
Or, sluggish, does it water deeper wounds? 345

*Manto*: The blood of one, through that same welcome thrust,  
Doth flow in generous streams; but of the bull,  
Those yawning wounds are stained with scanty drops,  
While, turning backward, through his eyes and mouth  
The plenteous current flows. 350

*Tiresias*: These unblest rites  
Some dreadful ills portend. But come, describe  
The trusty markings of the viscera.

*Manto*: Oh, what is this? For not, as is their wont,  
With gentle motion do the entrails quake,

But, rather, strongly throb beneath the touch,  
While from the veins the blood leaps forth anew. 355  
The sickly heart is shriveled up and lies  
Deep hidden in the breast; the veins appear  
Of livid hue. The entrails suffer lack;  
And from the wasting liver oozes slow  
A stream of black corruption. Nay, behold  
(A sign of dark foreboding to a king  
Who holdeth single sway), two swelling points  
Of equal elevation rise to view;  
But both are lopped and covered with a veil. 360  
Refusing lurking-place to things unseen,  
The hostile side uprears itself with strength  
And shows seven swelling veins; but these, again,  
An intersecting line cuts straight across,  
Preventing their return. The natural law 365  
And order of the parts has been reversed,  
And nothing lies within its proper place.  
All on the right the blood-filled lungs appear,  
Incapable of air; the heart no more  
Is found upon the left, its 'customed place.  
The fatty walls, with their soft covering,  
No longer richly fold the entrails in. 370  
The ways of nature are in all things changed;  
The womb itself is most unnatural.  
Look close, and see what impious thing is this:  
Oh, monstrous! 'tis the unborn progeny  
Of a heifer still unmated! stranger still,  
It lies not in the wonted place, assigned  
By nature's laws, but fills its mother's side. 375  
It moves its members with a feeble groan;  
Its unformed limbs with trembling rigors twitch.  
Black blood has stained the darkened entrails all;  
The mangled bodies strive e'en yet to move,  
Make show to rise, and menace with their horns  
The priestly hands. The entrails shun the touch. 380  
Nor is that lowing which has frightened thee  
The deep-voiced roar of bulls nor do the calls

THE deep voiced roar of bulls, not as the bulls  
Of frightened cattle sound upon our ears:  
It is the lowing of the altar fires,  
It is the frightened muttering of the shrine!

*Oedipus*: What meaning have these monstrous signs? Declare;  
And with no timid ears will I attend.  
For he who has the dregs of fortune drained 385  
Fears nothing more.

*Tiresias*: The time will come to thee,  
When these thy ills, for which thou seekest aid,  
Will blessings seem.

*Oedipus*: But tell me then, I pray,  
The one thing which the gods would have me know:  
Whose hands are stained with murder of the king?

*Tiresias*: Neither the birds can summon up the name,  
Who cleave the depths of heaven on fleeting wing, 390  
Nor yet the vitals plucked from living breasts.  
But we must seek it in another way:  
The murdered king himself must be recalled  
From realms of everlasting night, that thus,  
Released from Erebus, he may declare  
His murderer. The earth must be unsealed;  
The pitiless divinity of Dis 395  
Must be implored, and hither brought the shades  
Who live beyond the Styx.

Now do thou tell  
To whom thou giv'st the sacred embassy;  
For 'tis not right for thee who hold'st the reins  
Of government to seek the gloomy shades.

*Oedipus*: O Creon, thee this task demands, to whom,  
As next in power, my kingdom looks for aid. 400

*Tiresias*: And while we loose the bars of deepest hell,  
Do ye the praises of our Bacchus tell.

[*Exeunt* Creon, Tiresias, and Manto.]

*The Chorus [in dithyrambic strain sings in praise of Bacchus]:* Bind ye  
 now your flowing locks with the swaying ivy,  
 Brandish aloft with your languishing arms the Nysaean thyrsus!  
 O glorious light of heaven, attend the prayers  
 Which noble Thebes, thy Thebes, O beautiful Bacchus, 405  
 With suppliant hands outstretched here offers thee.  
 Turn hither thy smiling virgin face,  
 Dispel the clouds with thy starry glance,  
 The gloomy threats of Erebus, 410  
 And ravenous fate.  
 Thee it becomes to crown thy locks with flowers of the  
 springtime,  
 Thee to bind thy head with the Tyrian fillet;  
 Or with the clinging ivy, gleaming with berries,  
 Softly to wreathe thy brow; 415  
 Now thy hair to unbind and spread in confusion,  
 Now in close-drawn knot to collect and confine it;  
 Just as when thou, fearing the wrath of Juno,  
 Didst conceal thyself in the guise of maidens.  
 Virgin, too, thou seemedst with golden ringlets,  
 Binding up thy robe with a saffron girdle. 420  
 So the softer graces of living please thee,  
 Robes ungirt and flowing in long profusion.  
 When in thy golden car thou wast drawn by lions,  
 Clad in flowing garments, the East beheld thee,  
 All the vast expanse of the Indian country, 425  
 They who drink the Ganges and cleave the surface  
 Of snowy Araxes.  
 Seated on humble beast the old Silenus attends thee,  
 Binding his throbbing brows with a waving garland of ivy;  
 While the wanton priests lead on the mysterious revels. 430  
 And then a troop of Bassarids  
 With dancing step conducted thee,  
 Now ranging o'er Pangaeus' foot,  
 And now on Thracian Pindus' top.  
 Soon, 'mid the noble dames of Thebes, 435  
 A furious Maenad, the comrade of Bacchus,  
 In company of her companions, led thee to the end

in garment of rawn-skin, conducted the god.  
The Theban dames, by Bacchus excited,  
With streaming locks and thyrsus uplifted  
In high-waving hands, now join in the revels, 440  
And wild in their madness they rend Pentheus  
Limb from limb.  
Their fury spent, with weary frame,  
They look upon their impious deed,  
And know it not.

Into the sea realms holds, the foster-mother of Bacchus;  
Round her the daughters of Nereus dance, Leucothoë singing; 445  
Over the mighty deep, though new to its waves, Palaemon,  
Brother of Bacchus, rules, a mortal changed to a sea-god.

When in childhood a band of robbers assailing  
Bore thee away in their flying vessel a captive,  
Nereus quickly calmed the billowy ocean;  
When lo! to rolling meadows the dark sea changes; 450  
Here stands in vernal green the flourishing plane-tree,  
There the groves of laurel dear to Apollo;  
While resounds the chatter of birds in the branches.  
Now are the oars enwreathed with the living ivy,  
While at the masthead hang the clustering grape vines;  
There on the prow loud roars a lion of Ida, 455  
At the stern appears a terrible tiger of Ganges.  
Filled with terror the pirates leap in the ocean.  
Straight in their plunging forms new changes appear;  
For first their arms are seen to shrink and fall, 460  
Their bodies' length to shorten; and on their sides  
The hands appear as fins; with curving back  
They skim the waves, and, lashing their crescent tails,  
They dash through the water.

Changed to a school of dolphins now, they follow the vessel. 465  
Soon did the Lydian stream with its precious waters receive  
thee,

Pouring down its golden waves in a billowy current.  
Loosed was the vanquished bow and Scythian darts of the savage  
Massagetan who mingles blood in his milky goblets.  
The realm of Lycurgus, bearer of axes, submitted to Bacchus; 470

The land of the Dacians<sup>[2]</sup> untamable felt his dominion,  
 The wandering tribes of the north by Boreas smitten,  
 And whom the Maeotis bathes with its frozen waters. 475  
 Where the Arcadian star looks down from the zenith,  
 Even there the power of Bacchus extended;  
 Conquered too the scattered Gelonian peoples.  
 From the warlike maidens their arms he wrested;  
 Down to the earth they fell in desperate conflict, 480  
 The hardy bands of Amazonian maidens.  
 Now, at last, their arrows swift are abandoned,  
 And Maenads have they become.  
 Holy Cithaeron too has streamed with slaughter,  
 Where was spilt the noble blood of Ophion. 485  
 Proetus' daughters the forests sought; and Argos,  
 Juno at last consenting, paid homage to Bacchus.  
 The island of Naxos, girt by the broad Aegean,  
 Gave to Bacchus the maid whom Theseus abandoned,  
 Compensating her loss by a better husband. 490  
 Out of the rock there gushed Nyctelian liquor;  
 Babbling streams at his word clove the grassy meadows;  
 Deep the earth drank in the nectarean juices;  
 Streams of snowy milk burst forth from the fountains, 495  
 Mingled with Lesbian wine all fragrant with spices.  
 Now is the bride to her place in the heavens conducted;  
 Phoebus, with flowing locks, sings a stately anthem;  
 Love, in honor of both, bears the wedding torches; 500  
 Jove lays down the deadly darts of his lightning,  
 Halting his bolts of flame at the coming of Bacchus.  
 While the gleaming stars in their boundless pasturage wander,  
 While the sea shall gird th' imprisoned earth with its waters, 505  
 While the full-orb'd moon shall gather her lost refulgence,  
 While the morning star shall herald the coming of Phoebus,  
 While in the north the Bear shall fear the cerulean ocean,  
 Still shall we worship the shining face of the beautiful Bacchus.

**FOOTNOTES:**



### ACT III

[*Enter Creon, returned from the rites of necromancy.*]

*Oedipus*: Although thy face displays the marks of grief,  
Declare whose death an angry heaven demands. 510

*Creon*: Thou bid'st me speak where fear would silence keep.

*Oedipus*: If Thebes, to ruin falling, move thee not,  
Regard the scepter of thy kindred house.

*Creon*: Thou wilt repent the knowledge which thou seek'st.

*Oedipus*: A useless cure for ills is ignorance.  
And wilt thou still obstruct the public weal? 515

*Creon*: Where foul the cure, 'tis grievous to be cured.

*Oedipus*: Thy tidings speak; or, by thy pains subdued,  
Thou soon shalt know what angered kings can do.

*Creon*: Kings hate the words whose speech they would compel. 520

*Oedipus*: In hades shalt thou pay thy life for all,  
Unless thou tell the secrets of the fates.

*Creon*: Nay, let me hold my peace. No smaller boon  
Was ever sought.

*Oedipus*: More often than by speech,  
Have kingdoms by the boon of silence fall'n. 525

*Creon*: When silence is denied what can be given?

*Oedipus*: He sins who silence holds when speech is best.

*Creon*: Then hear in peace the words which I must speak.

*Oedipus*: Was ever punishment for speech compelled?

*Creon*: Afar from Thebes there is a frowning grove  
Near the well-watered vale of Dirce's fount. 530  
And there a cypress lifts its giant head

And holds within its evergreen embrace  
The trees around. Here stands an ancient oak  
And spreads its branches dark with clustering mould.  
One side is torn by time's destructive hand;  
The rest, with roots decayed and falling, hangs 535  
Supported on a neighbor's trunk. Here stand  
The bitter laurel, rustling linden trees,  
The myrtle, and the alder destined soon  
To sweep its oarage on the boundless sea.  
Midway, a mighty pine its smooth trunk lifts 540  
Against the rays of Phoebus and the winds,  
And with its heavy shade it overwhelms  
The lesser trees; for, with its spreading boughs,  
It stands, the giant guardian of the wood.  
Beneath this pine there springs a gloomy pool 545  
That never saw the sun nor light of day.  
An oozy swamp surrounds the sluggish pool.  
Here did the agéd priest direct his steps;  
Nor was there need to wait; the gloomy spot  
Supplied the shades of night. A trench is dug,  
Where brands are kindled, pluck'd from funeral pyres.  
The priest is shrouded in a mourning pall, 550  
And waves the bough; his dark robe sweeps the earth.  
And now, in squalid garb and wrapped in gloom,  
The priest advances, with his hoary locks  
Encircled by the yew-tree's deadly leaves. 555  
Black sheep and sable oxen, backward driven,<sup>[3]</sup>  
Are sacrificed. The fire devours the food,  
And the living entrails quiver in the flames.  
The shades he calls, and him who rules the shades,  
And him who guards the dark Lethæan stream.  
A magic rune he mutters o'er and o'er 560  
And fiercely chants the charm which either lures  
The shifting ghosts, or forces them to come.  
He burns the victims whole, and fills the trench  
With sacrificial blood, and snowy milk,  
And, with his left hand pouring, mingles wine; 565  
A magic chant he utters, and he drives the shades to the south.

Again he cants, and, bending to the earth,  
With stronger words and frantic, summons up  
The manes. Loudly bayed the hounds of hell;  
And thrice the hollows gave a mournful sound;  
The whole earth trembled and the solid ground 570  
Was rent asunder. Then the priest exclaimed:  
"I have prevailed, for strong the words I spoke;  
The deep and gloomy realm of chaos yawns,  
And for the dwellers in the home of Dis  
A way is opened to the world of light."  
The whole wood shrank away; its leaves erect  
In horror stood, the mighty trunks were split,  
And all the grove was smitten with amaze. 575  
The frightened earth crouched back with hollow groans,  
As if unwillingly she saw the deeps  
Of Acheron assailed; or else herself,  
That back to life the dead might find a way,  
With crashing sound her close-wrought barriers burst;  
Or threefold Cerberus in angry rage 580  
Clanked loud his heavy chains. Then suddenly  
The earth yawned wide, and at our very feet  
A deep abyss appeared. I saw, myself,  
The sluggish pools amidst the dusky shades;  
I saw the shadowy gods, and that black gloom  
No earthly night can give. At that dread sight  
My blood ran cold and froze within my veins.  
And then there hurried forth a dreadful band, 585  
And stood in armed array, that viper brood,  
The troop of brothers sprung from dragon's teeth;  
And that fell pestilence, the curse of Thebes.  
Then grim Erinys raised her piercing cry,  
Blind Fury, Dread, and all the ghastly forms  
Which spawn and lurk within the endless shades: 590  
Grief, in her madness, tearing out her hair;  
Disease, scarce holding up her weary head;  
Age, burdened with itself, and brooding Fear.  
Our spirits died within us at the sight.  
Even the prophet's daughter stood amazed, 595

Though well she knew her father's mystic arts.  
But he, undaunted, since he saw them not,  
Convoked the bloodless throng of gloomy Dis.  
Like clouds the shadowy forms come trooping up,  
And snuff the air of unrestricted heaven.  
Not lofty Eryx in his mountain glades  
As many falling leaves, nor Hybla's slopes 600  
As many flowers produce, in sunny spring,  
When greedy bees in teeming bunches swarm;  
As many waves break not upon the shore;  
As many birds deserting Strymon's streams,  
Exchange not wintry blasts and Arctic snows,  
And seek the milder valley of the Nile; 605  
As were the shades the prophet summoned forth.  
In eager haste the shivering spirits seek  
The hiding-places of the leafy grove.  
From out the cave, his right hand by the horns  
A raging bull restraining, Zethus came, 610  
And next Amphion, with that famous shell  
Whose magic strains insensate rocks allured.  
Here haughty Niobe, in safety now,  
Amongst her children lifts her head in scorn  
And proudly counts her shades. And worse than she,  
That mother, mad Agave, next appears, 615  
With all the impious band who rent the king.  
Then Pentheus' self, all torn and bleeding, comes,  
In rage pursuing those wild Bacchanals.  
At length, when often summoned, Laius comes  
In shame, and, skulking, flees the shadowy throng,  
And hides himself away; but still the seer, 620  
With unrelenting purpose pressing on,  
Repeats his strong compelling exorcisms,  
Until he brings the ghost to open view.  
I shudder as I tell it. There he stood,  
A fearful sight, his body drenched with blood,  
His matted locks o'erspread with horrid filth.  
And now, with raging tongue, the specter spoke: 625  
"O wild and savage house of Cadmus, thou

O wild and savage house of Cadmus, thou  
Who ever dost rejoice in brother's blood!  
The thyrsus wave, in madness rend thy sons.  
The greatest crime of Thebes is mother's love.  
O fatherland, 'tis not the wrath of heaven,  
But sin of man by which thou art undone. 630  
No plague-fraught south wind with its deadly blast,  
Nor yet the parchéd earth with its dry breath,  
Is harming thee; but 'tis thy bloody king,  
Who, as the prize of savage murder done,  
Hath seized his father's scepter and his bed.  
An impious son (but far more impious, 635  
The mother who in most unhallowed womb  
Bore children once again), he forced his way  
Back to his source of life, and there begot  
Upon his mother offspring horrible,  
Got brothers to himself, a custom base,  
Whence e'en the very beasts of prey are free.  
Oh, base entanglement, more monstrous far 640  
Than that fell Sphinx which he himself hath slain.  
Thee, thee, who dost the bloody scepter hold,  
Thee will thy sire, still unavenged, pursue,  
With all thy town; and with me will I bring  
Th' attendant fury of my wedding night—  
I'll bring her with her loud-resounding<sup>[4]</sup> lash! 645  
Thy house, polluted, will I overthrow,  
And thy Penates will I trample down  
In fratricidal strife! Then quickly drive  
Thy king, O Thebes, from out thy boundaries!  
For when his baleful step shall leave the land,  
In vernal green shall it renew itself,  
The air shall give again pure springs of life, 650  
And to the woods their beauty shall return.  
Destruction, Pestilence and Death, Distress,  
Disease, Despair—his fitting company—  
Shall all depart with him. And he, indeed,  
Will seek with eager haste to flee his realm,  
But him will I hedge round with barriers,

And hold him back. Uncertain of his way, 655  
And with his staff to guide his faltering steps,  
He'll creep along his sad and darkened path.  
Do ye the land deny him; I, his sire,  
Will take away from him the light of heaven."

*Oedipus:* A chilling tremor penetrates my bones;  
The very thing which I have feared to do,  
They say that I have done it. But the charge 660  
That in unholy wedlock I am joined,  
My mother Merope refutes, for she  
To Polybus, my sire, is wedded still;  
And my hands from stain of father's blood are clean,  
Since Polybus in safety lives and reigns.  
Since both my parents free me from the guilt  
Of murder and that base, incestuous crime,  
What room is there for accusation more?  
And as for Laius, Thebes his death deplored  
Long 'ere I set my feet upon her soil. 665  
What shall we say then? Was the seer deceived,  
Or does the hand of God afflict the state?  
No! now we see these two confederates  
Deep in a crafty plot: that priest of thine  
With lying tongue pretends the will of heaven,  
And promises my sovereignty to thee. 670

*Creon:* Would I expel my sister from the throne? 670  
But if that sacred fealty which I owe  
Unto my kindred house restrained me not,  
Yet fortune would herself affright me sore,  
For with care and danger is she ever fraught.  
But be thyself content to lay aside,  
While still thou safely mayst, the cares of state,  
Lest, [5] borne too long, they may o'erwhelm thee quite. 675  
In a humbler state more safely shalt thou dwell.

*Oedipus:* And dost thou bid me, then, of mine own will  
To lay aside the heavy cares of state?

*Creon:* Thus would I counsel those to whom the way

*Creon:* Thus would I counsel those to whom the way  
Is open yet to choose the path he will.  
But the lot that fortune sends thee thou must bear. 680

*Oedipus:* When one desires to reign, 'tis ever thus,  
That humble life he praises, and the joys  
Of ease and sleep are ever in his mouth.  
A peaceful face oft hides a restless heart.

*Creon:* Does my long loyalty defend me not? 685

*Oedipus:* To traitors, loyalty's a cloak to crime.

*Creon:* Free from the burdens of a kingly state,  
I still enjoy the fruits of royalty;  
My house is honored by our citizens;  
And day by day thy royal gifts o'erflow,  
And fill my kindred home with luxury. 690  
Rich food and clothing, gifts of every sort,  
And safety flow to many through my aid.  
Why should I think aught lacking to my lot?

*Oedipus:* Because there is a lack. Prosperity  
Ne'er halts at any bounds.

*Creon:* And shall I fall,  
Prejudged, and have no right to plead my cause? 695

*Oedipus:* Hadst thou consideration for *my* life?  
Did old Tiresias listen to my cause?  
And yet I am condemned. My pattern, thou;  
I do but follow in the way thou lead'st.

*Creon:* But what if I am guiltless?

*Oedipus:* Kings are wont  
To fear alike the doubtful and the true.

*Creon:* Who quakes at empty fears, hath true in store. 700

*Oedipus:* Who in a fault is taken, and forgiven,  
Is filled with hate. Let all such dubious faith  
Be far from me.

*Creon:* But thus is hatred bred.

*Oedipus:* Nay, he who feareth hatred overmuch,  
Knows not the art of ruling like a king;  
For 'tis by fear that kings are guarded most.

*Creon:* Who holds the scepter with tyrannic sway,  
Doth live in fear of those who fear his power;  
For terror ever doth return to him  
Who doth inspire it.

705

*Oedipus* [*to attendants*]: Hence, away with him;  
Deep in some rocky dungeon let him stay,  
While I unto the palace take my way.

[*Creon is led away by the attendants, while Oedipus retires into the palace.*]



*Chorus:* Not thou the cause of these our ills;  
And not on thy account hath fate  
Attacked the house of Labdacus;  
But 'tis the ancient wrath of heaven 710  
That still pursues our race.  
Castalia's grove once lent its shade  
Unto the Tyrian wanderer,  
And Dirce gave her cooling waves,  
What time the great Agenor's son,  
O'er all the earth the stolen prey 715  
Of Jove pursuing, worn and spent,  
Within these forests knelt him down  
And adored the heavenly ravisher.  
Then by Apollo's bidding led,  
A wandering heifer following,  
Upon whose neck the dragging plow, 720  
Nor the plodding wagon's curving yoke  
Had never rested, he his quest  
At last gave over, and his race  
From that ill-omened heifer named.  
From that time forth, the land of Thebes  
Strange monsters hath engendered: first,  
That serpent, sprung from the valley's depths, 725  
Hissing, o'ertopped the agéd oaks  
And lofty pines; and higher still,  
Above Chaonia's woods, he reared  
His gleaming head, though on the ground  
His body lay in many coils. 730  
And next the teeming earth produced  
An impious brood of arméd men.  
The battle call resounded loud  
From the curving horn, and the piercing notes  
Of the brazen trumpet shrill were heard.  
Their new-created, nimble tongues,  
And voices strange, they first employ 735  
In hostile clamor; and the fields,  
The plains, their kindred soil, they fill.

This monster brood, consorting well  
With that dire seed from which they sprung,  
Their life within a day's brief span  
Enjoyed; for after Phoebus rose 740  
They had their birth, but ere he set  
They perished. At the dreadful sight  
Great terror seized the wanderer;  
And much he feared to face in war  
His new-born foes. Until, at length  
The savage youth in mutual strife  
Fell down, and mother earth 745  
Beheld her sons, but now produced,  
Returned again to her embrace.  
And Oh, that with their fall might end  
All impious strife within the state!  
May Thebes, the land of Hercules,  
Such fratricidal strife behold  
No more!

Why sing Actaeon's fate, 750

Whose brow the new-sprung antlers crowned  
Of the long-lived stag, and whom his hounds,  
Though their hapless master still, pursued?  
In headlong haste through the mountains and woods,  
He flees in fear, and with nimble feet  
He scours the glades and rocky passes, 755  
In fear of the wind-tossed feathers hung  
Among the trees; but most he shuns  
The snares which he himself has set;  
Until at last in the still, smooth pool  
He sees his horns and his features wild, 760  
The pool where the goddess, too sternly  
chaste,  
Had bathed her virgin limbs.

#### FOOTNOTES:

[3] Reading, *retro*.

[4] Reading, *sonantem*.

[5] Reading, *ne*.

## ACT IV

*Oedipus*: My soul is filled with dark, foreboding fear;  
For the gods in heaven and hades join the charge  
That by my guilty hand King Laius fell. 765  
And yet my soul, in conscious innocence,  
And knowing better than the gods themselves  
Its secret deeds, denies the charge.

But now,  
Along the shadowy vistas of the past,  
My memory beholds an aged man who fell  
Beneath the heavy stroke of my stout staff.  
But first the elder strove with haughty words  
To drive the younger traveler from the path. 770  
But that was far from Thebes, in Phocis' realm,  
Where the forked road in three directions leads.  
But thou, my faithful wife, dispel my care:  
What span of life had Laius at his death?  
Fell he in manhood's bloom, or spent with age? 775

*Jocasta*: Midway 'twixt youth and age, but nearer age.

*Oedipus*: Did courtiers, thronging round, protect his course?

*Jocasta*: The many lost him on the winding way;  
A few by faithful toil kept near his side.

*Oedipus*: Did any fall as comrade of his fate? 780

*Jocasta*: One comrade in his death did valor give.

*Oedipus*: Alas, I stand convicted, for the place  
And number tally. Tell me now the time.

*Jocasta*: Since Laius fell, ten harvests have been reaped.

[*Enter an old Corinthian man, a messenger from Merope.*]

*Old Man* [to Oedipus]: The state of Corinth calls thee to the throne,  
For Polybus has gained his lasting rest.

785

*Oedipus*: See how a heartless fate doth compass me!  
But tell me how my father met his end.

*Old Man*: In gentle sleep he breathed his life away.

*Oedipus*: My sire is dead, and not by violence!  
I call the gods to witness that to heaven  
I now in piety may lift my hands,  
And fear no stain of impious slaughter more.  
And yet a still more fearful fate remains.

790

*Old Man*: Thy father's kingdom will dispel thy fears.

*Oedipus*: My father's kingdom would I seek, but still  
I fear my mother.

*Old Man*: Fear'st thou her who waits.  
With anxious heart, imploring thy return?

795

*Oedipus*: 'Tis piety itself that bids me flee.

*Old Man*: And wouldst thou leave her in her widowhood?

*Oedipus*: Thou speak'st the very essence of my fears.

*Old Man*: Speak out the fear that doth oppress thy soul;  
For 'tis my wont in trusty confidence  
To counsel kings.

*Oedipus*: By Phoebus' word forewarned,  
From wedlock with my mother do I flee.

800

*Old Man*: Then cease thy empty fears, and lay aside  
Thy base forebodings; for I tell thee here  
That thou art not the son of Merope.

*Oedipus*: Why did she wish to rear a spurious son?

*Old Man*: Because the proud security of kings  
Is by a son established.

*Oedipus*: Tell me now.  
How thou dost know the secrets of the court

805

HOW CAN YOU KNOW THE SECRETS OF THE COURT.

*Old Man:* With my own hands I gave thee to the king.

*Oedipus:* Thou gavest me? But who gave me to thee?

*Old Man:* A shepherd on Cithaeron's snowy slopes.

*Oedipus:* How camest thou within that sacred wood?

*Old Man:* My sheep upon that mountain did I seek.

810

*Oedipus:* Now on my body name some well-known mark.

*Old Man:* Behold, thy feet in infancy were pierced,  
And from thy swollen ankles art thou named.

*Oedipus:* Who was the man who gave me as a gift  
Into thy hands?

*Old Man:* He fed the royal flocks,  
And under him the hireling shepherds served.

815

*Oedipus:* But tell his name.

*Old Man:* An old man's memory  
Grows faint and weakly falters with disuse.

*Oedipus:* But wouldst thou know the features of the man?

*Old Man:* I might recall him, for a slender clue  
Ofttimes awakens memory of things  
Long buried and forgot.

820

*Oedipus:* Then hasten, slaves,  
Let all the master-shepherds drive their flocks  
Before the altar here, yea, summon all  
On whom depends the guidance of the flocks.

*Old Man:* Or chance or providence has kept thy fate  
In darkness hid. What long hath lain concealed,  
I bid thee suffer to remain in doubt.  
For often truth, when brought into the light,  
Becomes the bane of him who seeks for her.

825

*Oedipus:* Can any ills be worse than those I fear?

*Old Man:* Oh be thou sure the truth is hid with fate

Whose meaning must be sought with toil and pain.  
The public weal calls there, and here thine own,  
And both with equal voice. Direct thy steps 830  
Along a middle course! provoke not fate;  
Permit thy fortune to unfold itself.  
It profits naught to change a happy state.

*Oedipus:* A change is well when all is at the worst.

*Old Man:* What better canst thou ask than royal birth?  
No further seek, lest thou thy sire repent. 835

*Oedipus:* Though I should prove to be of shameful blood,  
My purpose still is fixed to know the truth.  
[*Enter Phorbas, the head-shepherd.*]

But see, the agéd man, old Phorbas, comes,  
'Neath whose control the royal flocks are kept.  
Dost thou remember still his face or name?  
840

*Old Man:* His form eludes my mind; not fully known,  
And yet again not all unknown his face.  
[*To Phorbas.*]

Old man, while Laius still was king, didst thou,  
His shepherd, ever drive the royal flocks  
To pasture here upon Cithaeron's slopes?

*Phorbas:* On fair Cithaeron's sunny slopes my flocks  
Have ever found the greenest pasturage. 845

*Old Man:* Dost thou know me?

*Phorbas:* But dim and indistinct  
My memory.

*Oedipus:* Didst thou at any time  
An infant boy deliver to this man?  
[*Phorbas falters and turns pale.*]

Come then, speak out! why dost thou hesitate?  
And why does pallor overspread thy cheeks?  
Why seek for words? The truth no respite needs.  
850

*Phorbas:* Thou speak'st of things long buried and forgot.

*Oedipus:* But speak, or pain shall drive thee to confess.

*Phorbas:* I gave a boy to him, a useless gift;  
He never could have lived or known the light.

*Old Man:* The gods forbid! The child is living still;  
And may his life be long on earth, I pray. 855

*Oedipus:* Why dost thou think the child did not survive?

*Phorbas:* A slender rod of iron his ankles pierced,  
And bound his limbs. This wound produced a sore,  
Which by contagion spread o'er all his frame.

*Old Man:* Why question more? The fatal truth draws near.  
Who was that infant boy? 860

*Phorbas:* My lips are sealed.

*Oedipus:* Bring hither fire! Its flames shall loose thy speech.

*Phorbas:* Must truth be sought along such cruel paths?  
I pray thy grace.

*Oedipus:* If I seem harsh to thee,  
Or headstrong, thy revenge is in thy hand—  
The truth revealed. Then speak: who was the child? 865  
Of what sire gotten? Of what mother born?

*Phorbas:* *He was the son of her who is thy—wife.*

*Oedipus:* Then yawn, O earth! and thou, O king of shades,  
Into the lowest depths of hades hurl  
This vile confounder of the son and sire! 870  
Ye citizens, on my incestuous head  
Heap crushing rocks! with weapons slaughter me!  
Let husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers—all  
Whose name I have defiled, against me arm!  
And let the poor, plague-smitten populace  
Hurl blazing brands from off their funeral pyres!  
The plague spot of the age, I wander here,  
Heaven-cursed pollutor of all sacred ties; 875  
Who, in the day when first I breathed the air,  
Was doomed to death

was doomed to death.

[*To himself.*]

Call up thy courage now,  
And dare some deed befitting these thy crimes.  
Haste to thy palace and congratulate  
Thy mother's house increased by children's sons.

880

[*Exit.*]



*Chorus:* If it were mine to choose my fate  
 And fashion as I would,  
 I'd trim my sails to the gentle breeze,  
 Lest, by the raging blasts o'erwhelmed,  
 My spars should broken be. 885  
 May soft and gently blowing winds  
 My dauntless bark lead on;  
 And ever on the middle course,  
 Where safely runs the path of life,  
 May I be traveling. 890  
 Fearing the Cretan king, 'tis said,  
 And trusting in strange arts,  
 Young Icarus essayed the stars,  
 And strove to conquer birds in flight,  
 On false wings balancing. 895  
 He fell into the raging sea  
 And his name alone survived.  
 But, wiser far, old Daedalus  
 A safer course midst the clouds pursued, 900  
 Awaiting his wingéd son.  
 As the timid bird flees the threat'ning hawk,  
 And collects her scattered young;  
 So the father watched till he saw his son 905  
 Plying his hands in the gulping sea,  
 Enmeshed in his useless wings.  
 So does he stand in treacherous ways,  
 Whoever goes beyond the bounds  
 Ordained by nature's law.  
 [*Enter Messenger from within the palace.*] 910  
 But what is this? The palace gates resound;  
 Behold, it is the royal messenger.  
 With wild and woeful mien he seems to come.  
 Speak out, and tell us what the news thou bring'st.

## ACT V

*Messenger:* When Oedipus his impious race perceived, 915  
 And saw the warning fates had been fulfilled;  
 When on a hideous charge he stood condemned;  
 Then, with a deadly purpose in his breast,  
 Did he approach his palace, and in haste  
 Beneath those hated battlements he went.  
 And as a lion rages o'er the sands,  
 And, threat'ning, tosses back his tawny mane;  
 So Oedipus advanced with blazing eyes, 920  
 And stern, mad face, while hollow groans burst forth,  
 And from his limbs there dripped a chilling sweat.  
 He foams and vents a stream of threat'ning words,  
 And from his heart his mighty grief o'erflows.  
 He in his madness seeks against himself  
 Some heavy penalty and like his fate. 925  
 "Why do I wait for punishment?" he cries;  
 "Let my guilty heart with hostile sword be pierced,  
 Or overwhelmed with flames or crushing rocks!  
 Oh, for a tiger or some bird of prey,  
 To rend my tender flesh! Do thou thyself,  
 Who hast beheld full many deeds of blood,  
 O cursed Cithaeron, from thy forests send 930  
 Thy wild beasts 'gainst me or thy greedy dogs.  
 Oh, that Agave were returned to earth!  
 But thou, my soul, why dost thou shrink from death?  
 For death alone can make thee innocent."  
 So spake he, and his impious hand he laid  
 Upon the hilt and drew his glittering sword. 935  
 "And dost thou, then, with this brief punishment  
 Expect to pay thy mighty debt of guilt,  
 And with one blow wilt balance all thy sins?  
 Thy death would satisfy thy murdered sire;  
 But what to appease thy mother wilt thou do,  
 And those thy children, shamefully begot?  
 What recompense canst make unto thy land,  
 Which for thy sin is smit with pestilence? 940  
 Such debts as these thou canst not pay by death.  
 Let Nature, who, in Oedipus alone

Let nature, who, in Oedipus alone,  
Strange births devising, hath her laws o'erturned,  
Subvert herself again to punish him.  
Let it be mine, in never-ending round,  
To live and die, and to be born again, 945  
That for my crimes by never-ending pain  
I may atone. Now use thy wit, poor soul.  
Since by repeated death thou canst not die,  
Choose then some form of lingering death in life,  
Some way by which, not numbered with the dead,  
Nor yet the living, thou mayst linger on.  
So die, that in thy death thou mayst remain 950  
Without the land wherein thy father dwells.  
O soul, why dost thou hesitate?" And then  
A sudden stream of tears o'erspread his face,  
And wet his cheeks. "And can my tears suffice?  
Too long my eyes these useless showers have poured;  
Nay, let them follow where the tears have flowed, 955  
From out their sockets driven. O gods of wedlock,  
Is this enough? These eyes must be removed."  
He spoke with frenzied rage; and all the while  
His cheeks were flaming with a dangerous light,  
And his starting eyeballs strained to leave their seats.  
His face was full of passion, fierce resolve.  
Groaning he thrust his hands into his eyes; 960  
And those fierce eyes stood forth to meet his hands,  
And eager followed of their own accord  
Their kindred hands, as courting that deep wound.  
Deep in with hookéd fingers he explores,  
And rends his eyeballs from their deepest roots. 965  
Still stays his hands within those empty seats,  
And tears the hollow sockets with his nails,  
With savage joy, with vain and endless rage;  
So great<sup>[6]</sup> his fear and hatred of the light. 970  
He lifts his head, and with those empty eyes  
The heavens surveying, tests his darkened sight.  
Whatever from his mangled eyes still hangs,  
He tears away, and now in triumph cries

To all the gods: "Oh, spare my country now,  
I pray; for I have done what must be done, 975  
And I have paid the penalty I owed.  
Now have I found at last a fitting night  
To match my impious wedlock." As he speaks,  
His face is watered by a hideous shower,  
As the blood flows streaming from his ruptured veins.

*Chorus:* By fate we're driven; then yield to fate. 980  
No anxious, brooding care can change  
The thread of destiny that falls  
From that grim spindle of the Fates.  
Whate'er we mortals suffer here,  
Whate'er we do, all hath its birth  
In that deep realm of mystery.  
Stern Lachesis her distaff whirls, 985  
Spinning the threads of mortal men,  
But with no backward-turning hand.  
All things in ordered pathways go;  
And on our natal day was fixed  
Our day of death. Not God himself  
Can change the current of our lives,  
Which bears its own compelling force 990  
Within itself. Each life goes on  
In order fixed and absolute,  
Unmoved by prayer. Nay fear itself  
Has been by many found a bane;  
For, while they sought to shun their fate,  
They came upon it in their flight.  
But now the palace gates resound, and see, 995  
The sightless king himself, with none to guide,  
Takes hitherward his blind and groping way.

[*Enter Oedipus.*]

*Oedipus:* Now all is well and finished; to my sire  
I've paid the debt I owed. How sweet these shades!  
What god, at length appeased, hath wrapped my head  
In a pall of darkness, and my crimes forgiven?  
Now have I 'scaped the conscious eye of day; 1000  
And nothing dost thou owe, O parricide,  
To thine avenging hand. Thy sight is gone,  
And such a countenance becomes thee well.

[*Enter* Jocasta.]

*Chorus:* See where with hurried step Jocasta comes,  
Beside herself and overcome with grief;  
As when in maddened rage that Theban dame 1005  
Her son's head tore away and realized  
What she had done. She wavers, longs to speak  
To that afflicted one, and fears to speak.  
Now shame at last has yielded to her grief,  
And with a faltering tongue she speaks to him.

*Jocasta:* What shall I call thee? Son? Dost shun that name?  
Thou art my son; thy shame confesseth it.  
And yet, O son, though all unwilling, speak. 1010  
Why dost thou turn away thy sightless face?

*Oedipus:* Who now forbids me to enjoy my night?  
Who gives me back mine eyes? My mother's voice!  
Oh, awful sound! Now is my labor vain.  
Stay where thou art! Each step is impious.  
Let boundless seas our guilty souls divide, 1015  
And lands remote; and if beneath this land  
Some other hangs, beholding other stars,  
May that far country one of us receive.

*Jocasta:* What thou deplorest is the fault of fate.  
A fated crime can leave no stain of sin.

*Oedipus:* Now cease thy words, O mother, spare my ears,  
By these poor remnants of my mangled form, 1020  
By that unhallowed offspring of my blood

By that unmanly whispering of my blood,  
And all that in the double names we bear  
Is right and wrong!

*Jocasta* [to herself]: Why art thou listless now,  
O soul of mine? Since thou hast shared his guilt,  
Why hesitate to share his punishment?  
The beauty of all human intercourse 1025  
Has fallen into ruin for thy sake,  
Confused and lost, O wretch incestuous.  
Not if the father of the gods himself  
Should hurl at me his glittering thunderbolts,  
Could I for my foul crimes atonement make,  
Since I the name of mother have profaned. 1030  
Now death is welcome, but the way of death  
Must I consider.

[To Oedipus.]

Come, thou parricide,  
And lift thy hand against thy mother too.  
This act is wanting to complete thy work.

[To herself.]

Now let the sword be drawn. By this good blade  
Was Laius, my husband, slain—not so;  
My husband's father, by his rightful name! 1035  
Shall I this weapon plunge into my breast,  
Or thrust it deep within my waiting neck?  
Nay, nay: thou know'st not how to choose a place.  
Strike here, O hand, through this capacious womb,  
Which (horrible!) the son and husband bore.

[*She stabs herself and falls dead.*]

*Chorus:* She lies in death, her failing hand relaxed;  
And spouting streams of blood drive out the sword. 1040

*Oedipus:* O fate-revealer, thee do I upbraid,  
Thou god and guardian of the oracles.  
My father only was I doomed to slay;  
But now, twice parricide and past my fears,  
Have I been guilty, and my mother slain.  
For 'tis by sin of mine that she is dead.  
O lying Phoebus, now have I outdone 1045  
The impious fates.

With apprehensive feet  
Let me go out upon my darkened way,  
Planting my footsteps with a faltering tread,  
And through the darkness grope with trembling hands.  
Stay not thy flight, speed thy uncertain steps—  
But hold! lest on thy mother's corse thou tread. 1050  
O Thebans, weak and smitten sore with ills,  
Whose hearts are fainting in your breasts, behold,  
I flee, I go: lift up your drooping heads.  
A milder sky and sweeter air shall come  
When I am gone. Whoever still retains 1055  
His feeble life may now inhale the air  
In deep, life-giving draughts. Go, lend your aid  
To those who were to certain death resigned;  
For with me in my exile do I bear  
All pestilential humors of the land.  
Then come, ye blasting Fates and mad Despair,  
Thou deadly Pestilence, come, come with me;  
With such a company 'tis sweet to flee! 1060

[*Exit.*]

#### FOOTNOTES:

[6] Reading, *tantum*.

**PHOENISSAE, OR THEBAÏS**  
**A FRAGMENT**



# PHOENISSAE, OR THEBAÏS

## A FRAGMENT

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### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

<i>Oedipus</i>	Late king of Thebes.
<i>Antigone</i>	Daughter of Oedipus, constant to him in his misfortunes.
<i>Jocasta</i>	Wife and mother of Oedipus.
<i>Polynices</i>	} Sons of Oedipus and rivals for the throne.
<i>Eteocles</i>	
<i>Messenger</i>	

THE SCENE is laid, first in the wild country to which Oedipus, accompanied by Antigone, has betaken himself; then in Thebes, and lastly in the plain before Thebes.

THE TIME is three years after the great tragedy of Oedipus.

*The stroke of fate, that has been threatening Oedipus since long before his birth, has fallen at last, and he has done the thing he feared to do. And now, self-blinded and self-exiled from his land, he has for three years wandered in rough and trackless places, attended by Antigone, his daughter, who, alone of all his friends, has condoned his fated sins and remained attached to him.*

*Meanwhile his sons, though they agreed to reign alternate years, are soon to meet in deadly strife; for Eteocles, although his year of royal power is at an end, refuses to give up the throne; and now Polynices, who has in exile wed the daughter of Adrastus, king of Argos, is marching against the gates of Thebes, with seven great armies, to enforce his rights.*

*[By a different version from the "Oedipus," Jocasta did not slay herself at once as in that tale, but still is living on in grief and shame, and strives to reconcile her sons.]*

## ACT I

*Oedipus* [to Antigone, who has followed him into exile]: O thou, who  
guid'st thy blinded father's steps,  
Sole comfort of my weary heart, my child,  
Begotten at such heavy cost to me,  
Leave thou the unpropitious way I tread.  
Why shouldst thou seek to lead my feet aright  
Which fain would wander? Let me stumble on. 5  
Far better shall I find my way, alone,  
The path that from the miseries of life  
Shall take me, and the face of heaven and earth  
Free from the sight of this ill-omened head.  
O hand of mine, how little hast thou done!  
For, though I do not see the light of day  
Which looked upon my crime, still am I seen.  
Unclasp thy clinging hand from mine; permit 10  
My sightless feet to wander where they will.  
I go, I go where my Cithaeron lifts  
His rugged crags on high; where to his dogs  
Actaeon, speeding through the rocky ways,  
Became a booty strange and pitiful;  
Where through the dim old woods and dusky glades, 15  
By Bacchic frenzy fired, the mother wild  
Her sisters led, rejoicing in the crime,  
When on the waving thyrsus' point she bore  
The gory head of Pentheus; where the bull  
Of Zethus rushed along, the mangled corpse  
Of Dirce dragging (through the thorny briars  
The mad beast's flight was traceable in blood); 20

Or where the cliff of Ino lifts its head  
 High o'er the heaving sea, into whose depths  
 The mother leaped, fleeing an unknown crime,  
 Yet daring other crime, by terror driven  
 To sink her son with her beneath the waves. 25  
 Oh, happy they whose better fortune gave  
 Mothers like these! There is another place  
 Within these woods—my place, which calls to me,  
 To which I fain would haste; my eager feet  
 Will not delay, and thither will I go,  
 Unguided, all alone. Why hesitate 30  
 To seek the place that most belongs to me?  
 Give back that death, Cithaeron, give again  
 That spot where once I lay upon thy breast,  
 That, where I should in infancy have died,  
 In age I may expire. Now let me pay  
 The debt I long have owed. O mountain, fell  
 And bloody, cruel, savage in thy rage,  
 Both when thou spar'st and when thou dost destroy, 35  
 This body long ago was given to thee:  
 Obey my father's and my mother's will.  
 My soul is eager to receive at last  
 Its punishment. Why, daughter, why dost thou  
 With baleful love restrain me? Hold me not.  
 My father calls, and I will follow, yea,  
 Will follow him. Then cease to hold me back. 40  
 See where the royal Laius comes in rage,  
 The blood-stained scepter of his ravished realm  
 Within his grasp. See, with his angry hands  
 He seeks to tear again my empty eyes.  
 O daughter, dost thou see my father, too?  
 I surely see him.  
 [*To himself:*] Now, O coward soul,  
 Brave but to mar a helpless part of thee, 45  
 At length spew out that hateful life of thine.  
 Delay no more upon thy punishment,  
 And give thyself entirely unto death.

Why do I, sluggish, linger on in life?  
There is no further crime that I can do.  
Oh, my foreboding, wretched soul, there is!

[To Antigone.]

Flee from thy father, flee, while still a maid;  
My mother's fate makes me of all afraid.

50

*Antigone:* No power, my father, shall unloose my hold  
Of thee; no one shall force me from thy side.

The illustrious, rich house of Labdacus,  
Let my two brothers seek with strife to gain:  
The greatest part of all my father's realm  
Is mine—my father's self. Nor shall this share

55

Be reft away from me by him who holds  
By stolen right the scepter over Thebes,  
Nor by that other brother who leads on  
Against his native land th' Argolic hosts;  
Though Jove himself should thunder out of heaven,  
And hurl his bolt against my clinging hands,  
I would not let thee go. Though thou forbid,  
I'll guide thee, O my father, 'gainst thy will,  
And thy reluctant feet will I direct.

60

Seek'st thou the level plain? There will I go.  
The rugged mountain heights? I'll not oppose,  
But will precede thy way. Use me as guide  
Wherever thou wouldst go; since for us both  
Is every path selected that thou tread'st.

65

With me, but not without me, canst thou die.  
There springs a lofty cliff, precipitous,  
And looks far out upon the sea below:  
Shall we seek this? There hangs a naked rock,  
There yawns the riven earth with gaping jaws:  
Wouldst thou to these? And there a mountain stream

70

In roaring torrent falls, and 'neath its waves  
Worn fragments of the mountain roll along:  
Shall we rush headlong in? Where thou wouldst go,  
I go, but always first. I'll not oppose  
Nor urge. Dost thou desire to be destroyed?  
Is death thy highest wish? If thou dost die

is death thy highest wish? If thou dost die,  
I go before thee; if thou liv'st, I follow. 75  
But change thy mind, call up thine old-time strength,  
And with a mighty will thy sorrows curb.  
Resist, since in such ills defeat is death.

*Oedipus:* Whence springs so rare a spirit in a house  
So impious? Whence comes this noble maid, 80  
Unlike her race? Can it be true indeed?  
Has any pious thing been born of me?  
Ne'er would it be, for well I know my fates,  
Except for harmful ends. Nature herself  
Has changed her laws: now shall the stream, reversed,  
Bear back its whirling waters to their source; 85  
The torch of Phoebus shall bring in the night,  
And day be heralded by Hesperus;  
And, that I may but add unto my woe,  
I, too, shall pious be. Not to be saved—  
This is for Oedipus the only cure.  
Let me avenge my father, unavenged  
Till now. My hand, why dost thou hesitate 90  
To exact the penalty I owe to him?  
Whatever I have suffered hitherto  
Was for my mother's sake. Release my hand,  
Undaunted girl; thou but delay'st my death,  
And thy living father's funeral prolong'st.  
Let earth conceal at last this hated form. 95  
Thou wrongest me, though with a kind intent,  
And deem'st it piety to keep thy sire  
From burial. But they are one in guilt,  
Both he who forces death upon a man  
Who fain would live, and he who holds him back  
Who longs to die. And yet they are not one;  
For surely is the last the worsen sin.  
To be condemned to death were better far 100  
For me than to be saved from death. Then cease,  
My child, from this attempt. I have reserved  
For my own will the right to live or die.  
Right gladly did I yield the sovereignty

right gladly and I yield the sovereignty  
O'er all my realm; yet o'er myself alone  
I still am king. If thou in very truth  
Art loyal to me, give me back my sword, 105  
That sword already with my father's blood  
Defiled. Wilt give it back? Or do my sons  
Retain my sword together with my throne?  
'Tis well. Wherever there is need of crime,  
There let it be; I gladly give it up.  
Let both my sons possess the sword. But thou,  
Flames, rather, and a heap of wood prepare;  
Then will I fling myself upon the pyre, 110  
Cling in its hot embrace, and hide myself  
Within its deadly hold. There will I loose  
This stubborn soul, and give to mortal dust  
Whatever lives in me. Where is the sea?  
Come, lead me where some beetling crag juts out,  
Or where Ismenus rolls his savage waves; 115  
Or thither would I go and end my life,  
Where once upon a jutting rock abode  
The hybrid Sphinx and wove her crafty speech.  
Direct me thither, set thy father there. 120  
Let not that dreadful seat be empty long,  
But place me there, a greater monster still.  
There will I sit and of my fate propose  
A riddle dark which no man will resolve.  
Come listen, ye, who plow the Theban fields;  
Whoever worships in the sacred grove  
Of Cadmus, for the deadly serpent famed, 125  
Where hallowed Dirce lies; whoever drinks  
Eurotas' stream; ye who in Sparta dwell,  
Illustrious for its heavenly brothers twain;  
And ye who reap Boeotia's fertile fields,  
The plains of Elis and Parnassus' slopes:  
What riddle like to this could she propose, 130  
That curse of Thebes, who wove destructive words  
In puzzling measures? What so dark as this?  
*He was his grandsire's son-in-law, and yet*

*His father's rival; brother of his sons,  
And father of his brothers; at one birth  
The granddame bore unto her husband sons,  
And grandson's to herself. Who can unwind  
A tangle such as this? E'en I myself,  
Who bore the spoils of triumph o'er the Sphinx,  
Stand mute before the riddle of my fate.*

---

135

*[Has a speech of Antigone dropped out at this point, or does Oedipus hark back to a previous thought after a dramatic pause?]*



But why waste further words? Why dost thou try  
To soften my determined heart with prayers? 140  
My will is fixed to pour this spirit forth  
Which now for long has struggled sore with death,  
And seek the world of shades; for blackest night  
Is still not black enough for this my crime.  
'Tis sweet in deepest Tartarus to hide;  
Or, if there yet is deeper pit than this,  
There would I go. 'Tis well to do at last 145  
The thing which long ago should have been done.  
I cannot be prevented from my death.  
Wilt take away my sword? Wilt bar all paths  
That lead unto the fatal precipice?  
Wilt keep my neck free from the choking noose?  
Remove all poisonous herbs from me? Yet what,  
Think'st thou, will all that care of thine avail? 150  
For death is everywhere. A kindly God  
Hath this great law with wisest care ordained:  
That anyone can take man's life away,  
But none can stay his death; for countless ways  
Are open unto him who seeks to die.  
I ask no aid of thine. Well am I used  
To employ this naked hand. Then come, my hand,  
With all thy force, with all thy passion, come. 155  
And not one wound alone would I endure,  
For I have sinned in every part of me.  
Come, strike the mortal blow where'er thou wilt:  
Break through my breast and tear my heart away,  
So full of sin; lay bear my vitals all;  
Rain blows upon my neck until it break, 160  
Or let thy gouging fingers tear my veins  
Until they flow with blood. Or, if thou wilt,  
Direct thine anger whither thou art wont:  
These healing wounds reopen; let them flow  
With streams of blood and loathsome gore again;  
And through this passage drag my life away,  
So stubborn in defeat, so hard to storm.

And thou, O father, wheresoe'er thou art, 165  
Who stand'st as judge upon my just deserts,  
I ne'er have thought that such a crime as mine  
Could ever be sufficiently atoned,  
Nor has this living death contented me;  
I have not bought my pardon with my eyes,  
But fain would perish for thee, limb by limb.  
Exact at last the penalty I owe. 170  
Now I atone; then I but sacrificed  
Unto thy manes. Be thou here to aid,  
And my reluctant hand help me to plunge  
Deep down and deeper in my sightless eyes.  
A scant and timid offering I made,  
When first I plucked my eager eyeballs out.  
And even now my trembling spirit halts, 175  
Yea, halts, though downward to my shrinking hands  
My face inclines. Now shalt thou hear the truth,  
O Oedipus: less boldly than thou plan'dst  
Did'st thou pluck out thine eyes. Let now thy brain  
Feel those avenging fingers; through this door 180  
Complete the death which has begun in me.

*Antigone:* O father, great of soul, I pray thee hear  
With quiet mind thy wretched daughter's words:  
I do not seek to lead thee back again  
Into the presence of thy former home,  
Nor to the illustrious splendor of thy realm;  
I ask thee not with calm and peaceful soul 185  
To bear again that fearful shock of woe  
Which even yet the soothing hand of time  
Has not assuaged. And yet it is not meet  
That one so stout of heart should be o'ercome  
And to misfortune weakly turn his back.  
It is not valor, father, as thou think'st,  
To shrink from life; but 'gainst the mightiest ills 190  
To stand opposed, and not to flinch or budge,  
That is the truest test of manly worth.  
Who tramples under foot his destiny,

Who disregards and scorns the goods of life,  
 And aggravates the evils of his lot,  
 Who has no further need of Providence: 195  
 Wherefore should such a man desire to die,  
 Or seek for death? Each is the coward's act.  
 No one holds death in scorn who seeks to die.  
 The man whose evils can no farther go  
 Is safely lodged. Who of the gods, think'st thou,  
 Grant that he wills it so, can add one jot 200  
 Unto thy sum of trouble? Nor canst thou,  
 Save that thou deem'st thyself unfit to live.  
 But thou art not unfit, for in thy breast  
 No taint of sin has come. And all the more,  
 My father, art thou free from taint of sin,  
 Because, though heaven willed it otherwise,  
 Thou still art innocent. What is there now 205  
 Which has so maddened thee, which goads thy  
 heart  
 To fresh outbursts of grief? What forces thee  
 To seek the abodes of hell, and fly from these?  
 Is't that thou wouldst avoid the light of day?  
 Thou dost avoid the light. Or wouldst thou flee  
 This noble palace and thy native land?  
 Thy native land, although thou livest still,  
 Is dead to thee. Wouldst from thy sons escape,  
 And from thy mother? From the sight of all 210  
 Has fate removed thee; and whatever death  
 From any man can take, thy life has taken.  
 Art weary of the kingdom's press and stir?  
 At thy command thy former courtier throng  
 Has vanished.—Whom, O father, dost thou flee?

215

*Oedipus:* Myself I flee, I flee this heart of mine,  
 Full of all crimes; I flee this hand, this sky,  
 These gods; I flee those dreadful sins which I,  
 Though innocent, have done. And can it be  
 That this fair world, whence bounteous harvests spring,  
 Is trod by such as I? This wholesome air

DO I WITH pestilential lips innate, 220  
With water quench my thirst, or any gift  
Of kindly earth enjoy? And do I dare,  
This impious, incestuous, curséd wretch,  
To touch thy maiden hand? Have I still ears  
To hear the name of parent or of son? 225  
Oh, that with rending hands I might destroy  
These narrow ways of sound by which I hear  
The words of men. My child, all sense of thee,  
Who art a parcel of my impious deeds,  
In my unhappiness I would have fled.  
But now my crime sticks fast within my heart, 230  
And threatens ever to break out afresh;  
For what my blinded eyes have spared to me,  
Is through my ears poured in upon my soul.  
Oh, why do I not plunge this darkened life  
Into the eternal shadow-world of Dis?  
Why do I longer hold my spirit here? 235  
Why be a burden to the upper world,  
And wander still among the living men?  
What evil yet remains? My fatherland,  
My parents, children, valor—all are lost,  
And that illustrious glory of the mind;  
Yea, evil chance hath stripped me of my all.  
Tears yet remained, but these with my own hand 240  
Have I destroyed. Then go thy ways, my child.  
My soul will not give ear to any prayers,  
And only seeks new punishment for crime,  
And equal to my sin—if that can be.  
While yet an infant was I doomed to death.  
What mortal ever drew so hard a fate?  
Ere I had seen the light, while still confined 245  
Within the darksome prison of the womb,  
I was a thing of dread. The night of death  
Lays hold on many at the hour of birth,  
And snatches them away from dawning life;  
But death anticipated birth in me.  
Some are o'ertaken by untimely fate

While still within the womb, yet without sin. 250  
But I, yet hid within the hold of life,  
While yet my very being was in doubt,  
Was by the heavenly oracle compelled  
To answer to a charge unspeakable.  
My sire condemned me at Apollo's word,  
And through my tender ankles thrust a rod  
Still glowing from the forge; then sent his child  
Into the forest deep, a prey for beasts 255  
And all the savage birds Cithaeron breeds,  
Accustomed to be stained with royal blood.  
Yet him, whom God condemned, who by his sire  
Was cast away to die, death also fled.  
And Delphi's oracle have I fulfilled:  
For I with impious hand assailed my sire, 260  
And slew him.  
[*With bitter irony*] Yet, for this impiety,  
Perchance another act of piety  
Will make amends: I killed my father; true,  
But still I loved my mother.—Oh, 'tis shame  
To mention such a wedlock; yet I will,  
And force myself to bear this punishment,  
To tell abroad my more than bestial crime,  
So strange, that nations stand in dumb amaze, 265  
So shameful, that no age will credit it,  
That e'en the shameless parricide is shocked:  
Into my father's bed I bore my hands  
Smeared with my father's blood, and there received  
The wages of my crime—a greater crime.  
My father's murder was a trivial thing;  
But, that my sum of crime might be complete, 270  
My mother, to my marriage chamber led,  
Conceived—Oh, how could nature e'er endure  
A greater crime? And yet, if aught remains,  
I have begotten children vile enough  
To do this also. I have cast away  
The scepter which I won by parricide,  
And with it other hands are armed for war 275

AND WITH IT OTHER HANDS ARE ARMED FOR WAR.  
Full well do I my kingdom's fortune know,  
That never more shall any gain the throne  
Without the sacrifice of kindred blood.  
Dire evils doth my father-soul presage,  
For even now are sown the baleful seeds  
Of future strife; the plighted pact is spurned; 280  
One will not yield the throne he hath usurped,  
The other claims his right, calls on the gods  
To witness of his bond, and, driven from home,  
Moves Argos and the towns of Greece to arms.  
No light destruction comes to weary Thebes;  
For weapons, flames, and wounds press hard on her,  
And greater woes than these, if such there be, 285  
That all may know I have begotten sons.

*Antigone:* If thou no other cause for living hast,  
My father, this one reason is enough,  
That thou as father mayst restrain thy sons  
From deadly strife. Thou only canst avert 290  
Their threats of impious war, curb their mad hearts,  
Give peace to citizens, to country rest,  
And to their broken treaty honest faith.  
To many men art thou refusing life,  
If for thyself thou dost refuse to live.

*Oedipus:* Think'st thou that such as they have aught of love 295  
For father or for right, whose hearts are filled  
With lust for blood and power and impious arms,  
Profane and cruel sons—in brief, my own?  
Toward every form of evil deed they strive,  
And have no scruples where their wrath impels.  
In shame begot, they have no sense of shame.  
They have no feeling for their wretched sire, 300  
None for their country. Naught but lust of power  
Rules in their maddened breasts. I know full well  
To what dire ends they tend, what monstrous deeds  
They are prepared to do; and for this cause  
I seek to find destruction's shortest path,

And haste to die, while yet within my house  
There is no soul more steeped in guilt than I. 305  
O child, why dost thou weep about my knees,  
Why seek with prayer to soften my hard heart?  
This means alone my fortune has reserved  
By which I may be led, unconquered else;  
For thou alone canst soothe my stubborn soul,  
Canst teach me piety. For naught is hard 310  
Or grievous in my sight, if I perceive  
That thou dost wish it. Do thou but command:  
Then will I swim the broad Aegean straits,  
Will drink the flames which from Sicilia's mount  
Earth belches forth in whirling, molten streams,  
Will beard the savage dragon in his den, 315  
Still raging at the theft of Hercules;  
At thy command, to birds of prey will give  
My bleeding heart—at thy command will live.

*[The first act seems to be complete here, except for the commenting chorus which would naturally follow. Oedipus has temporarily yielded to his daughter's will.]*

## ACT II

*[The following passage fittingly opens the second act or episode. Although some editors would assign it to Antigone, it seems more fittingly to belong to a messenger who has just arrived, for the double reason that it gives fresher information from Thebes than Antigone would naturally possess; and that Oedipus, after the speech to his daughter with which the previous scene ended, would hardly address to her as rough a reply as he uses in his next speech.]*

*Messenger:* Thee, sprung from regal stock to be our guide,  
In fear of civil strife our Thebes invokes, 320  
And prays that thou wouldst save thy father's  
house  
From the flaming torch of war. No mere threats, these;  
For ever nearer does destruction come

...for ever neither does destruction come.  
One brother claims his share of royal power,  
His turn to rule according to the bond,  
And now is rousing all the tribes of Greece  
To bloody war. Against the walls of Thebes 325  
Seven camps have set them down. Haste to our aid,  
And war and crime prohibit equally.

*Oedipus:* Do I seem one to stay the hand of crime,  
And teach it to refrain from kindred blood?  
Should I teach righteousness and filial love?  
They take me as a model for their crimes, 330  
And follow me. I gladly recognize  
And praise them as my sons; I urge them on  
To do some outrage worthy of their sire.  
Then on, my worthy offspring; by your deeds  
Approve your noble birth; do ye surpass  
My glory and my praises; do some deed 335  
Because of which your father will rejoice  
That he has lived till now. And well I know  
That you will do it; for to such an end  
Were ye brought forth. Such noble birth as yours  
Cannot be satisfied with common crime  
Or slight. Then forward with your impious arms!  
Attack your household gods with flaming brands;  
With torches gather in the ripened grain 340  
Upon your native fields; confuse all things,  
And hurry all to ruin absolute;  
O'erthrow the city's walls, yea, lay them low,  
E'en to the level of the plain; the gods  
And temples in one common fall o'erwhelm;  
Destroy our lares, now so foully stained,  
And let our whole house perish utterly;  
Let all the city be consumed with fire, 345  
And be my impious marriage chamber first  
To feel the flames.

*Antigone:* This raging storm of grief  
Give o'er; and let the sorrows of the state  
Be still with those to whom it is due.



prevail with thee to reconcile my sons.

*Oedipus*: And dost thou think that thou dost see in me  
A mild old man given o'er to peaceful thoughts? 350  
And dost thou summon me unto thine aid,  
As one who loves to 'stablish peace? Not so:  
For even now my spirit swells with rage,  
My grief burns fiercely, and I long to see  
Some greater deed than chance or youthful wrath  
Would dare attempt. I am not satisfied  
With civil war: let brother brother slay. 355  
Nor yet would this suffice. I wait to see  
Some evil done that shall be like my own,  
That shall be worthy of my marriage bed.  
Give deadly weapons to my mother's hand—  
But do not seek to drag me from these woods.  
Here will I hide within the rocky caves,  
Or hedge myself about with thickets dense. 360  
Here will I catch at warlike rumor rife  
And hear what news I may of brothers' strife.

### ACT III

*[It is possible that the following fragments belong to still another play. The presence of Antigone in Thebes, notwithstanding her resolve to remain with her father, would strengthen this view.]*

*Jocasta:* Oh, fortunate Agave! for she bore,  
Within the hand which did the deed, the spoil,  
The horrid spoil of her dismembered son,  
A raging Maenad. Yea, she did the deed; 365  
But naught in all her sinfulness did she  
Save that one crime.<sup>[7]</sup> It is my least of sins  
That I am guilty; this my greater crime,  
That I have made another sinful too.  
But even this seems light when I reflect  
That I have given birth to sinful sons.  
Till now 'twas wanting to my sum of woe  
That I should love my country's enemy. 370  
Three times has winter put away his snows,  
And thrice have Ceres' golden harvests fall'n  
Beneath the sickle, since my hapless son  
In exile wanders, robbed of fatherland,  
And craves assistance from the Grecian kings.  
He has become Adrastus' son-in-law,  
Whose sway is o'er the waters of the sea  
Which Isthmus cleaves. Adrastus even now 375  
Is leading on his tribes, and with him march  
Seven other royal hosts. Ah, woe is me,  
I know not what I ought to wish or say.  
My exiled son with justice claims his share  
Of empire, but he seeks it wrongfully.  
How shall I pray? I count them both my sons,  
And yet, alas, without impiety, 380  
Can I for neither pray. If for one son  
I call a blessing down, 'tis but a curse  
Upon the other's head. Yet this I know:  
Although I love them both with equal love,  
My heart inclines toward the better cause,  
The worser fortune, ever favoring him 385  
Who suffers more; for this is fortune's way  
To win the wretched to their own again.

[*Enter Messenger in haste.*]

*Messenger:* O queen, while thou dost utter these complaints,  
And spend'st the precious time in useless tears,  
With weapons drawn the battle lines approach.  
The trumpet's blare incites to bloody war,  
And even now the eagles are advanced. 390  
The kings in seven-fold battle are arrayed,  
While the sons of Thebes with equal spirit go  
To meet the enemy. With hurrying tread,  
Now here, now there, advance the soldiery.  
Behold, dark clouds of dust obscure the day,  
And from the plain dense, smokelike billows rise, 395  
Which earth, beneath the tread of countless  
hoofs,  
Sends rolling heavenward. And through the dust,  
If terror-stricken eyes can see aright,  
The hostile standards shine; with lifted spears  
The foremost ranks advance; while banners gleam,  
Bearing the names of famous generals wrought 400  
In golden characters.

Then haste, O queen:  
Unto the warring brothers love restore,  
Give peace to all, and by a mother's hands  
Prevent the conflict of these impious bands.

*Antigone:* O mother, haste thee, haste on flying feet;  
Hold back their weapons, from my brothers' hands  
Strike down the swords, and 'twixt their deadly points  
Thy bared breast interpose. Then, mother, haste;  
Or stop the war, or be thou first to fall. 405

*Jocasta:* I go, I go, and 'twixt their swords will stand,  
And there unto their points expose my life.  
And he who shall his brother seek to slay  
Must slay his mother first. At my command  
The son whose heart is moved by piety  
Will lay aside his arms; the impious son 410  
Must first make war on me. These fiery youths  
Will I, although a woman, old, restrain.

Within my sight shall be no impious deed;  
Or, if within my sight one impious deed  
Can be committed—then shall two be done.

[*Exit toward the scene of conflict.*]

*Antigone:* Now gleam the advancing standards, near at hand;  
And loud the hostile battle-cry resounds. 415  
A moment, and the impious deed is done.  
O mother, speed thee with thy prayers. But see!  
You would suppose them by my weeping moved,  
So slowly do the armed lines advance.

*Messenger:* The lines move slowly, but the leaders haste.

*Jocasta [hurrying onward]:* What wingéd wind will speed me through the  
air, 420  
Bearing me onward with the storm's mad whirl?  
What monstrous Sphinx or dark Stymphalian bird,  
Whose spreading wings blot out the light of day,  
Will bear me on its space-consuming wings?  
What Harpy, hovering o'er the royal board  
Of that stern Thracian king, will catch me up  
Along the lofty highways of the air,  
And cast me headlong 'twixt th' opposing lines? 425

*Messenger [looking after her]:* Like some wild creature reft of sense she  
goes.  
Swift as an arrow shot by Parthian hand,  
Or as a ship which boisterous winds impel,  
Or as the flight of falling star from heaven, 430  
Which in unswerving course athwart the sky  
Darts on its fiery way: with maddened haste  
The queen has sped her flight, and even now  
Has ta'en her stand between th' opposing lines.  
The battle pauses yet a little while,  
O'ercome at sight of those maternal tears.  
And now the hosts, on mutual slaughter bent,  
Stand with their weapons balanced in their hands: 435  
Peace wins the day: the threat'ning points are lowered:

The swords are sheathed. But in the brothers' hands  
They still are poised. The frantic mother now,  
Her white hair torn with grieving, speaks to them,  
Beseeches their reluctant, stubborn wills,  
And wets their knees with tears. Too long they bide:  
Such halting bodes the mother's prayers denied.

440

#### FOOTNOTES:

[7] Reading, *ultra suum scelus hoc cucurrit*.

### ACT IV

[*On the field before Thebes, between the battle lines.*]

*Jocasta* [*kneeling between her two hostile sons*]: 'Gainst me your arms and  
blazing torches turn;  
'Gainst me alone let every warrior rush,  
Who comes from Argos thirsting for the fray,  
And they who from the citadel of Thebes  
Come down to battle. Friend and foe, alike,  
Attack this womb of mine which brothers bore  
Unto my husband. Rend me limb from limb,  
And scatter me abroad upon the plain.  
I bore you both—will you lay down your arms?  
Or shall I say from whom I bore you, too?  
Give me your hands while still they are unstained.  
'Till now 'twas all unwittingly you sinned;  
'Twas fortune's crime, who ever 'gainst our peace  
Delights to plot. But this impiety  
Is done with fullest knowledge of your sin.  
Within your power lies whichsoe'er you will:  
If filial love, then grant your mother peace;  
If crime, then must you do a greater crime.  
Your mother stands between you, blocks your way;  
Have done with war or with the war's delay.  
To which of you in fond anxiety

445

450

455

Shall I address my prayers? Whom first embrace?  
My heart with equal love is drawn to both. 460

[*Turning to Polynices.*]

This son has wandered far away from me;  
But if the compact of the brothers holds,  
This other son must wander too. Alas,  
And shall I never see you both again,  
Except in enmity? Do thou come first  
Into thy mother's arms, who hast endured  
So many toils, so many miseries,  
And, worn with weary exile, see'st at last 465  
Thy mother's face. Come nearer to me here.  
Now sheathe thine impious sword; and this thy spear,  
Which even now is quivering with hate  
And eager to be thrown, thrust in the ground.  
Put by thy shield as well; it keeps me off  
From folding thee unto my mother-breast. 470  
Unbind thy brow, and from thy warlike head  
Thy helm remove and let me see thy face.  
Why dost thou turn away, and fix thine eyes  
With timid gaze upon thy brother's band?  
I'll throw my arms about thee for a shield,  
That through my body only may the sword 475  
Find passage to thy blood. Why hesitate?  
Can it be that thou dost fear thy mother's pledge?

*Polynices:* I fear; for nature's laws no longer hold.  
Since I have known a brother's faithlessness,  
I scarce can trust my mother's plighted word. 480

*Jocasta:* Then lay thy hand upon the sword again,  
Bind on thy helmet, take again thy shield;  
And while thy brother doth his arms remove,  
Remain thou armed.

[*To Eteocles.*]

Do thou lay by thy sword,  
Who first didst cause the weapon to be drawn.  
If peace is hateful to thee, if in war  
Thou dost prefer to rage, a moment's truce

Thou dost prefer to rage, a moment's trace  
Thy mother begs of thee, that on her sons, 485  
Returned but now from exile, she may print  
A kiss of love, the first—perchance the last.  
While I seek peace, attend ye both, unarmed.  
Dost thou fear him, and he fear thee, in turn?  
But I do fear you both, and for you both.  
Why dost refuse to sheathe thy naked sword?  
Rejoice in this delay. You wage a war,  
Of which the best end is to be o'ercome. 490  
And dost thou fear thy hostile brother's wiles?  
If one must on his brother work deceit  
Or suffer it himself, 'tis better far  
To be the victim of the treachery  
Than to perform the crime. But fear thou not;  
For I will shield thee from all sudden snares. 495  
Do I prevail with thee? Or must I grudge  
Thy father's blindness? Have I hither come  
To check an impious crime, or see it done  
Before my very eyes?

[Eteocles *yields to her.*]

He sheathes his sword,  
And on his peaceful, grounded spear he leans.

[*She turns to Polynices.*]

And now to thee, O son, thy mother turns  
With prayers and tears. At last I see thy face 500  
Which long have I desired and prayed to see.  
Thee, as an exile from thy fatherland,  
The household of a foreign king protects;  
O'er many seas, by many chances driven,  
Thou'rt still a wanderer. It was not mine  
With stately train to lead thee to thy bride,  
With my own hand to deck the festal halls, 505  
And with sacred fillets wreath thy wedding torch.  
The father of thy bride no wedding gifts,  
No wealth of gold, has given, no fields, no towns;  
Thy only gift is war. A foeman's son  
Hast thou become, far from thy native land, 510

An alien household's guest, driven from thine own,  
Committed to another's interests,  
A sinless exile. That no element  
Might fail thee of thy father's hapless fate,  
Thou too hast blundered in thy marriage choice.  
O son, after so many years returned, 515  
O son, thy anxious mother's hope and fear,  
For sight of whom I ever prayed the gods;  
Though thy return was doomed to take from me  
As much as at thy coming it could give:  
"When shall I cease to fear for thee?" I said;  
The mocking god replied: "Him shalt thou fear." 520  
I should not have thee near me now, indeed,  
Were there no war; and there would be no war,  
If thou wert not at hand. Oh, bitter price  
And hard, that I must pay for sight of thee.  
But still there's pleasure in't. These hostile hosts—  
Let them withdraw a little space from here, 525  
While yet stern Mars dares no impiety.  
Yet this as well is great impiety,  
That they have been so near. I am appalled,  
And tremble when I see two brothers stand,  
Each fronting each, upon the brink of crime.  
My limbs do quake with fear. How near I came 530  
To seeing greater infamy than that  
Which thy poor father never could have seen!  
Though I am freed from fear of such a crime,  
Though I shall not behold such evil now,  
Still am I most unhappy when I think  
How nearly I beheld it. O my son,  
By the womb that bore thee through ten weary months,  
And by thy noble sister's piety; 535  
By thy unhappy father's sightless eyes,  
Which he, though innocent of any crime,  
Tore out, his fatal error to avenge:  
Turn from thy father's walls these impious brands,  
Send back the standards of this warring host. 540  
Though thou shouldst yield. still is the greater part



Of thy impiety already done:

Thy fatherland has seen its fertile plains

By hordes of hostile soldiery o'errun,

The arméd legions gleaming from afar,

The broad Cadmean meadows trampled down

545

By flying hoofs, the princes, insolent,

High in their chariots dashing o'er the plain,

The blazing torches threatening our homes

With utter devastation, and, a crime

Which even Thebes till now has never seen,

A brother 'gainst his brother waging war.

This crime was seen by all our Theban host;

The citizens and both thy sisters saw,

550

And I thy mother; to himself is due

That Oedipus, thy father, saw it not.

Oh, do thou but compare thyself with him,

By whose stern judgment fitting penalty

E'en error pays. Do not with impious sword

Destroy thy city and thy father's house,

555

Nor overthrow the city thou wouldst rule.

What madness holds its sway within thy soul?

Wouldst thou, by seeking to obtain the land,

Destroy it? That it may become thine own,

Dost thou intend to spoil it utterly?

To thine own cause thou doest deadly wrong,

In harrying this very soil of thine

With hostile arms, in laying low the crops,

560

And spreading fear through all the country round.

No one such devastation ever works

Upon his own. What thou dost burn with fire,

And reap with sword, 'tis plain that thou dost grant

To be another's. Gain thou then the throne,

Whichever of you will; but gain it so

That 'twill not be the kingdom's overthrow.

Dost seek these homes with hostile sword and brand?

565

Wilt thou avail to batter down these walls

Which great Amphion built, these mighty walls,

Whose stones no human hand e'er set in place,  
 The huge weights moving by the creaking crane—  
 But, marshaled by the strains of song and harp,  
 The stones, e'en to the topmost turret's round,  
 Moved of their own accord—wouldst shatter these? 570  
 As victor wilt thou bear away the spoils?  
 And shall rough soldiery lead off in chains  
 Thy father's noble friends and stately dames  
 Torn from their grieving husbands' very arms?  
 And, mingled with the wretched captive band,  
 Shall Theban maidens go as presents meet 575  
 For wives of Argos? And shall I myself,  
 My hands (disgraceful!) bound behind my back,  
 The mother, be the booty of the son,  
 In triumph borne? And canst thou bear to see  
 On every hand thy fellow-citizens  
 To dire destruction given? 'Gainst these dear walls  
 Canst thou lead on the savage enemy, 580  
 And fill thy native Thebes with blood and flame?  
 Hast thou so wild a heart within thy breast,  
 So hard and savage—and not yet a king?  
 Then what will't be when thou the scepter wield'st?  
 Oh, put aside thy spirit's swelling rage,  
 And give thyself once more to piety. 585

*Polynices:* That I may wander still a fugitive?  
 That ever, banished from my native land,  
 Upon a stranger's bounty I may live?  
 What, think'st thou, could I suffer more than this,  
 If I had broken faith or falsely sworn?  
 Shall I be punished for another's sin,  
 While he enjoys the profits of his crime? 590  
 Thou bid'st me go; and gladly would I yield  
 Unto my mother's will. But whither, then,  
 Shall I depart? "Let my proud brother dwell  
 Within my royal halls, and some poor hut  
 Be my abode": let such a boon be given  
 Unto the exile; give him in exchange  
 A horse for a throne. And shall I then

A novel for a throne. And shall I, men,  
A pensioner upon my wealthy bride,  
Be forced to yield to her unbending will,  
And to her father's domineering ways  
Submit like any slave? 'Tis hard, indeed,  
To fall from royalty to servitude. 595

*Jocasta:* If thou art eager for a royal throne,  
And if, without the scepter in thy hand,  
Thou canst not live, whatever land thou wilt  
Will offer many kingdoms to thy hand. 600  
On this side Tmolus lifts his ridgy heights,  
Well known to Bacchus, where wide-spreading plains  
Stretch out upon the grain-producing earth;  
And where Pactolus' all-enriching stream  
O'erflows the country with its sands of gold.  
And there Maeander through the joyful fields  
Directs his wandering waves; swift Hermus, too, 605  
Cleaves meadows rich. And there is Gargara,  
Beloved of Ceres, and the fertile plains  
Which Xanthus waters, fed by Ida's snows.  
And here, where ends the long Ionian sea, [8]  
Across the narrows from Abydos stands 610  
The Thracian Sestos. Farther to the east,  
With safe and numerous harbors, lies the land  
Of Lycia. There realms seek with thy sword;  
Against these peoples let Adrastus fight,  
And to thy sceptered hand deliver them.  
Consider that thy father still is king 615  
Within this realm of Thebes. Far better, then,  
Than such returns as this will exile seem.  
Thou liv'st in exile through another's sin;  
But thy return must be through thine alone.  
With those brave troops of thine 'twere better far  
To seek thee out new realms unstained by crime.  
Nay, e'en thy brother's self will be thy aid, 620  
And fight for thee. Go, wage such warfare, then,  
That, as thou fight'st, thy mother and thy sire  
May pray for thy success. For he accused

may pray for thy success. For, be assured,  
That kingdoms won by crime are heavier far  
Than any exile.

Now consider well

625

The woes of war and war's uncertainties:  
Though thou dost bring with thee the flower of Greece,  
Though far and near thy arméd soldiery  
Is spread, still ever in the balance hangs  
The fate of war. 'Tis all as Mars decides.

Though two may seem to be unmatched in strength,  
The sword will make them equal; hope and fear  
Are subject to the blind caprice of fate.

630

Uncertain is the prize of war thou seek'st,  
But sure the crime. Suppose that all the gods  
Have heard thy prayers; suppose the citizens,  
In panic fear, have turned their backs and fled;  
The soldiers' bloody corpses hide the plain:

Though in such victory thou shouldst exalt  
And bear thy murdered brother's spoils away,  
Thy victory is but a broken thing.

635

What sort of warfare, think'st thou, that would be,  
In which the victor wins by curséd crime,  
And glories in it? Nay, thy brother's self,  
Whom thou, unhappy man, dost seek to slay,  
When thou hast gained thy wish, thou wilt lament.

640

Oh, then, forego this most unhallowed strife,  
And free at last thy fatherland from fear,  
Thy parents from their grief.

*Polynices:* Shall I do this,  
That so for all his treachery and crime  
My curséd brother be not recompensed?

*Jocasta:* Fear not. He shall indeed be recompensed,  
For he shall reign.

645

*Polynices:* Is that a punishment?

*Jocasta:* If thou believe me not, believe thy sire,  
Believe thy grandsire too. This truth to thee

Will Cadmus and the house of Cadmus tell.  
Without disaster has no Theban king  
E'er held the scepter, nor will anyone  
Who wins the kingly power by broken faith  
Retain it long. And 'mongst those faithless ones  
Count now thy brother.

650

*Eteocles:* Be it even so:  
If I must die, I count it worthy death,  
To die with kings.

[*To Polynices.*]

          Thee to the exiled band  
I doom.

*Jocasta:* Reign then, but hated by thy friends.

*Eteocles:* Who shrinks from hatred does not wish to reign.  
That great divinity who made the world  
Made of one substance royalty and hate.  
For me, I count it worthy of a king  
To overcome this hate. By love of friends  
Too oft is royal power circumscribed.  
O'er those who hate him is the king more free  
To lord it as he will. Who would be loved,  
With but a weak and languid scepter reigns.

655

*Jocasta:* But hated empire never long endures.

660

*Eteocles:* 'Tis for the king to speak of empire's rules.  
Do thou give laws for exiles. For the throne—

*Jocasta:* Wouldst burn thy native land, thy home and all?

*Eteocles:* A kingdom is well bought at any price.

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#### **FOOTNOTES:**

[8] The text is corrupt here. The Ionian Sea, situated to the west of Greece, can have no possible connection with the region here described, i.e., the Hellespont.

**MEDEA**

# MEDEA

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## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MEDEA	Daughter of Aeëtes, King of Colchis, and wife of Jason.
<i>Jason</i>	Son of Aeson, and nephew of Pelias, the usurping king of Thessaly; organizer and leader of the Argonautic expedition to Colchis in quest of the golden fleece.
<i>Creon</i>	King of Corinth, who had received into his hospitable kingdom Medea and Jason, fugitives from Thessaly, after Medea had plotted the death of Pelias.
<i>Nurse</i>	Of Medea.
<i>Messenger</i>	
<i>Two Sons</i>	Of Medea and Jason ( <i>personae mutae</i> ).
<i>Chorus of Corinthians</i>	Friendly to Jason and hostile to Medea.

THE TIME of the play is confined to the single day of the culmination of the tragedy, the day proposed by Creon for the banishment of Medea and marriage of Jason to Creüsa, daughter of Creon.

THE SCENE is in Corinth, in the court of the house of Jason.

*Although the play is confined in time to the final day of catastrophe at Corinth, the background is the whole romantic story of the Argonauts: how*



*Jason and his hero-comrades, at the instigation of Pelias, the usurping king of Thessalian Iolchos, undertook the first voyage in quest of the golden fleece; how, after many adventures, these first sailors reached the kingdom of Aeëtes who jealously guarded the fleece, since upon its possession depended his own kingship; how the three deadly labors were imposed upon Jason before the fleece could be won—the yoking of the fiery bulls, the contest with the giants that sprang from the sown serpent's teeth, and the overcoming of the sleepless dragon that ever guarded the fleece; how, smitten by love of him, the beautiful, barbaric Medea, daughter of the king, by the help of her magic aided Jason in all these labors and accompanied him in his flight; how, to retard her father's pursuit she slew her brother and scattered his mangled remains in the path as they fled; how again, for love of Jason, she restored his father to youth and tricked Pelias' own daughters into slaying their aged sire; how, for this act, Medea with her husband were exiled from Thessalia and dwelt in Corinth; how, for ten happy years, she lived with her husband and two sons in this alien land, her wild past almost forgotten, her magic untouched.*

*But now, Jason has been gradually won away from his wife, and is about to wed Creüsa, the daughter of Creon, king of Corinth. The wedding festivities have already begun when the play opens and reveals Medea invoking all the powers of heaven and hell in punishment of her false lord.*

## ACT I

*Medea:* Ye gods of wedlock, thou the nuptial couch's guard,  
Lucina, thou from whom that tamer of the deep,  
The Argo's pilot, learned to guide his pristine bark,  
And Neptune, thou stern ruler of the ocean's depths,  
And Titan, by whose rays the shining day is born,  
Thou triformed maiden Hecate, whose conscious beams     5  
With splendor shine upon the mystic worshipers—  
Upon ye all I call, the powers of heaven, the gods  
By whose divinity false Jason swore; and ye  
Whose aid Medea may more boldly claim, thou world  
Of endless night, th' antipodes of heavenly realms,  
Ye damnéd ghosts, thou lord of hades' dark domain,  
Whose misty powers, with th' ethereal powers, unite to do

whose mistress was with trustier pledge won to my side—

Before ye all this baleful prayer I bring: Be near!  
Be near! Ye crime-avenging furies, come and loose  
Your horrid locks with serpent coils entwined, and grasp  
With bloody hands the smoking torch; be near as once  
Ye stood in dread array beside my wedding couch. 15

Upon this new-made bride destruction send, and death  
Upon the king and all the royal line! But he,  
My husband, may he live to meet some heavier doom;  
This curse I imprecate upon his head; may he,  
Through distant lands, in want, in exile wander, scorned  
And houseless. Nay, may he once more my favor woo; 20  
A stranger's threshold may he seek where now he walks  
A well-known guest; and—this the blackest curse I know—

May children rise to him to emulate their sire,  
Their mother's image bear.—Now won is vengeance, won!  
For I have children borne.—Nay, nay, 'tis empty plaints  
And useless words I frame. Shall I not rather rush 25  
Against the foe and dash the torches from their hands,  
The light from heaven? Does Father Phoebus suffer this?

Do men behold his face, as, seated in his car,  
He rolls along th' accustomed track of sky serene?  
Why does he not return to morning's gates, the law 30  
Of heaven reversing? Grant that I be borne aloft  
In my ancestral car! Give me the reins, O sire,  
Thy fiery team grant me to guide with lines of flame.  
Then Corinth, though with double shore delaying fate,  
Herself consumed with fire, shall light two seas with 35  
flame.

But no, this course alone remains, that I myself  
Should bear the wedding torch, with acquiescent prayers,  
And slay the victims on the altars consecrate.  
Thyself inspect the entrails, and seek there the way  
By prayer, if still, O soul, thou livest, if there still 40  
Remaineth aught of old-time strength in thee! Away  
With woman's fears! Put on thy heart a breast-plate hard  
And chill as Caucasus! Then all the wizard arts

That Phasis knew, or Pontus, shall be seen again  
In Corinth. Now with mad, unheard of, dreadful deeds,  
Whereat high heaven and earth below shall pale and 45  
quake,  
My pregnant soul is teeming; and my heart is full  
Of pictured wounds and death and slaughter.—Ah, too long  
On trifling ills I dwell. These were my virgin deeds.  
Now that a mother's pains I've felt, my larger heart  
Must larger crimes conceive. Then passion, gird 50  
thysself,  
Put on thy strength, and for the issue now prepare!  
Let my rejection pay as dread a fee as when,  
Of old, through impious deeds of blood, I came to him.  
Come, break through slow delay, and let the home once won  
By crime, by equal deeds of crime be done away! 55

*Chorus [chanting the epithalamium for the nuptials of Jason and Creüsa]:*

Now on our royal nuptials graciously smiling,  
Here may the lords of heaven and the deeps of the ocean  
Come while the people feast in pious rejoicing!

First to the gods who sway the scepter of heaven,  
Peeling forth their will in the voice of thunder,  
Let the white bull his proud head bow in tribute.

60

Then to the fair Lucina, her gift we offer,  
White as the driven snow, this beautiful heifer,  
Still with her neck untouched by the yoke of bondage.

Thou who alone canst rule the heart of the war-god,  
Thou who linkest in peace the opposing nations,  
Out of thy generous hand abundance pouring—  
Thee we offer a daintier gift, O Concord!

65

Thou who, on the marriage torches attending,  
Night's dark gloom with favoring hand dispellest,  
Hither come with languishing footstep drunken,  
Binding thy temples fair with garlands of roses!

70

Star of the evening, thou who to twilight leadest  
The day, and hailest again the dawn of the morning,  
All too slowly thou com'st for lovers impatient,  
Eager to see thy sign in the glow of the sunset.

The fairest of girls is she,  
The Athenian maids outshining,  
Or the Spartan maiden with armor laden,  
No burden of war declining.

75

Not by Alpheus' sacred stream,  
Nor Boeotia's musical water,  
Is there any fair who can compare  
With our lovely Corinthian daughter.

80

Our Thessalian prince excels,  
In beauty of form and face,  
Even Bacchus, the son of the fierce-flaming one,  
Who wakes the wild tigers in place

WHO YOKES THE WILD OGEIS IN PLACE.

85

The murmuring tripod's lord,  
Though the fairest in heavenly story,  
The twins with their star bright gleaming afar—  
All yield to our Jason in glory.

90

When in her train of courtly maidens she mingles—  
Like the bright sunshine paling the starry splendor,  
Or the full moonlight quenching the Pleiads' brilliance,  
So does she shine, all peerless, of fair ones the fairest.

95

Now, O Jason, freed from the hateful wedlock  
That held thee bound to the barbarous Colchian woman,  
Joyfully wed the fair Corinthian maiden,  
While at last her parents' blessings attend thee.

100

105

Ho then, youths, with licensed jest and rejoicing,  
Loud let the songs of gladness ring through the city;  
Rarely against our lords such freedom is given.

Fair and noble band of Bacchus, the thyrsus-bearer,  
Now is the time to light the glittering torches of pinewood.  
Shake on high the festal fire with languishing fingers;

110

Now let the bold and merry Fescennine laughter and jesting  
Sound through our ranks. Let Medea fare in silence and darkness,  
If perchance another lord she shall wed in her exile.

115

## ACT II

*Medea:* We are undone! How harsh upon mine ears doth grate  
The song! and even now I cannot comprehend  
The vast extent of woe that hath befallen me.  
Could Jason prove so false? Bereft of native land,  
And home, and kingdom, could he leave me here alone  
On foreign shores? Oh, cruel, could he quite reject  
My sum of service, he who saw the fire and sea  
With crime o'ercome for his dear sake? And does he think  
That thus the fatal chapter can be ended? Wild,  
Devoid of reason, sick of soul, my swift mind darts

120

In all directions seeking whence revenge may come!  
I would he had a brother! But his wife—'gainst her  
Be aimed the blow! Can thus my wrongs be satisfied? 125

Nay, nay—to meet my sum of woe must be heaped high  
The crimes of Greece, of strange barbaric lands, and those  
Which even thy hands have not known. Now lash thy soul  
With memory's scourge, and call thy dark deeds in review:  
The glory of thy father's kingdom reft away; 130

Thy brother, guiltless comrade of thy guilty flight,  
All hewn in pieces and his corpse strewn on the deep,  
To break his royal father's heart; and, last of crimes,  
Old Pelias by his daughters slain at thy command. 135

O impious one, what streams of blood have flowed to  
work

Thy ends! And yet, not one of all my crimes by wrath  
Was prompted. Love, ill-omened love, suggested all.  
Yet, what could Jason else have done, compelled to serve  
Another's will, another's law? He should have died  
Before he yielded to the tyrant's will. Nay, nay, 140

Thou raging passion, speak not so! For, if he may,  
I would that Jason still may live and still be mine,  
As once he was; if not, yet may he still live on,  
And, mindful of my merits, live without my aid.  
The guilt is Creon's all, who with unbridled power  
Dissolves the marriage bond, my children separates  
From me who bore them, yea, and makes the strongest  
pledge, 145

Though ratified with straightest oath, of none effect.  
Let him alone sustain my wrath; let Creon pay  
The debt of guilt he owes! His palace will I bring  
To utter desolation; and the whirling fire  
To far-off Malea's crags shall send its lurid glare. 150

*Nurse:* Be silent now, I pray thee, and thy plaints confine  
To secret woe! The man who heavy blows can bear  
In silence, biding still his time with patient soul,  
Full oft his vengeance gains. 'Tis hidden wrath that harms;  
But hate proclaimed oft loses half its power to harm.

*Medea:* But small the grief is that can counsel take and hide  
Its head; great ills lie not in hiding, but must rush  
Abroad and work their will. 155

*Nurse:* Oh, cease this mad complaint,  
My mistress; scarce can friendly silence help thee now.

*Medea:* But fortune fears the brave, the faint of heart o'erwhelms.

*Nurse:* Then valor be approved, if for it still there's room. 160

*Medea:* But it must always be that valor finds its place.

*Nurse:* No star of hope points out the way from these our woes.

*Medea:* The man who hopes for naught at least has naught to fear.

*Nurse:* The Colchians are thy foes; thy husband's vows have failed;  
Of all thy vast possessions not a jot is left. 165

*Medea:* Yet I am left. There's left both sea and land and fire  
And sword and gods and hurtling thunderbolts.

*Nurse:* The king must be revered.

*Medea:* My father was a king.

*Nurse:* Dost thou not fear?

*Medea:* Not though the earth produced the foe.

*Nurse:* Thou'lt perish. 170

*Medea:* So I wish it.

*Nurse:* Flee!

*Medea:* I'm done with flight.<sup>[9]</sup>  
Why should Medea flee?

*Nurse:* Thy children!

*Medea:* Whose, thou know'st.

*Nurse:* And dost thou still delay?

*Medea:* I go, but vengeance first.

*Nurse:* Th' avenger will pursue

*Nurse.* In avenger will pursue.

*Medea:* Perchance I'll stop his course.

*Nurse:* Nay, hold thy words, and cease thy threats, O foolish one.  
Thy temper curb; 'tis well to yield to fate's decrees.

175

*Medea:* Though fate may strip me of all my, myself am left.  
But who flings wide the royal palace doors? Behold,  
'Tis Creon's self, exalted high in Grecian sway.

[*Medea retires to back of stage; exit Nurse; enter Creon.*]

*Creon:* Medea, baleful daughter of the Colchian king,  
Has not yet taken her hateful presence from our realm.  
On mischief is she bent. Well known her treach'rous power. 180  
For who escapes her? Who may pass his days in peace?  
This curséd pestilence at once would I have stayed  
By force of arms; but Jason's prayers prevailed. She still  
May live, but let her free my borders from the fear  
Her presence genders, and her safety gain by flight. 185

[*He sees Medea approaching.*]

But lo, she comes, with fierce and threatening mien, to seek  
An audience with us.

[*To attendants.*]

Slaves defend us from her touch  
And pestilential presence! Bid her silence keep,  
And learn to yield obedience to the king's commands.

[*To Medea.*] 190

Go, speed thy flight, thou thing of evil, fell, and monstrous!

*Medea:* But tell me what the crime, my lord, or what the guilt  
That merits exile?

*Creon:* Let the guiltless question thus.

*Medea:* If now thou judgest, hear me; if thou reign'st, command. [\[10\]](#)

*Creon:* The king's command thou must abide, nor question aught.

195

*Medea:* Unrighteous sovereignty has never long endured.

*Creon:* Go hence, and to the Colchians complain.



*Medea:* I go,  
 But let him take me hence who brought me to thy shores.

*Creon:* Thy prayer has come too late, for fixed is my decree.

*Medea:* Who judges, and denies his ear to either side,  
 Though right his judgment, still is he himself unjust. 200

*Creon:* Didst lend thine ear to Pelias, ere thou judgedst him?  
 But come, I'll give thee grace to plead thy goodly cause.

*Medea:* How hard the task to turn the soul from wrath, when once  
 To wrath inclined; how 'tis the creed of sceptered kings  
 To swerve not from the purposed course they once have taken,  
 Full well I know, for I have tasted royalty. 205  
 For, though by present storms of ill I'm overwhelmed,  
 An exile, suppliant, lone, forsaken, all forlorn,  
 I once in happier times a royal princess shone,  
 And traced my proud descent from heavenly Phoebus' self. 210  
 My father's realm extended wide o'er all the land  
 Where Phasis' gentle waters flow, o'er Scythia's plains  
 Whose rivers sweeten Pontus' briny waves; where, too,  
 Thermodon's banks inclose the race of warlike maids,  
 Whose gleaming shields strike terror to their foes. All this 215  
 My father held in sway. And I, of noble birth,  
 And blessed of heaven, in royal state was high upraised.  
 Then princes humbly sought my hand in wedlock, mine,  
 Who now must sue. O changeful fortune, thou my throne 220  
 Hast reft away, and given me exile in its stead.  
 Trust not in kingly realms, since fickle chance may strew  
 Their treasures to the winds. Lo, this is regal, this  
 The work of kings, which time nor change cannot undo:  
 To succor the afflicted, to provide at need 225  
 A trusty refuge for the suppliant. This alone  
 I brought of all my Colchian treasure, this renown,  
 This very flower of fame, [\[11\]](#) that by my arts I saved  
 The bulwark of the Greeks, the offspring of the gods.  
 My princely gift to Greece is Orpheus, that sweet bard 230  
 Who can the trees in willing bondage draw, and melt  
 The croak's hard heart. Mine too are Demos' wingéd sons

THE CRAG'S HARD HEART. MINE TOO ARE BOREAS-WINGED SOUS,  
And Leda's heaven-born progeny, and Lynceus, he,  
Whose glance can pierce the distant view—yea, all the Greeks,  
Save Jason; for I mention not the king of kings,  
The leader of the leaders; he is mine alone,  
My labor's recompense; the rest I give to you.  
Nay, come, O king, arraign me, and rehearse my crimes. 235  
But stay! for I'll confess them all. The only crime  
Of which I stand accused is this—the Argo saved.  
Suppose my maiden scruples had opposed the deed;  
Suppose my filial piety had stayed my hand:  
Then had the mighty chieftains fall'n, and in their fate  
All Greece had been o'erwhelmed; then this, thy son-in-law,  
Had felt the bull's consuming breath, and perished there. 240  
Nay, nay, let fortune, when she will, my doom decree;  
I glory still that kings have owed their lives to me.  
But what reward I reap for all my glorious deeds  
Is in thy hands. Convict me, if thou wilt, of sin,  
But give him back for whom I sinned. O Creon, see, 245  
I own that I am guilty. This much thou didst know,  
When first I clasped thy knees, a humble suppliant,  
And sought the shelter of thy royal clemency.  
Some little corner of thy kingdom now I ask,  
In which to hide my grief. If I must flee again,  
Oh, let some nook remote within thy broad domain 250  
Be found for me!

*Creon:* That I my power in mercy wield,  
And spurn not those who seek my aid let Jason's self  
My witness be, who, exiled, overwhelmed by fate, 255  
And smitten sore with fear, a refuge found with me.  
For Io, Thessalia's monarch, bent on vengeance dire,  
Seeks Jason at my hand. The cause, indeed, is just:  
For that his sire, o'erburdened with the weight of years,  
Was foully taken off, while by thy wicked guile  
His guileless sisters' hands were nerved to do the deed. 260  
If now our Jason can unlink his cause from thine,  
'Tis easy his defense to make, for on his hands  
No stain of blood is found. His arm no sword unraised

NO STAIN OF BLOOD IS FOUND. HIS ARM NO SWORD UPRaised,  
And he has had no part nor lot in this thy crime. 265  
No, thou and thou alone the arch contriver art,  
Uniting in thy person woman's fertile wit  
And man's effective strength; while in thy reckless heart  
No thought of reputation dwells to check thy hand.  
Then go thou hence and purge our kingdom of its stain;  
Bear hence thy deadly poisons; free the citizens 270  
From fear; abiding in some other land than this,  
Outwear the patience of the gods.

*Medea:* Thou bid'st me flee?  
Then give me back my bark wherein to flee. Restore  
The partner of my flight! Why should I flee alone?  
I came not thus. Or if avenging war thou fear'st,  
Then banish both the culprits; why distinguish me 275  
From Jason? 'Twas for him old Pelias was o'ercome;  
For him the flight, the plunder of my father's realm,  
My sire forsaken and my infant brother slain,  
And all the guilt that love suggests; 'twas all for him.  
Deep dyed in sin am I, but on my guilty soul 280  
The sin of profit lieth not.

*Creon:* Why seek delay  
By speech? Too long thou tarriest.

*Medea:* I go, but grant  
This last request: let not the mother's fall o'erwhelm  
Her hapless babes.

*Creon:* Then go in peace. For I to them  
A father's place will fill, and take them to my heart.

*Medea:* Now by the fair hopes born upon this wedding day,  
And by thy hopes of lasting sovereignty secure 285  
From changeful fate's assault, I pray thee grant from flight  
A respite brief, while I upon my children's lips  
A mother's kiss imprint, perchance the last.

*Creon:* A time  
Thou seek'st for treachery. 290

*Medea:*       What fraud can be devised  
                  In one short hour?

*Creon:*        To those on mischief bent, be sure,  
                  The briefest time is fraught with mischief's fatal power.

*Medea:* Dost thou refuse me, then, one little space for tears?

*Creon:* Though deep-ingrafted fear would fain resist thy plea,  
                  A single day I'll give thee ere my sentence holds.

295

*Medea:* Too gracious thou. But let my respite further shrink,  
                  And I'll depart content.

*Creon:*        Thy life shall surely pay  
                  The forfeit if tomorrow's sun beholds thee still  
                  In Corinth. But the voice of Hymen calls away  
                  To solemnize the rites of this his festal day.

300

[*Exeunt.*]

---

*Chorus:*       Too bold the man who first upon the seas,  
                  The treacherous seas, his fragile bark confided;  
                  Who, as the well-known shore behind him glided,  
                  His life intrusted to the fickle breeze;

                  And, as his unknown seaward course he sped  
                  Within his slender craft with foolish daring,  
                  Midway 'twixt life and death went onward faring,  
                  Along the perilous narrow margin led.

305

                  Not yet were sparkling constellations known,  
                  Or sky, all spangled with the starry glory;  
                  Not yet could sailors read the warning story  
                  By stormy Hyades upon the heavens thrown.

310

                  Not yet was Zeus's foster-mother famed,  
                  Nor slow Boötes round the north star wheeling;  
                  Nor Boreas nor Zephyr gently stealing,  
                  Each feared or welcomed, though as yet

315

unnamed.

First Tiphys dared to spread his venturous sail,  
The hidden lesson of the breezes learning,  
Now all his canvas to the Zephyrs turning,  
Now shifting all to catch the changing gale. 320

Now midway on the mast the yard remains,  
Now at the head with all its canvas drawing,  
While eager sailors lure the breezes blowing,  
And over all the gleaming topsail strains. 325

The guiltless golden age our fathers saw,  
When youth and age the same horizon bounded;  
No greed of gain their simple hearts confounded;  
Their native wealth enough, 'twas all they knew. 330

But lo, the severed worlds have been brought  
near

And linked in one by Argo's hand uniting;  
While seas endure the oar's unwonted smiting,  
And add their fury to the primal fear. 335

This impious bark its guilt in dread atoned  
When clashing mountains were together driven, 340  
And sea, from sea in mighty conflict riven,  
The stars besprinkled with the leaping foam. 345

Amid these perils sturdy Tiphys paled,  
And from his nerveless hand the vessel bounded;  
While stricken Orpheus' lyre no more resounded,  
And tuneful Argo's warning message failed.

What sinking terror filled each quaking breast,  
When near the borders of sea-girt Pelorus,  
There smote upon their ears the horrid chorus 350  
Of Scylla's baying wolves around them pressed.

What terror when they neared the Sirens' lair,  
Who soothe the troubled waves with witching  
measures! 355

But Orpheus filled their souls with nobler pleasures,

And left the foe in impotent despair.

360

And of this wild adventure what the prize,  
That lured the daring bark with heroes laden?  
The fleece of gold, and this mad Colchian maiden,  
Well fit to be the first ship's merchandize.

The sea, subdued, the victor's law obeys;  
No vessel needs a goddess' art in framing,  
Nor oars in heroes' hands, the ocean taming:  
The frailest craft now dares the roughest waves.

365

Now, every bound removed, new cities rise  
In lands remote, their ancient walls removing;  
While men of Ind by Caspian shores are roving,  
And Persia's face now greets the western skies.

370

The time will come, as lapsing ages flee,  
When every land shall yield its hidden treasure;  
When men no more shall unknown courses measure,  
For round the world no "farthest land" shall be.

375

#### FOOTNOTES:

[9] Reading, *Medea fugiam*, as a continuation of Medea's speech.

[10] Retaining *si regnas, iube* in Medea's speech.

[11] Reading, *gloriae*.

#### ACT III

[*Medea is rushing out to seek vengeance, while the Nurse tries in vain to restrain her.*]

*Nurse:* My foster-daughter, whither speedest thou abroad?

Oh, stay, I pray thee, and restrain thy passion's force.

380

[*Medea hastens by without answering. The Nurse soliloquizes.*]

As some wild Bacchanal, whose fury's raging fire  
The god inflames, now roams distraught on Pindus' snows,  
And now on lofty Nyssa's rugged slopes; so she.

Now here, now there, with frenzied step is hurried on, 385  
Her face revealing every mark of stricken woe,  
With flushing cheek and sighs deep drawn, wild cries, and tears,  
And laughter worse than tears. In her a medley strange  
Of every passion may be seen: o'ertopping wrath,  
Bewailings, bitter groans of anguish. Whither tends 390  
This overburdened soul? What mean her frenzied threats?  
When will the foaming wave of fury spend itself?  
No common crime, I fear, no easy deed of ill  
She meditates. Herself she will outvie. For well  
I recognize the wonted marks of rage. Some deed  
Is threatening, wild, profane, and hideous.

[*Re-enter Medea.*] 395

Behold

Her face betrays her madness. O ye gods, may these  
Our fears prove vain forebodings!

*Medea* [*not noticing the Nurse's presence*]: For thy hate, poor soul,  
Dost thou a measure seek? Let it be deep as love.  
And shall I tamely view the wedding torches's glare?  
And shall this day go uneventful by, this day,  
So hardly won, so grudgingly bestowed? Nay, nay,  
While, poised upon her heights, the central earth shall 400  
bear  
The heavens up; while seasons run their endless round,  
And sands unnumbered lie; while days, and nights, and sun,  
And stars in due procession pass; while round the pole  
The ocean-fearing bears revolve, and tumbling streams  
Flow downward to the sea; my grief shall never cease  
To seek revenge, and shall forever grow. What rage 405  
Of savage beast can equal mine? What Scylla famed?  
What sea-engulfing pool? What burning Aetna placed  
On impious Titan's heaving breast? No torrent stream,  
Nor storm-tossed sea, nor breath of flame fanned by the 410  
gale,  
Can check or equal my wild storm of rage. My will  
Is set on limitless revenge!

Will Jason say

He feared the power of Creon and Acastus' threats? 415  
True love is proof against the fear of man. But grant  
He was compelled to yield, and pledged his hand in fear:  
He might at least have sought his wife with one last word  
Of comfort and farewell. But this, though brave in heart,  
He feared to do. The cruel terms of banishment 420  
Could Creon's son-in-law not soften? No. One day  
Alone was giv'n for last farewell to both my babes.  
But time's short space I'll not bewail; though brief in hours,  
In consequence it stretches out eternally.  
This day shall see a deed that ne'er shall be forgot.  
But now I'll go and pray the gods, and move high heaven  
But I shall work my will! 425

*Nurse:* Thy heart all passion-tossed,  
I pray thee, mistress, soothe, and calm thy troubled soul.

*Medea:* My troubled soul can never know a time of rest  
Until it sees all things o'erwhelmed in common doom.  
All must go down with me! 'Tis sweet such death to die.

[*Exit Medea.*]

*Nurse* [*calling after her*]: Oh, think what perils thou must meet if thou  
persist!  
No one with safety may defy a sceptered king. 430

[*Enter Jason.*]

*Jason:* O heartless fate, if frowns or smiles bedeck thy brow,  
How often are thy cures far worse than the disease  
They seek to cure! If, now, I wish to keep the troth  
I plighted to my lawful bride, my life must pay 435  
The forfeit; if I shrink from death, my guilty soul  
Must perjured be. I fear no power that man can wield;  
But in my heart paternal love unmans me quite;  
For well I know that in my death my children's fate  
Is sealed. O sacred Justice, if in heaven thou dwell'st,  
Be witness now, that for my children's sake I act. 440



Nay, sure am I that even she, Medea's self,  
Though fierce she is of soul and brooking no restraint,  
Will see her children's good outweighing all her wrongs.  
With this good argument my purpose now is fixed,  
In humble wise to brave her wrath. 445

[*Enter Medea.*]

At sight of me  
Her raging fury flames anew! Hate, like a shield,  
She bears, and in her face is pictured all her woe.

*Medea:* Thou see'st, Jason, that we flee. 'Tis no new thing  
To suffer exile, but the cause of flight is strange;  
For with thee I was wont to flee, not from thee. Yes,  
I go. But whither dost thou send me whom thou driv'st  
From out thy home? Shall I the Colchians seek again, 450  
My royal father's realm, whose soil is steeped in blood  
My brother shed? What country dost thou bid me seek?  
What way by sea is open? Shall I fare again  
Where once I saved the noble kings of Greece, and thee,  
Thou wanton, through the threatening jaws of Pontus' strait, 455  
The blue Symplegades? Or shall I hie me back  
To fair Thessalia's realms? Lo, all the doors which I,  
For thee, have opened wide, I've closed upon myself.  
But whither dost thou send me now? Thou bid'st me flee,  
But show'st no way or means of flight. 460

But 'tis enough:  
The king's own son-in-law commands and I obey.  
Come, heap thy torments on me; I deserve them all.  
Let royal wrath oppress me, wanton that I am,  
With cruel hand, and load my guilty limbs with chains;  
And let me be immured in dungeons black as night: 465  
Still will my punishment be less than my offense.  
O ingrate! hast thou then forgot the brazen bull,  
And his consuming breath? the fear that smote thee, when,  
Upon the field of Mars, the earth-born brood stood forth  
To meet thy single sword? 'Twas by my arts that they,  
The monsters, fell by mutual blows. Remember, too, 470  
The long-sought fleece of gold I won for thee, whose guard,

The dragon huge, was lulled to rest at my command;  
My brother slain for thee. For thee old Pelias fell,  
When, taken by my guile, his daughters slew their sire, 475  
Whose life could not return. All this I did for thee.  
In quest of thine advantage have I quite forgot  
Mine own.

And now, by all thy fond paternal hopes,  
By thine established house, by all the monsters slain  
For thee, by these my hands which I have ever held 480  
To work thy will, by all the perils past, by heaven  
And sea that witnessed at my wedlock, pity me!  
Since thou art blessed, restore me what I lost for thee:  
That countless treasure plundered from the swarthy tribes  
Of India, which filled our goodly vaults with wealth,  
And decked our very trees with gold. This costly store 485  
I left for thee, my native land, my brother, sire,  
My reputation—all; and with this dower I came.  
If now to homeless exile thou dost send me forth,  
Give back the countless treasures which I left for thee. 490

*Jason:* Though Creon in a vengeful mood would have thy life,  
I moved him by my tears to grant thee flight instead.

*Medea:* I thought my exile punishment; 'tis now, I see,  
A gracious boon!

*Jason:* Oh, flee while still the respite holds;  
Provoke him not, for deadly is the wrath of kings. 495

*Medea:* Not so. 'Tis for Creüsa's love thou sayest this;  
Thou wouldst remove the hated wanton once thy wife.

*Jason:* Dost thou reproach me with a guilty love?

*Medea:* Yea, that,  
And murder too, and treachery.

*Jason:* But name me now,  
If so thou canst, the crimes that I have done.

*Medea:* Thy crimes—  
Whatever I have done.

*Jason:* Why then, in truth, thy guilt  
Must all be mine, if all thy crimes are mine. 500

*Medea:* They are,  
They are all thine; for who by sin advantage gains,  
Commits the sin. All men proclaim thy wife defiled.  
Do thou thyself protect her, and condone her sin.  
Let her be guiltless in thine eyes who for thy gain  
Has sinned.

*Jason:* But gifts which sin has bought 'twere shame to take.

*Medea:* Why keep'st thou then the gifts which it were shame to take? 505

*Jason:* Nay, curb thy fiery soul! Thy children—for their sake  
Be calm.

*Medea:* My children! Them I do refuse, reject,  
Renounce! Shall then Creüsa brothers bear to these  
My children?

*Jason:* But the queen can aid thy wretched sons.

*Medea:* May that day never dawn, that day of shame and woe,  
When in one house are joined the low born and the high, 510  
The sons of that foul robber Sisyphus, and these,  
The sons of Phoebus.

*Jason:* Wretched one, and wilt thou then  
Involve me also in thy fall? Begone, I pray.

*Medea:* Creon hath heard my prayer.

*Jason:* What wouldst thou have me do? 515

*Medea:* For me? I'd have thee dare the law.

*Jason:* The royal power  
Doth compass me.

*Medea:* A greater than the king is here:  
Medea. Set us front to front and let us strive;  
And of this royal strife let Jason be the prize.

*Jason:* O'erwearied by my woes I yield. But be thou ware,

Medea, lest too often thou shouldst tempt thy fate.

520

*Medea:* Yet fortune's mistress have I ever been.

*Jason:* But see,  
With hostile front Acastus comes, on vengeance bent,  
While Creon threatens instant death.

*Medea:* Then flee them both.  
I ask thee not to draw thy sword against the king  
Nor yet to stain thy pious hands with kindred blood.  
Come, flee with me.

*Jason:* But what resistance can we make,  
If war with double visage rear his horrid front,  
If Creon and Acastus join in common cause?

525

*Medea:* Add, too, the Colchian armies with my father's self  
To lead them; join the Scythian and Pelasgian hordes:  
In one deep gulf of ruin will I overwhelm them all.

*Jason:* Yet on the scepter do I look with fear.

*Medea:* Beware,  
Lest not the fear, but lust of power prevail with thee.

*Jason:* Too long we strive: have done, lest we suspicion breed.

530

*Medea:* Now Jove, throughout thy heavens let the thunders roll!  
Thy mighty arm in wrath make bare! Thy darting flames  
Of vengeance loose, and shake the lofty firmament  
With rending storms! At random hurl thy vengeful bolts,  
Selecting neither me nor Jason with thy aim;  
That thus whoever falls may perish with the brand  
Of guilt upon him; for thy hurtling darts can take  
No erring flight.

535

*Jason:* Recall thee and in calmness speak  
With words of peace and reason. Then if any gift  
From Creon's royal house can compensate thy woes,  
Take that as solace of thy flight.

*Medea:* My soul doth scorn  
The wealth of kings. But let me have my little ones

540

As comrades of my flight, that in their childish breasts  
Their mother's tears may flow. New sons await thy home.

*Jason:* My heart inclines to yield to thee, but love forbids.  
For these my sons shall never from my arms be reft,  
Though Creon's self demand. My very spring of life, 545  
My sore heart's comfort, and my joy are these my sons;  
And sooner could I part with limbs or vital breath,  
Or light of life.

*Medea* [*aside*]: Doth he thus love his sons? 'Tis well;  
Then is he bound, and in his armored strength this flaw 550  
Reveals the place to strike.

[*To Jason.*]

At least, ere I depart,  
Grant me this last request: let me once more embrace  
My sons. E'en that small boon will comfort my sad heart.  
And this my latest prayer to thee: if, in my grief,  
My tongue was over bold, let not my words remain 555  
To rankle in thy heart. Remember happier things  
Of me and let my bitter words be straight forgot.

*Jason:* Not one shall linger in my soul; and curb, I pray,  
Thy too impetuous heart, and gently yield to fate.  
For resignation ever soothes the woeful soul.

[*Exit Jason.*]

*Medea:* He's gone! And can it be? And shall he thus depart,  
Forgetting me and all my service? Must I drop, 560  
Like some discarded toy, out of his faithless heart?  
It shall not be. Up then, and summon all thy strength  
And all thy skill! And, this the fruit of former crime,  
Count nothing criminal that works thy will. But lo,  
We're hedged about; scant room is left for our designs.  
Now must the attack be made where least suspicion 565  
wakes  
The least resistance. Now Medea, on! and do  
And dare thine utmost, yea, beyond thine utmost power!

[*To the Nurse.*]

Do thou, my faithful nurse, the comrade of my grief,  
And all the devious wanderings of my checkered course,  
Assist me now in these my plans. There is a robe,  
The glory of our Colchian realm, the precious gift  
Of Phoebus' self to king Aeëtes as a proof 570  
Of fatherhood; a gleaming circlet, too, all wrought  
With threads of gold, the yellow gold bespangled o'er  
With gems, a fitting crown to deck a princess' head.  
These treasures let Medea's children bear as gifts  
To Jason's bride. But first infuse them with the power 575  
Of magic, and invoke the aid of Hecate;  
The woe-producing sacrifices then prepare,  
And let the sacred flames through all our courts resound.

*Chorus:* No force of flame or raging gale,  
Or whizzing bolt so fearful is,  
As when a wife, by her lord betrayed, 580  
Burns hot with hate.

Not such a force is Auster's blast,  
When he marshals forth the wintry storms;  
Nor Hister's headlong rushing stream,  
Which, wrecking bridges in its course,  
Pours reckless on; 585

Nor yet the Rhone, whose current strong  
Beats back the sea; nor when the snows.

Beneath the lengthening days of spring  
And the sun's warm rays, melt down in streams  
From Haemus' top.

590

Blind is the rage of passion's fire,  
Will not be governed, brooks no reins,  
And scoffs at death; nay, hostile swords  
It gladly courts.

Spare, O ye gods, be merciful,  
That he who tamed the sea may live.  
But much we fear, for the lord of the deep  
Is wroth that his realm of the second lot  
Should be subdued.

595

The thoughtless youth who dared to drive  
His father's sacred chariot,  
Was by those fires, which o'er the heavens  
He scattered in his mad career,  
Himself consumed.

600

The beaten path has never proved  
The way of danger. Walk ye then  
Where your forefathers safely trod,  
And keep great nature's holy laws  
Inviolatè.

605

Whoever dipped the famous oars  
Of that bold bark in the rushing sea;  
Whoe'er despoiled old Pelion  
Of the thick, dark shade of his sacred groves;  
Whoever dared the clashing rocks,  
And, after countless perils passed,  
His vessel moored on a barbarous shore,  
Hoping to fare on his homeward way  
The master of the golden fleece,  
All by a fearful end appeased  
The offended sea.

610

615

First Tiphys, tamer of the deep,  
Abandoned to an untrained hand

His vessel's helm. On a foreign shore,  
Far from his native land he died;  
And now within a common tomb,  
'Midst unknown ghosts, he lies at rest. 620  
In wrathful memory of her king  
Lost on the sea, did Aulis then  
Within her sluggish harbor hold  
The impatient ships.

Then he, the tuneful Muse's son,  
At whose sweet strains the streams stood still, 625  
The winds were silent, and the birds,  
Their songs forgotten, flocked to him, [\[12\]](#)  
The whole wood following after—he,  
Over the Thracian fields was hurled  
In scattered fragments; but his head 630  
Down Hebrus' grieving stream was borne.  
The well-remembered Styx he reached,  
And Tartarus, whence ne'er again  
Would he return.

The wingéd sons of Boreas  
Alcides slew, and Neptune's son  
Who in a thousand changing forms 635  
Could clothe himself. But after peace  
On land and sea had been proclaimed,  
And after savage Pluto's realm  
Had been revealed to mortal eyes,  
Then did Alcides' self, alive,  
On burning Oeta's top lie down,  
And give his body to the flames;  
For sore distressed was he, consumed 640  
By Deianira's deadly gift,  
The double blood.

A savage boar Ancaeus slew;  
Thou, Meleager, impiously  
Thy mother's brother in wrath didst slay,  
And by that angry mother's hand



Didst die. All these deserved their death. 645  
But for what crime did Hylas die,  
A tender lad whom Hercules  
Long time but vainly sought? For he,  
'Mid waters safe was done to death.  
Go then, and fearlessly the deep  
Plow with your daring ships; but fear  
The peaceful pools. 650

Idmon, though well he knew the fates,  
A serpent slew on Afric sands;  
And Mopsus, to all others true,  
False to himself, died far from Thebes. 655  
If he with truth the future sang,  
Then Nauplius, who strove to wreck  
The Argive ships by lying fires,  
Shall headlong fall into the sea.  
And for his father's daring crime  
Shall Ajax, that Oïleus' son, 660  
Make full atonement, perishing  
'Midst flame and flood.<sup>[13]</sup>

And thou, Admetus' faithful mate,  
Shalt<sup>[14]</sup> for thy husband pay thy life,  
Redeeming his from death. But he,  
Who bade the first ship sail in quest  
Of the golden spoil, King Pelias, 665  
Seethed in a boiling cauldron, swam  
'Mid those restricted waves. Enough,  
O gods, have ye avenged the sea:  
Spare him, we pray, who did but go  
On ordered ways.

#### FOOTNOTES:

[12] Reading, *cui*.

[13] Reading, with a period after *profundum* and after *Oïleus*.

## ACT IV

*Nurse* [*alone*]: My spirit trembles, for I feel the near approach  
Of some unseen disaster. Swiftly grows her grief, 670  
Its own fires kindling; and again her passion's force  
Hath leaped to life. I oft have seen her, with the fit  
Of inspiration in her soul, confront the gods  
And force the very heavens to her will. But now,  
A monstrous deed, of greater moment far than these,  
Medea is preparing. For, but now, did she 675  
With step of frenzy hurry off until she reached  
Her stricken home. There, in her chamber, all her stores  
Of magic wonders are revealed; once more she views  
The things herself hath held in fear these many years,  
Unloosing one by one her ministers of ill,  
Occult, unspeakable, and wrapt in mystery;  
And, grasping with her hand the sacred altar-horn,  
With prayers, she straightly summons all destructive powers, 680  
The creatures bred in Libya's sands, and on the peaks  
Of frigid Taurus, clad in everlasting snows.  
Obedient to her potent charms, the scaly brood  
Of serpents leave their darksome lairs and swarm to her; 685  
One savage creature rolls his monstrous length along,  
And darts his forkéd tongue with its envenomed sting,  
Death-dealing; at the charming sound he stops amazed,  
And fold on fold his body writhes in nerveless coils.  
"But these are petty ills; unworthy of my hand," 690  
She cries, "are such weak, earth-born weapons. Potent  
charms  
Are bred in heaven. Now, now 'tis time to summon powers  
Transcending common magic. Down I'll draw from heaven  
That serpent huge whose body lies athwart the sky  
Like some great ocean stream, in whose constricting folds 695  
The greater and the lesser Bears are held enthralled,  
The greater set as guide for Grecian ships, the less

For Sidon's mariners! Let Ophiuchus loose  
His hand and pour forth venom from his captive thrall!  
And let the Python huge, that dared to rear its head  
Against the heavenly twins, be present at my prayer! 700  
Let Hydra's writhing heads, which by Alcides' hand  
Were severed, all return to life and give me aid!  
Thou too be near and leave thy ancient Colchian home,  
Thou watchful dragon, to whose eyes the first sleep came  
In answer to my incantations."

When she thus  
Had summoned all the serpent brood, she cast her store 705  
Of baleful herbs together; all the poisons brewed  
Amid the rocky caves of trackless Eryx; plants  
That flourish on the snowy peaks of Caucasus,  
Whose crags were spattered with Prometheus' gore; the herbs  
Within whose deadly juice the Arab dips his darts, 710  
And the quiver-bearing Mede and fleeing Parthian;  
Those potent juices, too, which, near the shivering pole,  
The Suabian chieftains gather in Hyrcanian groves.  
The seasons, too, have paid their tribute to her stores:  
Whatever earth produces in the nesting time,  
And when the stiff'ning hand of winter's frost has stripped  
The glory from the trees and fettered all the land 715  
With icy bonds; whatever flow'ring plant conceals  
Destruction in its bloom, or in its twisted roots  
Distils the juice of death, she gathers to her use.  
These pestilential herbs Haemonian Athos gave;  
And these on lofty Pindus grew; a bloody knife 720  
Clipped off these slender leaves on Macedonia's heights;  
Still others grew beside the Tigris, whirling on  
His flood to meet the sea; the Danube nourished some;  
These grew on bright gem-starred Hydaspes' tepid stream;  
And these the Baetis bore, which gave the land its name, 725  
Displacing with its languorous tide, the western sea.  
These felt the knife when early dawn begins to break;  
The fruit of these was cut in midnight's gloomy hour;  
This fatal crop was reaped with sickle magic-edged.  
These deadly, potent herbs she takes and sprinkles o'er 730

These deadly, potent herbs she takes and sprinkles o'er  
With serpent venom, mixing all; and in the broth  
She mingles unclean birds: a wailing screech owl's heart,  
A ghastly vampire's vitals torn from living flesh.  
Her magic poisons all she ranges for her use.  
The ravening power of hidden fire is held in these, 735  
While deep in others lurks the numbing chill of frost.  
Now magic runes she adds more potent far.

But lo!

Her voice resounds! and, as with maddened step she comes,  
She chants her charms, while heaven and earth convulsive rock.

[*Enter Medea, chanting her incantations.*]

*Medea:* I supplicate the silent throng, and you, the gods  
Of death's sad rites, and groping chaos, and the home 740  
Of gloomy Pluto, and the black abyss of death  
Girt by the banks of Tartarus! Ye storied shades,  
Your torments leave and haste to grace the festival  
At Hymen's call! Let stop the whirling wheel that holds  
Ixion's limbs and let him tread Corinthian ground;  
Let Tantalus unfrighted drink Pirene's stream.  
On Creon's stock alone let heavier torments fall, 745  
And backward o'er the rocks let Sisyphus be hurled.  
You too, the seed of Danaüs, whose fruitless toil  
The ever-empty urns deride, I summon you;  
This day requires your helping hands. Thou radiant moon,  
Night's glorious orb, my supplications hear and come 750  
To aid; put on thy sternest guise, thou goddess dread  
Of triple form! Full oft have I with flowing locks,  
And feet unsandaled, wandered through thy darkling groves  
And by thy inspiration summoned forth the rain  
From cloudless skies; the heaving seas have I subdued,  
And sent the vanquished waves to ocean's lowest depths. 755  
At my command the sun and stars together shine,  
The heavenly law reversed; while in the Arctic sea  
The Bears have plunged. The seasons, too, obey my will:  
I've made the burning summer blossom as the spring,  
And have . . . . . 760

And noary winter autumn's golden narvests bear. ~ ~ ~  
The Phasis sends his swirling waves to seek their source,  
And Ister, flowing to the sea with many mouths,  
His eager water checks and sluggish rolls along.  
The billows roar, the mad sea rages, though the winds  
All silent lie. At my command primeval groves 765  
Have lost their shade; [15] the sun, abandoning [16] the day,  
Has stood in middle heaven; while falling Hyades  
Attest my charms.

But now thy sacred hour is come,  
O Phoebe. Thine these bonds with bloody hand entwined 770  
With ninefold serpent coils; these cords I offer thee,  
Which on his hybrid limbs Typhoeus bore, who shook  
The throne of Jove. This vessel holds the dying blood  
Of Nessus, faithless porter of Alcides' bride.  
Here are the ashes of the pyre on Oeta's top 775  
Which drank the poisoned blood of dying Hercules;  
And here the fatal billet that Althaea burned  
In vengeance on her son. These plumes the Harpies left  
Within their caverned lair when Zetes drove them forth; 780  
And these the feathers of that vile Stymphalian bird  
Which arrows, dipped in Lerna's deadly poison, pierced.

But lo! mine altar fires resound!  
While in the tripod's answering voice  
Behold the present deity! 785  
I see the car of Trivia,  
Not full and clear as when she drives  
The livelong night to meet the dawn;  
But with a baleful, lurid glare,  
As, harried by Thessalian cries,  
She holds a more restricted course. 790  
Send such uncanny light abroad!  
Fill mortals with a dread unknown;  
And let our Corinth's priceless bronze  
Resound, Dictynna, for thy aid!  
To thee a solemn sacrifice 795  
On bloody altar do we pay!  
To thee, snatched from the mournful tomb.



And let her mercely blazing locks outshine  
Her marriage torches! Lo, my prayer is heard:  
Thrice have replied the hounds of Hecate,  
And she has shown her baleful, gleaming fires. 840  
Now all is ready: hither call my sons,  
And let them bear these presents to the bride.

[*Enter sons.*]

Go, go, my sons, of hapless mother born,  
And win with costly gifts and many prayers 845  
The favor of the queen, your father's wife.  
Begone, but quick your homeward way retrace,  
That I may fold you in a last embrace.

[*Exeunt sons toward the palace, Medea in the opposite direction.*]

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*Chorus:* Where hastes this Bacchic fury now,  
All passion-swept? what evil deed 850  
Does her unbridled rage prepare?  
Her features are congealed with rage,  
And with a queenly bearing, grand  
But terrible, she sets herself 855  
Against e'en Creon's royal power.  
An exile who would deem her now?  
Her cheeks anon with anger flush,  
And now a deadly pallor show;  
Each feeling quick succeeds to each, 860  
While all the passions of her heart  
Her changing aspect testifies.  
She wanders restless here and there,  
As a tigress, of her young bereft,  
In frantic grief the jungle scours. 865  
Medea knows not how in check  
To hold her wrath nor yet her love;  
If love and wrath make common cause,  
What dire results will come?  
When will this scourge of Corinth leave 870  
Our Grecian shores for Colchis' strand.

And free our kingdom from its fear?  
Now, Phoebus, hasten on thy course  
With no retarding rein.  
Let friendly darkness quickly veil the light,  
And this dread day be buried deep in night. 875

#### FOOTNOTES:

[15] Reading, with period after *meae*.

[16] Reading, *relicto*, and substituting comma for semicolon.

#### ACT V

*Messenger* [*comes running in from the direction of the palace*]: Lo, all is  
lost! the kingdom totters from its base!  
The daughter and the father lie in common dust! 880

*Chorus*: By what snare taken?

*Messenger*: By gifts the common snare of kings.

*Chorus*: What harm could lurk in them?

*Messenger*: In equal doubt I stand;  
And, though my eyes proclaim the dreadful deed is done,  
I scarce can trust their witness.

*Chorus*: What the mode of death?

*Messenger*: Devouring flames consume the palace at the will  
Of her who sent them; there complete destruction reigns,  
While men do tremble for the very city's doom. 885

*Chorus*: Let water quench the fire.

*Messenger*: Nay here is added wonder:  
The copious streams of water feed the deadly flames;  
And opposition only fans their fiery rage  
To whiter heat. The very bulwarks feel their power. 890



[Medea enters in time to hear that her magic has been successful.]

Nurse [to Medea]: Oh, haste thee, leave this land of Greece, in headlong flight!

Medea: Thou bid'st me speed my flight? Nay rather, had I fled I should return for this. Strange bridal rites I see!

[Absorbed in her own reflections.]

Why dost thou falter, O my soul? 'Tis well begun;  
But still how small a portion of thy just revenge 895

Is that which gives thee present joy? Not yet has love  
Been banished from thy maddened heart if 'tis enough  
That Jason widowed be. Pursue thy vengeful quest  
To acts as yet unknown, and steel thyself for these.

Away with every thought and fear of God and man;  
Too lightly falls the rod that pious hands upbear. 900

Give passion fullest sway; exhaust thy ancient powers;  
And let the worst thou yet hast done be innocent  
Beside thy present deeds. Come, let them know how slight  
Were those thy crimes already done; mere training they  
For greater deeds. For what could hands untrained in crime 905  
Accomplish? Or what mattered maiden rage? But now,  
I am Medea; in the bitter school of woe  
My powers have ripened.

[In an ecstasy of madness.] 910

Oh, the bliss of memory!

My infant brother slain, his limbs asunder rent,  
My royal father spoiled of his ancestral realm,  
And Pelias' guiltless daughters lured to slay their sire!  
But here I must not rest; no untrained hand I bring  
To execute my deeds. But now, by what approach 915

Or by what weapon wilt thou threat the treacherous foe?  
Deep hidden in my secret heart have I conceived  
A purpose which I dare not utter. Oh, I fear  
That in my foolish madness I have gone too far—  
I would that children had been born to him of this  
My hated rival. Still, since she hath gained his heart, 920

His children too are hers—  
That punishment would be most fitting and deserved.  
Yes, now I see the final deed of crime, and thou,  
My soul, must face it. You, who once were called my sons,  
Must pay the penalty of these your father's crimes—  
My heart with horror melts, a numbing chill pervades 925  
My limbs, and all my soul is filled with sinking fear.  
Now wrath gives place, and, heedless of my husband's sins,  
The tender mother-instinct quite possesses me.  
And could I shed my helpless children's blood? Not so,  
Oh, say not so, my maddened heart! Far from my hand  
And thought be that unnameable and hideous deed! 930  
What sin have they that shedding of their wretched blood  
Would wash away?

    Their sin—that Jason is their sire,  
And, deeper guilt, that I have borne them. Let them die;  
They are not mine. Nay, nay! they are my own, my sons,  
And with no spot of guilt. Full innocent they are,  
'Tis true—my brother, too, was innocent. O soul, 935  
Why dost thou hesitate? Why flow these streaming tears,  
While with contending thoughts my wavering heart is torn?  
As when conflicting winds contend in stubborn strife,  
And waves, to stormy waves opposed, the sea invade,  
And to their lowest sands the briny waters boil; 940  
With such a storm my heart is tossed. Hate conquers love,  
And love puts impious hate to flight. Oh, yield thee, grief,  
To love! Then come, my sons, sole comfort of my heart,  
Come, cling within your mother's close embrace. Unharm'd 945  
Your sire may keep you, while your mother holds you too.

[*Embraces her sons.*]

But flight and exile drive me forth! And even now  
My children must be torn away with tears and cries.  
Then let them die to Jason since they're lost to me.  
Once more has hate resumed her sway, and passion's fire 950  
Is hot within my soul. Now fury, as of yore,  
Reseeks her own. Lead on, I follow to the end!  
I would that I had borne twice seven sons, the boast  
Of Niobe! But all too barren have I been 955

Still will my two sufficient be to satisfy  
My brother and my sire.

[*Sees a vision of the furies and her brother's ghost.*]

But whither hastes that throng  
Of furies? What their quest? What mean their brandished fires?  
Whom threats this hellish host with horrid, bloody brands?  
I hear the writhing lash resound of serpents huge. 960  
Whom seeks Megaera with her deadly torch? Whose shade  
Comes gibbering there with scattered limbs? It is my brother!  
Revenge he seeks, and we will grant his quest. Then come,  
Within my heart plunge all your torches, rend me, burn;  
For lo, my bosom open to your fury's stroke. 965  
O brother, bid these vengeful goddesses depart  
And go in peace down to the lowest shades of hell.  
And do thou leave me to myself, and let this hand  
That slew thee with the sword now offer sacrifice  
Unto thy shade. 970

[*Slays her first son.*]

What sudden uproar meets my ear?  
'Tis Corinth's citizens on my destruction bent.  
Unto the palace roof I'll mount and there complete  
This bloody sacrifice.

[*To her remaining son.*]

Do thou come hence with me.  
But thee, poor senseless corse, within mine arms I'll bear.  
Now gird thyself, my heart, with strength. Nor must this deed 975  
Lose all its just renown because in secret done;  
But to the public eye my hand must be approved.

*Jason* [*in the street below shouting to citizens*]: Ho, all ye loyal sons, who  
mourn the death of kings!  
Come, let us seize the worker of this hideous crime.  
Now ply your arms and raze her palace to the ground. 980

*Medea* [*appearing on the housetop with her two sons*]: Now, now have I  
regained my regal state, my sire,  
My brother! Once again the Colchians hold the spoil  
Of precious gold! And by the magic of this hour

I am a maid once more. O heavenly powers, appeased  
At length! O festal hour! O nuptial day! On, on!  
Accomplished is the guilt, but not the recompense. 985  
Complete the task while yet thy hands are strong to act!  
Why dost thou linger still? why dost thou hesitate  
Upon the threshold of the deed? Thou canst perform it.  
Now wrath has died within me, and my soul is filled  
With shame and deep remorse. Ah me, what have I done,  
Wretch that I am? Wretch that thou art, well mayst thou mourn,  
For thou hast done it!

At that thought delirious joy 990  
O'ermasters me and fills my heart which fain would grieve.  
And yet, methinks, the act was almost meaningless,  
Since Jason saw it not; for naught has been performed  
If to his grief be added not the woe of sight.

*Jason [discovering her]:* Lo, there she stands upon the lofty battlements!  
Bring torches! fire the house, that she may fall ensnared  
By those devices she herself hath planned. 995

*Medea [derisively]:* Not so,  
But rather build a lofty pyre for these thy sons;  
Their funeral rites prepare. Already for thy bride  
And father have I done the service due the dead;  
For in their ruined palace have I buried them.  
One son of thine has met his doom; and this shall die  
Before his father's face. 1000

*Jason:* By all the gods, and by the perils of our flight,  
And by our marriage bond which I have ne'er betrayed,  
I pray thee spare the boy, for he is innocent.  
If aught of sin there be, 'tis mine. Myself I give  
To be the victim. Take my guilty soul for his. 1005

*Medea:* 'Tis for thy prayers and tears I draw, not sheathe the sword.  
Go now, and take thee maids for wives, thou faithless one;  
Abandon and betray the mother of thy sons.

*Jason:* And yet, I pray thee, let one sacrifice atone.

*Medea:* If in the blood of one my passion could be quenched,

No vengeance had it sought. I hough both my sons I slay,  
The number still is all too small to satisfy  
My boundless grief. 1010

*Jason:* Then finish what thou hast begun—  
I ask no more—and grant at least that no delay  
Prolong my helpless agony. 1015

*Medea:* Now hasten not,  
Relentless passion, but enjoy a slow revenge.  
This day is in thy hands; its fertile hours employ.

*Jason:* Oh, take my life, thou heartless one.

*Medea:* Thou bid'st me pity—  
Well! [*Slays the second child.*]—'Tis done!  
No more atonement, passion, can I offer thee.  
Now hither lift thy tearful eyes ungrateful one.  
Dost recognize thy wife? 'Twas thus of old I fled. 1020  
The heavens themselves provide me with a safe retreat.

[*A chariot drawn by dragons appears in the air.*]

Twin serpents bow their necks submissive to the yoke.  
Now, father, take thy sons; while I, upon my car,  
With wingéd speed am borne aloft through realms of air. 1025

[*Mounts her car and is borne away.*]

*Jason* [*calling after her*]: Speed on through realms of air that mortals  
never see:  
But, witness heaven, where thou art gone no gods can be!

## HERCULES FURENS

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### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- HERCULES Son of Jupiter and Alcmena, but the reputed son of Amphitryon.
- Juno* Sister and wife of Jupiter, and queen of heaven.
- Amphitryon* Husband of Alcmena.
- Theseus* King of Athens and friend of Hercules.
- Lycus* The usurping king of Thebes, who has, prior to the opening of the play, slain king Creon in battle.
- Megara* Wife of Hercules and daughter of Creon.
- Chorus* Of Thebans.

THE SCENE is in the princely palace of Hercules at Thebes, on the day of the return of the hero from the lower world.

*The jealous wrath of Juno, working through Eurystheus, has imposed twelve mighty and destructive tasks on Hercules, her hated stepson. But these, even to the last and worst, the bringing of Cerberus to the upper world, he has triumphantly accomplished. Abandoning her plan of crushing him by toils like these, she will turn his hand against himself, and so accomplish his destruction. Upon the day of his return from hell, she brings a madness on him, and so precipitates the tragedy which forms the action of the play.*

## ACT I

*Juno [in soliloquy]*: Lo I, the sister of the Thunderer  
(For, save this name alone, I've nothing more),  
Have left my lord, so often false to me,  
Have left, in widowhood, the realms of heaven,  
And, banished from the sky, have given place  
Unto my hated rivals. Now must earth  
Be my abode, while they in heaven reign. 5  
Behold, the Bear, far in the frozen north,  
Is set on high to guide the Argive ships;  
Behold, in southern skies, where days grow long  
Beneath the warmth of spring, the Bull shines bright,  
Who once the Tyrian Europa bore.  
There gleam the wandering Atlantides, 10  
A fearful band for ships and sea alike;  
And yonder fierce Orion with his sword  
The very gods affrights; his stars, as well,  
The golden Perseus boasts; while Leda's sons  
With shining banners glitter in the sky;  
And they, Latona's children, for whose birth 15  
The floating land stood firm. And not alone  
Have Bacchus and his mother gained the heavens;  
But, that the infamy may be complete,  
The skies must needs the Cretan maiden's crown  
Endure. But these are ancient wrongs I tell:  
One wild and baneful land alone is full  
Of shameless mistresses—the Theban land, 20  
Which all too oft has me a stepdame made.  
And though Alcmena scale the heights of heaven,  
And hold my place, victorious over me;  
And though her son his promised star obtain  
(Whose hateful getting cost the world a day,  
Since Phoebus, bidden to hold his shining car  
In Ocean hid, with tardy light shone forth 25  
From eastern seas): still ever in my heart

FROM EASTERN SEAS). SUN EVER IN MY HEART  
Shall hate relentless dwell. Undying wrath  
My outraged soul shall kindle; and my grief,  
All hope of truce denying, endless wars  
Shall fiercely wage. But what avail my wars? 30  
Whatever savage things the hurtful earth,  
The sea or air produce, terrific shapes,  
Fierce, pestilential, horrible, and dire,  
The power of all is broken and subdued.  
Alcides towers above and thrives on woe;  
My wrath is his delight, and to his praise  
He turns my deadly hate. While I, too stern, 35  
Impose his dreadful tasks, I do but prove  
His origin, and opportunity  
For glorious achievement render him.  
Where Phoebus with his neighboring torch illumines  
The east and western shores of Aethiop's land,  
Alcides' dauntless courage is adored;  
While all the world considers him a god.  
And now have I no monsters more to send; 40  
And less his toil to do the tasks I bid,  
Than mine to set them. Joyfully he hears  
My several commands. But what dire tasks  
The tyrant may conceive can harm that youth  
Impetuous? His very arms, forsooth,  
Are torn from monsters which he feared—and slew; 45  
With spoils of lion and of hydra armed,  
He walks abroad. Nor are the lands of earth  
Enough for him: behold, the doors of Dis  
Are burst, and to the upper world he brings  
The booty taken from the vanquished king.  
'Tis not enough that he returns alive:  
The law that binds the shades is set at naught.  
Myself I saw him, when he had o'ercome 50  
The king of hades and escaped the night  
Of that deep underworld, display to Jove  
The spoils of Dis. But why does he not lead,  
Oppressed and overcome, the king himself



Who gained by lot an equal realm with Jove?  
Why rules he not in conquered Erebus?  
Why bares he not the Styx? His upward way  
From deepest hell to earth he has retraced, 55  
And all the sacred mysteries of death  
Lie open to the world. Not yet content,  
And proud that he has burst the bars of night,  
He triumphs over me, and, insolent,  
He leads through all the cities of the land  
That gruesome dog of hell. I saw, myself,  
The daylight pale at sight of Cerberus, 60  
The sun start in affright. Nay, even I  
Was struck with terror; and, as I beheld  
That triple-headed beast in bondage led,  
I trembled at the thought that 'twas my will.  
But all too trivial ills do I lament;  
My fears must be aroused for heaven itself,  
Lest he who overcame the lowest depths  
Should scale the very skies, and from his sire 65  
His scepter snatch away. Nor to the stars  
Will he, like Bacchus, by an easy path  
Ascend; through ruin would he make his way,  
And wish to rule an empty universe.  
He is inflamed with pride of tested strength;  
But he has learned by bearing up the heavens,  
That by his power the heavens can be subdued. 70  
Upon his head he bore the universe,  
Nor did his shoulders bend beneath the weight  
Of that stupendous mass; the vault of heaven  
Upon his neck was poised, and steadily  
He bore the expanse of sky, the shining stars;  
And even me, down pressing, he endured.  
He seeks a place among the immortal gods.  
Then up, arouse thee to destructive wrath, 75  
Destroy him meditating plans so great.  
Meet him in single strife; with thine own hands  
Asunder rend him. Why thy mighty hate  
Dost thou consign to others to appease?

Enough of monsters; let Eurystheus rest,  
All weary with imposing thy commands.  
Though thou shouldst open wide Sicilia's vaults,  
And free the Titans who essayed to wrench  
The scepter from the hand of mighty Jove; 80  
Though the Doric isle, which trembles with affright  
Whene'er the heaving giant turns himself,  
Should ease her weight upon the monster's head;  
Though in the moon another race of beasts  
Should be conceived: yet all of these, I know  
Alcides conquered and will conquer still.  
Seek'st thou his match? There is none save himself.  
Then set him on to war against himself; 85  
Let furies from the lowest depths of hell  
Be roused and come to aid, their flaming locks  
Aglow with maddening fire, their savage hands  
The horrid snaky scourges brandishing.  
Go now, thou proud one, seek the seats of heaven,  
And scorn the lot of men. And dost thou think, 90  
O hero brave, that thou hast fled the Styx  
And gloomy shades? Here will I show thee hell;  
Here will I summon up the goddess dire  
Of Discord, deep in darkness thick confined  
Far down below the abode of guilty souls.  
A cavern huge within a mountain's hold  
Is her dark prison. Her will I call forth, 95  
And from the deepest realms of Dis bring up  
Whate'er thou hast escaped: base Crime shall come;  
Impiety that fiercely stains its hands  
In kindred blood; the shape of Error, too,  
And Fury ever armed against itself.  
This, this assistance shall my grief employ.  
Come then, ye ever-faithful slaves of Dis, 100  
Begin your task. Shake high the blazing torch;  
And let Megaera lead her dreadful band  
Of sisters viperous. With deadly hand  
Let her from off the blazing funeral pyre

A burning brand snatch up. Now to your task;  
Thus seek revenge for violated Styx:  
Distract his heart with madness; let his soul  
More fiercely burn than that hot fire which glows 105  
On Aetna's forge. But first, that Hercules  
May be to madness driven, smitten through  
With mighty passion, I must be insane.  
Why rav'st thou not, O Juno? Me, Oh, me,  
Ye sisters, first of sanity deprive, 110  
That something worthy of a stepdame's wrath  
I may prepare. Let all my hate be changed  
To favor. Now I pray that he may come  
To earth again, and see his sons unharmed;  
May he return with all his old-time strength.  
Now have I found a day when Hercules  
May help me with his strength that I deplore. 115  
Now let him equally o'ercome himself  
And me; and let him, late escaped from death,  
Desire to die. Now let it profit me  
That he is born of Jove. I'll stand by him  
And nicely poise his hand, that so his darts  
May with more deadly aim be hurled. I'll guide  
The madman's arms. And so at last I help 120  
Alcides in his wars. The crime complete,  
Then let his father to the heavens admit  
Those guilty hands. Now must the attack begin.  
The day is breaking, and with saffron light  
The rising sun dispels the gloom of night.

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*Chorus:* Now scattered and with paling light  
 The stars gleam in the sinking west; 125  
 Now vanquished night collects her fires,  
 Whose shining band at the day's return  
 The star of morning drives away.  
 High up in the frozen northern sky,  
 The Arcadian Bears with their seven-fold stars,  
 Their course completed, hail the dawn. 130  
 Now borne along by his azure steeds  
 The sun looks forth from Oeta's ridge;  
 With whose light suffused, the clustering grapes  
 In the vineyards to Theban Bacchus dear  
 Flush rosy red. The waning moon  
 Fades out of sight, to return again. 135  
 Hard Toil awakens, at whose knock  
 The doors of men are opened wide,  
 And daily cares resumed.  
 The shepherd sends his flock afield,  
 And plucks, himself, the tender grass  
 Still sparkling with the frosty rime. 140  
 The young bull sports among the fields  
 At liberty; the dams refill  
 Their empty udders; sportive kids  
 Leap lightly o'er the tender grass  
 In aimless course. On the topmost branch 145  
 The Thracian Philomela sings  
 Her strident song, and near her nest  
 Of chattering young she spreads her wings  
 To the morning sun; while all around  
 The throng of birds with united songs 150  
 Announce the day.  
 The daring sailor spreads his sails  
 To the freshening wind, as the breezes fill  
 Their flapping folds. From wave-worn rocks  
 The fisher leans and baits anew  
 His cunning hook; he feels his line  
 A-tremble with the struggling fish, 155

Or weighs his prize with practiced hand  
And eager eye.  
Such are the joys of him who lives  
In tranquil and unworried peace; 160  
Whose pleasure is a humble house,  
His own, though small; whose simple hopes  
Are in the open fields. [\[17\]](#)  
But worried hopes in cities dwell,  
And trembling fears. There some would haunt  
The rich man's haughty vestibules,  
Wait at their proud, unfeeling doors, 165  
Forego their sleep. Some heap up wealth,  
Though blest with boundless wealth, and gaze  
In admiration at their heaps;  
And yet, with all their gold, are poor.  
Some strain for the applause of men,  
The vulgar throng, whose fickle will  
Is shifting as the sea, and swell 170  
With empty pride. The noisy mart  
Still others claim, who meanly deal  
In quarrelsome suits, and profit make  
Of wrath and empty words.  
Few know untroubled peace, the men  
Who, heeding time's swift flight, hold fast 175  
The years that never will return.  
While fate permits, live happily;  
For life runs on with rapid pace,  
And with headlong speed the year's swift wheel  
With winged hours is turned. 180  
The cruel sisters urge their task,  
Nor backward turn the threads of life.  
But the race of men is hurried on  
To meet the quick approaching fates,  
Uncertain of their own.  
Of our own will we haste to cross  
The Stygian waves. Thou, Hercules, 185  
With heart too brave, before thy time  
Didst see the grieving shades. The fates

DUST SEE THE GRIEVING SHADES. THE FATES  
 In pre-established order come;  
 And none may stay when they command,  
 None may put off the appointed day. 190  
 The swiftly whirling urn of fate  
 Contains all mortal men.  
 Let glory then to many lands  
 Proclaim some names, and chattering fame  
 Through every city sing their praise,  
 And raise them to the stars. Sublime 195  
 In triumph let another ride.  
 Me let my native land conceal  
 Within a safe and humble home.  
 'Tis unambitious souls who come  
 To hoary-headed age at last.  
 If humble, still the lot is sure  
 Of lowly homes. Souls lifted high, 200  
 For this to greater depths must fall.  
 But see, sad Megara comes with flowing hair,  
 Her little children closely pressing round;  
 And with her, with the tardy step of age,  
 The sire of Hercules, Amphitryon.

#### FOOTNOTES:

[17] Reading, *et in agris*.

## ACT II

*Megara:* O mighty ruler of Olympus' heights, 205  
 Thou judge of all the world, now set at length  
 A limit to my cares, and make an end  
 Of my disasters. No untroubled day  
 Doth dawn for me; but one misfortune's end  
 Marks but the starting-point of future woes.  
 Fresh foes are ready for my Hercules  
 Straightway on his return; ere he can reach 210

His happy home, another warfare bids 210  
That he set forth again. No time for rest  
Is given, save while he waits a fresh command.  
'Twas ever thus: from earliest infancy  
Unfriendly Juno follows on his track.  
Was e'en his cradle free from her assaults?  
He conquered monsters ere he learned to know  
What monsters were. Two crested serpents huge 215  
Against him reared their heads; the dauntless child  
Crawled forth to meet them, and, with placid gaze  
Intently fixed upon their fiery eyes,  
With fearless look he raised their close-coiled folds,  
And crushed their swollen necks with tender hand. 220  
And thus he practiced for the hydra's death.  
He caught the nimble stag of Maenalus,  
Its beauteous head adorned with horns of gold.  
The lion, terror of Nemean woods,  
Groaned out his life beneath the mighty arms  
Of Hercules. Why should I call to mind 225  
The stables dire of that Bistonian herd,  
And the king as food to his own horses given?  
The rough Maenalian boar, which, from his lair  
On Erymanthus' thickly wooded heights,  
Filled all the groves of Arcady with dread?  
Or that fell Cretan bull whose terror filled 230  
A hundred towns? Among his herds remote,  
The three-formed shepherd by Tartessus' shore  
Was slain, and from the farthest west his herds  
Were driven as booty. Now Cithaeron feeds  
The cattle once to Ocean known. Again,  
When bidden to penetrate the sultry zone  
Of summer's burning sun, those scorched realms 235  
Which midday parches with its piercing rays,  
He clove the ponderous mountain barriers,  
And made a pathway for the rushing sea.  
He next assailed the rich Hesperides,  
And bore therefrom the watchful dragon's spoil  
Of golden fruit. Then Lerna's savage beast. 240

An evil creature constantly renewed,  
Did he not overcome by fire at last,  
And teach it how to die? Did he not seek  
Within the clouds the dire Stymphalian birds,  
Whose spreading wings were wont to obscure the day?  
He was not conquered by the maiden queen  
Who ruled the Amazons and ever kept 245  
Her couch in virgin state. Nor did his hands,  
Courageous to attempt all glorious deeds,  
Disdain to cleanse the vile Augean stalls.  
But what avail these toils? For he alone  
Cannot enjoy the world he saved. And now  
The world perceives the giver of its peace  
Is absent from its sight. Now prosperous crime 250  
Is called by virtue's name; good men obey  
The guilty, might is counted right, and fear  
O'ershadows law. Before my eyes I saw  
The sons who dared defend their father's throne  
Fall dead beneath the tyrant's murderous hand;  
I saw King Creon's self by death o'ercome, 255  
The latest son of Cadmus' noble line;  
And with his head the royal diadem  
Was reft away. Who now could weep enough  
For Thebes? Proud land and mother of the gods,  
What master fears she now, she, from whose fields  
And fertile bosom sprang that band of youth 260  
With swords all ready drawn; whose mighty walls  
Amphion, son of Jove, once built, its stones  
Compelling by the magic of his lyre;  
Down to whose citadel not once alone  
The father of the gods from heaven came?  
This royal city which the immortals oft  
Has entertained, which has divinities 265  
Produced, and (heaven forgive the boastful word)  
Perchance will yet produce, is now oppressed  
Beneath a shameful yoke. O royal race  
Of Cadmus, noble state Amphion ruled,



Low hast thou fallen indeed! Dost thou obey  
A low-born exile, driven from his land  
And yet oppressing ours? And now, alas, 270  
He, who on land and sea doth punish crime,  
Who breaks all cruel rule with righteous hand,  
Far off obeys another, and himself  
Endures those ills from which he others saved;  
And Lycus rules the Thebes of Hercules!  
But not for long; he soon will come again,  
And punish all the wrongs; he suddenly 275  
Will to the upper world emerge; a way  
He'll find—or make. Oh, come unharmed, I pray;  
As victor come at last unto thy home  
Which now in ruins lies. O husband, come,  
With thy strong hand break through the shades of hell.  
And if no way is open, if the road 280  
Is closely barred, then rend the earth and come;  
And all that lies in keep of dismal night  
Bring forth with thee. As once, through riven hills  
A passage seeking for a headlong stream,  
Thou stood'st, and, with thy strength gigantic cleft,  
The vale of Tempe opened wide; as then, 285  
Impelled by might of thy resistless breast,  
The mountains fell away from either side,  
And through the broken masses poured the stream  
Of Thessaly along a channel new:  
So now to parents, children, native land,  
A passage burst. And bring away with thee 290  
The shapes of death, and all that greedy time  
Through countless rounds of years has hidden away;  
Those nations who have drunk forgetfulness,  
Drive out before thee, fearful of the light.  
The spoils are all unworthy of thy fame,  
If thou shouldst bring from hades only that 295  
Which was commanded. But too bold my words,  
And thoughtless of my present lot I speak.  
Oh, when will come at last that day for me  
When I shall clasp my husband once again,

And weep no more his long-delayed return,  
His long forgetfulness of me? To thee,  
O ruler of the gods, a hundred bulls  
Shall bleed; to thee, thou goddess of the fruits, 300  
Thy secret rites I'll pay: for thee shall blaze  
Upon Eleusin's shrine the sacred torch  
In celebration of thy mysteries.  
Then shall I think my brothers' lives restored,  
My father once again upon his throne.  
But if some power more potent than thine own 305  
Holds thee in durance, we shall come to thee.  
Return in safety and protect us all,  
Or drag us down with thee. This wilt thou do;  
No god will e'er our broken fortunes mend.

*Amphitr.:* O ally of my house, with wifely faith  
Preserving for the great-souled Hercules 310  
His couch and children, be of better mind.  
Take heart again, for surely he will come,  
Increased in fame by this, as is his wont  
By other tasks.

*Megara:* What wretched men desire  
They readily believe.

*Amphitryon:* Nay, what they fear  
They think can never be escaped or borne. 315  
For fear is prone to see the darker side.

*Megara:* Submerged, deep buried, crushed beneath the world,  
What chance has he to reach the upper realms?

*Amphitr.:* The same he had, when, through the arid plain,  
And sands that billowed like the stormy sea, 320  
Those twice receding, twice returning gulfs,  
He made his way; when on the dangerous shoals  
Of Syrtes he was wrecked, he left his ship  
A helpless hulk and crossed the sea on foot.

*Megara:* Unjust is fortune, rarely does she spare 325  
The bravest souls. No one with safety long

Can brave so frequent perils; he who oft  
Has shunned misfortune meets at last his fate.  
But see, with threatening looks fierce Lycus comes,  
His hateful soul in hateful bearing shown,  
And bears the stolen scepter in his hand.

330

[*Enter Lycus.*]

*Lycus:* The rich domain of this proud town of Thebes,  
With all the fertile soil which Phocis bounds  
Within its winding borders, all the land  
Ismenus waters; all Cithaeron sees  
From his high top; the narrow Isthmus, too,  
Two seas asunder cleaving: all I own,  
Not by prerogative of long descent,  
A worthless heir. No noble ancestors,  
Nor family adorned with lofty names  
Have I; but splendid valor. He who boasts  
His noble ancestry exalts a thing  
Which is not his to boast. But power usurped  
Is held with anxious hands; the sword alone  
Can guard it. All thou hold'st against the will  
Of citizens the sword must hold for thee.  
No kingdom built upon a foreign soil  
Is safe for long. One thing alone I see  
Which can our power establish—Megara,  
By ties of royal marriage bound to me.  
From her illustrious line my humble blood  
Shall a richer hue derive. Nor do I think  
That she will scorn me and refuse my suit.  
But should she with a blind and stubborn soul  
Refuse my proffered hand, my mind is fixed  
To give to utter ruin all the house  
Of Hercules. Will such a deed arouse  
A storm of scandal and the people's hate?  
The art of ruling chiefly lies in this:  
The power to bear the people's hate unmoved.  
Let me make trial then. Occasion smiles

335

340

345

350

LET ME MAKE THAT THEN. OCCASION SINGS,  
For she herself, in mourning vestments clad,  
Stands by the altars of her guardian gods, 355  
While near at hand Alcides' father waits.

*Megara* [*seeing Lycus, aside*]: What new outrage does yonder wretch  
prepare,  
The pestilent destroyer of our race?

*Lycus*: O thou, who bear'st a name illustrious 360  
From royal stock, with patient ear awhile  
Receive my words. If everlasting hate  
The hearts of men should feel, if fury dire,  
Once in the heart conceived, should never cease;  
If prosperous men must ever fight to rule,  
And those who fail obey because they must:  
Then never-ending wars would nothing leave,  
And all the fields would be a barren waste; 365  
Homes would be burned, and 'neath their ashes deep  
All nations of the earth would be o'erwhelmed.  
The victor's profit is in peace restored,  
But for the vanquished 'tis their direful need.  
Come, share my throne; let us unite our wills.  
And, as my pledge of faith, receive my hand. 370  
But why dost thou in scornful silence wait?

*Megara*: And dost thou think that I would touch the hand  
That is besprinkled with my father's gore,  
And my two brothers' blood? Oh, sooner far  
Shall day's last beams go out in eastern skies,  
And dawn break in the west; sooner shall peace  
Be made 'twixt snow and flame, and Scylla join 375  
Sicilia's shores with those of Italy;  
And sooner shall Euripus' rushing waves  
Lap peacefully upon Euboea's shores.  
My father and my brothers hast thou slain,  
My kingdom ruined, home and native land.  
What still is left? One thing remains to me,  
That's dearer than my father, brother, home, 380  
And kingdom: 'tis my deadly hate of thee.

That I must share this with the land at large  
Is grief to me. For in their cause for hate  
How small a share have I? Thou, swollen with pride,  
Rule on, and let thy soul exalt itself;  
But know that evermore the avenging god  
Pursues the proud of heart. Well do I know  
The history of Thebes. Why need I tell 385  
Of matrons who have dared and suffered wrong?  
Why name the double crime, the mingled names  
Of husband, father, son, the opposing camps  
Of brothers? Why describe the funeral pyres?  
The haughty mother, child of Tantalus,  
Still sits in stony grief; the mourning rock 390  
On Phrygian Sipylus still drips with tears.  
Nay, Cadmus' self, in form of serpent, still  
Flees through Illyria's realm with crested head,  
And leaves behind his dragging body's trail.  
Such fates admonish thee. Rule as thou wilt:  
But may the accustomed doom of Thebes be thine. 395

*Lycus:* Come then, have done with this wild talk of thine,  
And learn from Hercules to obey the will  
Of kings. Although by right of victory  
I wield this scepter, though I reign supreme 400  
Without the fear of laws which arms annul,  
Still will I briefly speak in my defense.  
And did thy father fall in bloody war?  
Thy brothers too? But arms no limit know,  
Cannot be checked with ease, nor can the sword,  
Once drawn, restrain its wrath. War will have blood.  
But (you will say), he fought to save his state, 405  
While I was prompted by the lust of power.  
Still we should look, not at the cause of war,  
But at its outcome. Now let memory  
Of all the former wrongs pass from thy heart.  
When the victor lays aside his arms, 'tis meet  
The vanquished should abandon hatred too.  
I ask thee not upon thy bended knees 410

To acknowledge me as king; for it is well  
That thou shouldst meet thy ruin dauntlessly.  
Lo, thou art worthy of a royal mate:  
Be then my wife and not my enemy.

*Megara:* Cold horror creeps throughout my lifeless limbs.

What shameful proposition do I hear?

I did not shrink when loud alarms of war

415

Rang round our city's walls; and all my woes

I've bravely borne. But marriage—and with him!

Now do I think myself indeed a slave.

Load down my tender frame with heavy chains;

Be lingering death by long starvation sought;

Still shall no power o'ercome my wifely faith.

420

I shall be thine, Alcides, to the death.

*Lycus:* Such spirits does a buried husband give?

*Megara:* He went below that he might reach the heavens.

*Lycus:* The boundless weight of earth oppresses him.

*Megara:* No weight of earth can overwhelm the man

Who bore the heavens up.

425

*Lycus:* Thou shalt be forced.

*Megara:* He can be forced who knows not how to die.

*Lycus:* Tell me what gift I could bestow more rich

Than royal wedlock?

*Megara:* Grant thy death, or mine.

*Lycus:* Then die, thou fool.

*Megara:* 'Tis thus I'll meet my lord.

*Lycus:* Is that slave more to thee, than I, a king?

430

*Megara:* How many kings has that slave given to death!

*Lycus:* Why does he serve a king, and bear the yoke?

*Megara:* Remove hard tasks, and where would valor be?

*Lycus:* To conquer monsters, call't thy valor then?

*Lycus:* To conquer monsters canst thou valor men?

*Megara:* 'Tis valor to subdue what all men fear.

435

*Lycus:* The shades of hades hold that boaster fast.

*Megara:* No easy way leads from the earth to heaven.

*Lycus:* Who is his father, that he hopes for heaven?

*Amphitr.:* Unhappy wife of mighty Hercules,

Be silent now, for 'tis my part to tell

Alcides' parentage. After his deeds,

440

So many and so great; after the world,

From rising unto setting of the sun,

Has been subdued, so many monsters tamed;

After the giants' impious blood was spilled

In Phlegra's vale, and gods were reinforced,

What need we yet to prove his parentage?

445

Do we make false pretense of Jupiter?

Then Juno's hate believe.

*Lycus:* Why blaspheme Jove?

The race of mortals cannot mate with gods.

*Amphitr.:* Such is the origin of many gods.

*Lycus:* But were they slaves before their heaven was gained?

450

*Amphitr.:* The Delian at Pherae kept the flocks.

*Lycus:* But he did not in exile roam the world.

*Amphitr.:* His mother bore him in a roaming land,

Herself a fugitive.

*Lycus:* Did Phoebus fear

Wild beasts and monsters?

*Amphitr.:* Yes, in dragon's blood

His earliest shafts were stained.

455

*Lycus:* Thou knowest not

What heavy ills the young Alcides bore.

*Amphitr.:* But Bacchus by a thunderbolt was ripped

From his mother's womb, and at the instant

from out his mother's womb; and yet he stood  
In after time beside the Thunderer,  
His sire. Nay, Jove himself, who rules the stars  
And drives the clouds, did he not lie concealed,  
In helpless infancy in Ida's cave? 460  
A heavy price must so high lineage pay,  
And suffering is the birthright of a god.

*Lycus:* Whoe'er is wretched, thou wouldst mortal know.

*Amphitr.:* Whoe'er is brave, thou wouldst not wretched call.

*Lycus:* But is he brave, from whose broad shoulders fell  
The lion's skin and club, that they might be 465  
A maiden's plaything? Who himself shone bright  
In Tyrian vestments? Should we call him brave,  
Whose bristling locks were wet with fragrant nard,  
Whose famous hands in woman's wise essayed  
To play the tambour; on whose frowning brow  
The Phrygian turban shamelessly was worn? 470

*Amphitr.:* But youthful Bacchus did not blush to wear  
His locks in flowing ringlets, in his hand  
The thyrsus light to brandish, as he walked  
With steps unsteady, clad in trailing robes  
Bright with barbaric gold. 'Tis virtue's right  
In foolishness to ease the strain of toil. 475

*Lycus:* 'Twas for this cause the house of Eurytus  
Was overthrown, and troops of maidens slain  
Like helpless sheep! No Juno ordered this,  
Nor yet Eurystheus: these his works alone. 480

*Amphitr.:* Thou know'st not all his deeds: it was his work  
That Eryx fell, by his own gauntlets slain;  
That in his death Antaeus, too, was joined;  
That those foul altars, dripping with the blood  
Of hapless strangers, drank the blood at last  
Of murderous Busiris. 'Twas his work  
That Cycnus, proof against the sword, was slain,  
Though still unwounded; by his hand alone 485





KNOWS NOT THE FATE'S ART. SEEK VAINLY PAINS,  
Forbid the wretch to die, the happy slay.  
Now, while the pyre is growing for the flames,  
I'll pay my vows unto the ocean's god.

515

[*Exit.*]

*Amphitr.:* O god of gods, O ruler of the skies,  
Whose hurtling bolts make mortals quake with fear,  
Check thou the impious hand of this dire king.  
Why do I vainly importune the gods?  
Where'er thou art, hear thou and answer, son.  
But why this sudden rocking of the shrine? 520  
Why groans the earth? Far in her lowest hold  
A crashing deep resounds. Our prayer is heard!  
It is, it is the step of Hercules!

---

*Chorus:* O Fortune, envious of the brave,  
Unjustly are thy prizes given! 525  
Behold Eurystheus reigns at ease,  
While our Alcmena's noble son,  
With hands which could the heavens uplift,  
Must endless wars with monsters wage;  
Must sever the hydra's teeming necks,  
And from the cheated sisters bear 530  
The apples, when the dragon huge,  
The guardian of the golden fruit,  
Had given to sleep his watchful eyes.  
To the wandering homes of Scythia,  
Where tribes in their ancestral seats  
As strangers dwell, he made his way.  
He trod the frozen ocean's crust, 535  
A still sea hemmed by silent shores;  
There no waves beat on the rigid plains,  
And where but now full swelling sails  
Had sped their barks, a path is worn

By the long-haired Sarmatae.  
There the waters change with the changing year, 540  
Now ships, now horses bearing up.  
From the queen who rules o'er virgin tribes,  
With golden girdles on their loins,  
He took her body's noble spoil,  
Her shield and her snowy bosom's guard. 545  
On bended knee she acknowledged him victor.  
With what hope, driven to the depths of hell,  
Bold to tread irretraceable ways,  
Didst thou behold the dusky realms  
Of Proserpine of Sicily?  
There Notus and Favonius lash 550  
No seas to rage with swelling floods;  
There do no frightened vessels find  
Help from the twin Tyndaridae.  
Those waters lie in stagnant pools  
And black; and when, with greedy teeth, 555  
Pale Death bears off uncounted tribes  
Unto the shades, one oarsman grim  
Bears all across their gloomy depths.  
Oh, that the laws of cruel Styx  
Thou mightst annul, and the distaff break,  
Relentless, of the fates. And lo, 560  
Thou canst avail, for he who rules  
O'er many nations once with thee  
His deadly hands in battle joined,  
When thou didst wage 'gainst Nestor's land  
A mighty war. A three-pronged spear  
He bore; but soon, by but a wound  
O'ercome, he fled. He feared to die, 565  
Though lord of death. Burst with thy hands  
The bonds of fate. To those sad souls  
In hell let in the light of day,  
And to the upper world reveal  
An easy path. Once, by his songs  
And suppliant prayers, did Orpheus bend  
The stubborn lords of hell when he

THE STAGGORN TONES OF HELL, WHICH HE  
 His lost Eurydice would seek. 570  
 That art which drew the forest trees,  
 Which held the birds and rocks enthralled,  
 Which stopped the river's headlong race,  
 And tamed the hearts of savage beasts,  
 Soothed with its strains ne'er heard before  
 Those darksome realms, and clear and fine 575  
 Resounded through that silent land.  
 Eurydice the Thracian dames  
 Bewailed; Eurydice, the gods,  
 Who ne'er had wept before; and they  
 Who with forbidding, awful brows,  
 In judgment sit and hear the crimes  
 Long since committed, unconfessed, 580  
 They sat and wept Eurydice,  
 Until the lord of death exclaimed:  
 "We grant thy prayer. Away to earth;  
 But on this sole condition go:  
 Do thou behind thy husband fare;  
 And look thou not upon thy wife,  
 Until the light of day thou see, 585  
 And Spartan Taenarus appear."  
 Love hates delay, nor suffers it:  
 He hasted to behold his wife—  
 And she again was lost to him.  
 So, then, the fortress that could yield to song,  
 Be sure that fortress shall to strength belong. 590

### ACT III

*[Enter Hercules, just returned from the lower world, accompanied by Theseus.]*

*Hercules:* O kindly lord of light, heaven's ornament,  
 Who circlest all the spaces of the sky  
 With thy flame-bearing car, and thy bright head  
 Dost lift to glad a new-awakened earth:

DOST ME TO glad a new-awakened earth.

Thy pardon, O Apollo, do I crave,  
If aught unlawful thou dost see in me; 595  
For by another's will have I revealed  
The hidden things of earth. Thou lord of heaven,  
And sire, behind thy flaming thunderbolt  
Conceal thy face; and thou who rul'st the seas  
By second lot, seek thou their lowest depths.  
Whoever from on high beholds the earth, 600  
And would not by strange sights be vision-  
stained,  
To heaven look and so these portents shun.  
Two only may behold this horrid sight:  
The one who brought and she who ordered it.  
To work my punishment and fated toils  
The earth was not enough. Through Juno's hate 605  
Have I seen regions unapproachable,  
Unknown to Phoebus' rays; yea, I have seen  
Those gloomy spaces which the nether pole  
Has yielded to the dusky Jove's domain.  
And had the regions of the final lot  
Been pleasing, there could I myself have reigned.  
That seething chaos of eternal night, 610  
And, what is worse than night, the gloomy gods,  
And fates I conquered; and in scorn of death  
I have come back again. What else remains?  
I've seen and shown the lower world to men.  
If aught beyond is left to do, command.  
Why dost thou for so long allow these hands,  
O Juno, to remain in idleness?  
What conquest still dost thou command? But 615  
why  
Do soldiers hold the temple walls in siege,  
And fear of arms beset their sacred doors?

[*Enter* Amphitryon.]

*Amphitr.*: Now do my fervent hopes deceive my sight,

On this the temple walls of the world



*Theseus:* NOW let thy face give o'er its grief, my queen;  
And thou, O father, check thy falling tears,  
Since this thy son is safe returned to thee.  
If I know Hercules, for Creon's death  
This Lycus soon shall pay the penalty.  
"Shall pay" is slow; he pays; nay more, has paid.

*Amphitr.:* Now may some favoring god our prayers fulfil,  
And help us in our need. O trusty friend 645  
Of our great son, his deeds in order tell:  
How long the way that leads to the sorrowing shades;  
How bore the dog of hell his heavy chains.

*Theseus:* Thou bid'st me call to memory such deeds 650  
As e'en in safety make me tremble still.  
For I can scarce believe that even yet  
I breathe the vital air. My eye's clear sight  
Is blinded, and, by that thick darkness dimmed,  
Can scarce endure the unaccustomed light.

*Amphitr.:* But conquer thou the fear that still remains  
Deep in thy heart; and do not rob thyself 665  
Of the best fruit of toil. For what was hard  
To bear becomes most sweet in memory.  
Go on, and tell us all thy sufferings.

*Theseus:* O god of heaven, and thou who holdest sway  
In that deep, all-embracing realm of death,  
And thou whose mother sought thee (but in vain)  
Through all the world: your powers I supplicate  
That I may speak with boldness of the things 660  
Concealed and buried in the hold of earth.  
The Spartan land lifts high a famous cliff  
Where Taenarus juts out upon the sea,  
Dense wooded. Here the realm of hated Dis  
Opes wide its mouth; the high cliff spreads apart, 665  
And in a mighty cavern yawns a pit  
With jaws portentous, huge, precipitous;  
And for all nations ample passage gives.  
The way begins, not dark with heavy shades.

A watery gleam of daylight follows in,  
 And doubtful light, as of the sun eclipsed,  
 Falls there and mocks the eye. Such light the day, 670  
 While mingled still with night, at early dawn  
 Or in its waning hour, is wont to give.  
 The way then broadens into spaces vast  
 And empty, where the human race entire  
 Might plunge and perish. 'Tis no labor here  
 To travel, for the road itself draws down. 675  
 As often whirlpools suck unwilling ships,  
 So does the air, down streaming, urge us on,  
 And hungry chaos. Here the clutching shades  
 Permit no backward step. Deep in the abyss,  
 With peaceful shallows gentle Lethe glides, 680  
 And by its draughts removes all mortal care  
 And, that no backward way may be allowed,  
 With many folds it wraps the stream of death;  
 Just as the wandering Maeander sports  
 With waves uncertain, now upon itself  
 Retreats, now halts in hesitation slow,  
 Whether it shall its fountain seek again, 685  
 Or journey to the sea. Here lies the marsh  
 Of sluggish, vile Cocytus; here, behold,  
 The vulture, there the doleful owl laments,  
 And through the air the fearsome screech-owl sends  
 Its sad, foreboding cry. There stands the yew,  
 Its black leaves shuddering on the gloomy boughs;  
 And 'neath its shelter hover sluggish Sleep, 690  
 And mournful Famine with her wasting jaws,  
 And Shame, at last her guilty face concealed.  
 Here quaking Fear, and Murder, desperate Grief,  
 Black Mourning, tottering Disease, and War  
 With weapons girded on, lie hid; and last  
 Comes feeble Age upon his staff upheld. 695

*Amphitr.:* Are there no fruitful fields of corn or wine?

*Theseus:* Not so: no joyful fields with verdure shine,  
 No ripening grain waves gently in the breeze,



No stately trees bear apple-laden boughs;  
But sterile wastes defile those lonely depths,  
And in eternal sloth the foul earth lies.  
Here lie the lonesome remnants of the world.  
The air hangs motionless; and thick night broods  
Upon a sluggish, horror-stricken land.  
The place of death is worse than death itself.

*Amphitr.:* And what of him who rules those dusky realms?  
Where sits he as he rules his shadowy folk?

*Theseus:* There is a place in an obscure recess  
Of Tartarus, which, with its heavy shades,  
Dense vapor shrouds. Hence, from a single source,  
Two different rivers flow: with silent stream  
One bears along the sacred Stygian waves  
On which the gods take oath; with mighty roar  
The other fiercely rolls the rocks along  
Within its flood, the raging Acheron,  
Which may not be recrossed. Set opposite,  
By these two streams encircled, stands the hall  
Of royal Dis; and by a shading grove  
The mighty house is hid. A spacious cave  
Of overhanging rock the threshold forms.  
This is the path of souls; here is the door  
Of Pluto's realm; and, round about, there spreads  
The plain wherein the frowning monarch sits  
And new-come souls reviews. Of lowering brow  
And awful majesty the god appears;  
Yet in his face his brother's likeness bears,  
And proves his noble birth. Jove's face is his,  
But thundering Jove's. And of that savage realm  
The master's self makes up the largest part,  
For every fearful thing holds him in fear.

*Amphitr.:* And is the story true that down below  
Stern justice is at last administered,  
And guilty souls, who have their crimes forgot,  
At last atone for sin? Who is he, then,

Who searches out the truth, and justice gives? 730

*Theseus:* There is not one inquisitor alone  
Who sits in judgment on the lofty seat,  
And tries the trembling culprits: in that hall  
Sit Cretan Minos, Rhadamanthus too,  
And Aeacus. Each for his sins of earth  
Must suffer here; the crime returns to him 735  
Who did it, and the guilty soul is crushed  
By its own precedents. There, deep immured  
In prison, bloody leaders have I seen,  
And bleeding backs of heartless tyrants, scourged  
By base plebeian hands. Who mildly reigns,  
And, though the lord of life, restrains his hands;  
Who mercifully rules a bloodless realm, 740  
And spares the lives of men: he shall enjoy  
Long years of happy life, and, at the end,  
Attain to heaven, or to those regions blest  
Of the Elysian fields, himself a judge.  
Refrain from human blood, all ye who rule:  
Your sins with heavier judgment shall be judged. 745

*Amphitr.:* Does any certain place inclose the lost,  
And do, as rumor says, the impious  
Sharp punishments in endless chains endure?

*Theseus:* On swiftly flying wheel Ixion turns;  
And on the neck of Sisyphus a stone 750  
Weighs heavily. There stands in middle stream,  
With throat thirst-parched, the poor old man, and seeks  
To catch the cooling waves which wash his chin.  
He, oft deceived, hopes now at last to drink;  
As often fails the water at his lips.  
So also do the fruits his hunger fail. 755  
There Tityos eternal banquets gives  
Unto the greedy vulture; and in vain  
Do Danaüs' daughters bear their brimming urns.  
There wander, raging still, the Cadmeids;  
And greedy birds still fright old Phineus.

*Amphitr.*: Now tell the noble struggle of my son.  
Does he bring back his uncle's willing gift, 760  
Or does he lead the dog as spoil of war?

*Theseus*: A gloomy cliff o'erhangs the sluggish shoals,  
Whose waves are dead, and waters motionless.  
This stream is guarded by a grim old man,  
Of squalid garb and aspect hideous,  
Who carries o'er the pool the quaking shades. 765  
His long beard hangs unkempt; his shapeless robe  
Is knotted into place; his fierce eyes gleam 770  
From sunken cheeks; and he, as ferryman,  
With his long pole propels his bark across.  
He now his empty boat unto the shore  
Was turning to receive the waiting souls,  
When Hercules requested to be borne 775  
Across the stream. The throng of shades give way;  
But fiercely Charon cries: "Whither so bold  
Dost thou haste on? Stay there thy hurrying steps."  
Alcmena's son would no delay endure,  
But with the pole itself the boatman tamed,  
And climbed aboard the boat. The roomy craft, 780  
For nations ample, groaned beneath his weight;  
And as he sat, the heavy-weighted skiff  
With rocking sides drank in the Lethe stream.  
Then quaked the conquered monsters at the sight:  
The Centaurs, fierce and wild, the Lapithae,  
Inflamed to strife by copious draughts of wine;  
And, seeking out the farthest pools of Styx,  
The beast of Lerna hid his fertile heads. 785  
Soon there appeared the home of greedy Dis,  
Where the fierce Stygian dog affrights the shades,  
Who, tossing back and forth his triple heads,  
With mighty bayings watches o'er the realm.  
Around his head with damp corruption foul,  
Writhe deadly serpents, and his shaggy mane  
With vipers bristles; while a twisting snake  
Forms his long, hissing tail. His wrath and form

Are both alike terrific. When he heard  
The sound of coming feet, straightway he raised  
His hackles, bristling with their darting snakes,  
And with erected ears caught at the sound  
(For even noiseless spirits can he hear). 790  
When Jove's son nearer came, within his cave  
The dog stood hesitant, and nameless fear  
Each of the other felt. Then suddenly  
The silence shudders with his bayings deep,  
And threatening snakes along his shoulders hiss.  
The clamor of his dreadful voice, sent forth  
Three-throated, even happy shades dismayed. 795  
Then did the hero from his left arm loose  
The lion's skin with head and grinning jaws,  
And 'neath this mighty shield opposed the dog.  
Then in his right all conquering, he raised  
His mighty club, and with a rain of blows, 800  
Now here, now there, he drove the frightened beast.  
The conquered dog at last gave o'er his threats,  
And, spent with fighting, lowered all his heads,  
And left the entrance free. Then did the king  
And queen of hell sit trembling on their thrones,  
And bade the dog be led away. Me, too, 805  
Did Dis at Hercules' request release,  
A royal gift. Then with his soothing hand  
Alcides stroked the monster's massive necks,  
And bound him with an adamantine chain.  
The watchful guardian of the dusky world  
Forgot his wonted fierceness, and his ears  
Drooped timidly. He let himself be led,  
Confessed his master, and, with muzzle low, 810  
Submissively he went, his snaky tail  
Beating his sides the while. But when he came  
To Taenarus, and in his eyes there smote  
The gleam of unknown light, though strongly bound,  
His courage he regained and madly shook 815  
His mighty chains. Even his conqueror  
Was backward borne and forced to yield his stand

was backward borne and forced to yield his stand.

Then even my aid did the hero seek;

And with united strength we dragged the dog,

Still mad with rage, attempting fruitless war,

Into the upper world. But when he saw

820

The gleaming spaces of the shining sky,

The light of day, thick darkness blinded him;

He turned his gaze to earth, and closed his eyes,

Expelled the hated light, looked backward, sought

With all his necks the sheltering earth; and last,

825

He hid his head within Alcides' shade.

But see, a mighty throng with shouts of joy

Comes yonder, wearing laurel on their brows,

Who chant the well-earned praise of Hercules.



*Chorus:* Eurystheus, brought untimely forth,  
Had bidden Hercules to pierce 830  
The depths of earth. This task alone  
Of all his labors yet remained—  
To rob the dusky king of hell.  
He dared to enter that dark way  
Which to the distant manes leads,  
Dismal, with gloomy forests set, 835  
Yet crowded with the thronging souls.  
As when the eager people haste  
Throughout the city to behold  
The play in some new theater;  
As when they crowd the Pisan fields  
When the fifth summer brings again 840  
The Elean Thunderer's sacred games;  
As, when the lengthening nights return,  
And the balanced Scales the sun's bright car  
Detain, to gentle sleep inclined,  
The people throng the mysteries  
Of Ceres, while the Attic priests 845  
Lead through the fields with hurried steps  
The worshipers: such thronging hordes  
Are driven through those silent plains.  
A part goes slow with steps of age,  
Sadly, and sated with the years;  
Some, in the earlier flush of life, 850  
Advance with the sprightly step of youth,  
Young maids not yet in wedlock joined,  
And boys with flowing ringlets, babes,  
Who have not yet learned to repeat  
Their mother's name. To these alone  
'Tis given to dispel the night 855  
With torches, and their fears relieve.  
The rest in utter darkness fare,  
And sadness. So our spirits mourn,  
When each one, grieving o'er his fate,  
Feels crushed in darkness 'neath the weight 860

Of all the world. There chaos reigns, 860  
Repulsive glooms, the hateful dark  
Of night, the empty veil of clouds,  
The weary inactivity  
Of that still, empty universe.  
Oh, may the time far distant be  
When old age bears us to that land.  
None come too late, and ne'er can he,  
Who once has come, return again. 865  
What need to hasten cruel fate?  
For all the wandering tribes of earth  
Shall surely seek the land of shades,  
And on the still Cocytus spread  
Their sails; all things the sun beholds,  
In rising and in setting, grow 870  
But to decay. Then spare, O death,  
Those who are doomed to come to thee.  
Life is but practicing for death;  
Though thou be slow in coming, still  
We hasten of ourselves. The hour  
Which gave us life begins our death.  
The joyful day of Thebes is here;  
Now at the altars sacrifice, 875  
And let the choicest victims fall.  
Ye maids and men, in mingled bands  
Begin the stately choral dance;  
And let the cattle of the fields  
Put off their yokes and be glad today; 880  
For by the hand of Hercules  
Has peace from east to west been won,  
And in that land where the sun rides high  
In middle heaven, and the shadows fail.  
Whatever region Tethys laves 885  
In her long reach has been o'ercome  
By great Alcides' toils. Borne now  
Across the shoals of Tartarus,  
With hell subdued, he comes again.  
No room is left for fear: for what 890

Beyond the world of death remains?  
And now ye priests, adorn your bristling hair  
With poplar which Alcides loves to wear.

#### ACT IV

[Enter Hercules, fresh from the slaying of Lycus, intending to offer sacrifices to the gods.]

*Hercules:* By my avenging hand lies Lycus slain;  
And all, who in his life the tyrant claimed 895  
As comrades, now by death are comrades still  
In punishment. Now will I offerings pay  
Unto my father and the gods of heaven  
For victory, and heap the altars high  
With bleeding victims to their kindness due.  
Thee, thee, O friend and helper in my toils, 900  
O warlike Pallas, unto thee I pray,  
Upon whose left the petrifying shield  
Makes direful threats. And be thou here I pray,  
Thou tamer of Lycurgus, who didst cross  
The ruddy sea, who in thy hand dost bear  
The thyrsus, ivy-wreathed; and ye twin gods,  
Apollo and Diana, hear my prayer.  
(Her hand the bow adorns, but his, the lyre.) 905  
Ye, too, I worship, all ye brothers mine,  
Who dwell in heaven; but not my stepdame's sons.

[To his attendants.]

And do ye hither drive my richest flocks;  
Whatever fragrant spices India bears 910  
And far Arabia, to the altars bring,  
And let the savory smoke of sacrifice  
To heaven ascend. Now let us crown our locks  
With wreaths of poplar; but the olive leaves,  
Thy nation's symbol, should adorn thy head,  
O Theseus. Now in prayer we lift our hands  
To love the Thunderer: do thou protect



to save the character, do thou protect  
The founders of our state, the wooded caves 915  
Of savage Zethus, Dirce's famous fount,  
And the Tyrian lares of our pilgrim king.

[*To the attendants.*]

Now throw the fragrant incense on the flames.

*Amphitr.*: O son, thy hands, all dripping with the blood  
Of thy slain foe, thou first shouldst purify.

*Hercules*: Would that his hateful blood I might pour out 920  
Unto the gods; for no libation poured  
Could stain the altars more acceptably.  
No ampler, richer victim could be paid  
To mighty Jove, than this unrighteous king.

*Amphitr.*: Beseech thy father that he end thy tasks;  
Pray that at last he give surcease of toil, 925  
And to the wearied rest.

*Hercules*: I shall myself  
Frame prayers more worthy Jupiter and me:  
May heaven, earth, and air their order keep,  
And the everlasting stars wheel on their way,  
Unchanged; may peace profound brood o'er the world;  
May iron be used for harmless toil alone, 930  
And deadly weapons vanish from the earth;  
May no unbridled tempest lash the sea;  
May angry Jove send forth no lightning bolts;  
And may no river, fed by winter's snows,  
O'erflow the troubled fields; may venom fail;  
And may no noxious herb its fruitage bear; 935  
May fierce and cruel tyrants rule no more.  
If the pregnant earth still foster any crime,  
Let her make haste to bring it to the light;  
And if she still another monster bear,  
Let it be mine to meet.

[*The madness planned by Juno begins to come upon him.*]

But what is this?

The day's bright noon is by dark shadows dimmed,  
And though the sky be cloudless, Phoebus frowns 940

And, though the sky be cloudless, Phoebus fares  
With face obscured. Who puts the day to flight,  
And drives it back to seek the dawn again?  
Whence rears unheard-of night its gloomy head?  
Why do so many stars the heavens fill  
In daylight hours? See where the Lion fierce,  
My earliest labor, glitters in the sky,  
Inflamed with wrath, and threatens with his fangs. 945  
Now, surely, will he some bright star devour.  
With gaping jaws and menacing he stands;  
He breathes out fire, and on his flaming neck  
His mane he tosses. Soon will he o'erleap  
With one huge bound the fruitful autumn's stars,  
And those which frozen winter brings to view,  
And slay with savage lunge the vernal Bull. 950

*Amphitr.:* What sudden ill is this? Why dost thou turn  
Now here now there thy burning eyes? And why  
Dost thou so falsely see the heavens?

*Hercules:* Now is the whole round earth at last subdued;  
The swollen seas give place, and e'en the realms 955  
Infernal have our toils heroic known.  
The heavens alone remain untried, a task  
Well worth the struggles of a Hercules.  
Now shall I soar aloft to those far heights,  
And seek the heavenly spaces; for a star  
Has Jupiter, my father, promised me.  
What if he should refuse? Nay, but the earth  
No longer can Alcides hold, and now 960  
Returns him to the heavens whence he came.  
Behold, the whole assembly of the gods  
Invite me to their midst, and open wide  
The doors of heaven—with one dissenting voice.

[*To Juno, in apostrophe.*]

And wilt thou not receive me into heaven?  
Wilt not unbar the gates? Wouldst have me rend  
The portals of the stubborn sky away?  
And dost doubt thou my power? Nay, Saturn's chains

Will I unbind, and loose my grandsire's might 965  
Against his impious son's unbridled sway.  
I'll stir the Titans up to war again,  
And lead them on; great rocks and trees I'll bring,  
And with my strong right hand I'll snatch and hurl  
The ridges where the Centaurs have their home.  
Two mountains, one on other, will I pile 970  
And so construct a highway to the skies.  
Then shall old Chiron see Mount Ossa placed  
Upon his Pelion; and if to heaven  
Olympus reach not, third in order set,  
I'll hurl it there.

*Amphitryon:* Such thought be far from thee!  
Check this mad impulse of a heart insane,  
Though great. 975

*Hercules:* But what is this? With dire intent  
The giants are in arms. Great Tityus  
Has fled the shades, and, towering aloft  
With torn and empty breast, has almost gained  
The heavens. Cithaeron totters to his base,  
Pallene trembles, Tempe faints in fear.  
One has Mount Pindus snatched away, and one 980  
Mount Oeta. Mimas rages horribly.  
Now comes Erinnys with her flaming torch,  
And shakes her hissing scourge; my face she seeks  
Nearer and nearer with ill-omened brands  
On funeral pyres enkindled. There I see  
Tisiphone with snake-encircled head;  
With brandished torch she guards the gate of hell, 985  
Now that their watch-dog has been stolen away.

[*He catches sight of his children.*]

But see where lurk the children of the king,  
The impious spawn of Lycus whom I hate.  
To your detested sire I'll send you now.  
Let darting arrows from my bowstring fly;  
Such errands fit my noble weapons well. 990

[*He aims an arrow at one of the children.*]

*Amphitr.*: What will he do in his blind passion's rage?

Now he has bent his mighty bow, and now  
His quiver loosed. The hissing dart is sped.  
Straight through the neck it flies, and leaves the wound.

*Hercules*: The rest will I hunt out, yea, all that lurk

Within this city's walls, without delay. 995

A greater war against Mycenae waits,  
That by my hands those Cyclopean walls  
May be o'erthrown; and that the royal hall,  
Its high walls shattered, noble roof in-fall'n,  
Doors burst, may be to utter ruin brought,  
And all its royal secrets be revealed. 1000

[*He sees his second son hiding.*]

Ah, here I see another hiding son  
Of that most wicked sire.

[*He seizes the child and drags him from the scene.*]

*Amphitryon* [*standing where he can see what is being done behind the scenes*]: Behold the child,

His coaxing hands stretched out to clasp the knees  
Of his mad father, begs with piteous tones.  
Oh, crime unspeakable, pathetic, grim:  
For by his pleading hand the child is caught,  
And, madly whirled again and yet again,  
Sent headlong through the air. A sickening sound—  
And with his scattered brains the roof is wet.  
But wretched Megara, her little son  
Protecting in her arms, flees madly forth.

1005

*Hercules* [*behind the scenes, to Megara also behind the scenes*]: Though  
thou shouldst hide thee in the Thunderer's arms,  
This hand of mine will seek and snatch thee forth. 1010

*Amphitryon* [*standing throughout this scene as above*]: Oh, whither,  
wretched woman dost thou flee?

What flight, what hiding-places dost thou seek?

what might, what hiding-places dost thou seek?  
No place is safe from angry Hercules.  
Embrace his knees the rather, and with prayer  
Attempt to soothe his wrath.

1015

*The voice of Megara:* O husband, spare;  
Thy Megara behold and recognize;  
This son of thine thy face and manner bears.  
See how he stretches out his hands to thee.

*The voice of Hercules:* At last I have thee, stepdame, in my power.  
Come thou with me, and pay full penalty  
For all my wrongs; free thy poor, troubled lord  
From his base yoke. But ere the mother dies,  
This little monster must be put to death.

1020

*The voice of Megara:* What wouldst thou, madman? Shed thine infant's  
blood?

*Amphitr.:* The child, in terror of his father's face,  
Died ere he felt the blow. 'Twas fear that snatched  
His spirit forth. Now 'gainst his trembling wife,  
His mighty club is raised—her bones are crushed,  
Her head is stricken from the mangled trunk  
And may no more be seen.

1025

[*To himself.*]

O stubborn age,  
Too long enduring, canst thou bide this sight?  
But if thy grief is irksome, death is near.

[*To Hercules.*]

Impale me on thy darts; that club of thine,  
With blood of monsters smeared, raise to my death.  
Come, slay me who am falsely called thy sire,  
And so remove this blot upon thy name,  
That I no longer may thy fame obscure.

1030

*Theseus:* Why shouldst thou wantonly provoke thy death,  
Old man? Why this mad haste to die? Away,  
And hide. From this one crime spare Hercules.

[*Enter Hercules.*]

*Hercules:* 'Tis well; the household of the shameless king  
Is utterly destroyed. To thee, O wife 1035  
Of mighty Jove, this promised sacrifice  
Have I performed; my vows I've gladly paid;  
And other victims shall thine Argos give.

*Amphitr.:* Thou hast not yet enough atonement made,  
O son. Complete the sacrifice. Behold, 1040  
A victim at the altar stands, and waits,  
With willing neck, thy hand. I offer here  
My life, and eagerly; I seek to die.  
Slay me.

[*Hercules appears to be fainting.*]

But what is this? His eye's keen glance  
Cannot maintain its gaze; grief dims his sight;  
And do I see the hands of Hercules  
A-tremble? Now his eyelids fall in sleep,  
His head sinks down upon his weary breast, 1045  
His knees give way, and down upon the earth  
His whole great body falls; as when some ash  
Is felled in forest glades, or when some cliff  
Falls down and makes a harbor in the sea.

[*To Hercules.*]

Dost thou yet live? Or has thy furious rage,  
Which sent thy friends to death, slain thee as well?

[*He examines the prostrate body.*]

He slumbers; this his measured breathing proves. 1050  
Let him have time for rest, that heavy sleep  
May break his madness' force, and so relieve  
His troubled heart.

[*To attendants.*]

Ye slaves, his arms remove,  
Lest, waking, he again his madness prove.

---

*Chorus:* Let heaven and heaven's creator mourn,  
The fertile earth, the wandering wave

THE TERTILE earth, the wandering wave  
Upon the restless sea. And thou, 1055  
Who over lands and ocean's plains  
Dost shed thy light, whose beauteous face  
Drives night away, O glowing Sun,  
Grieve more than all. For equally  
Thy risings had Alcides seen, 1060  
And eke thy settings; both thy homes  
Were known to him. His spirit loose  
From monstrous madness; loose him, ye  
Who rule above. His mind restore  
To sanity again. And thou,  
O Sleep, subduer of our ills, 1065  
The spirit's rest, thou better part  
Of human life, swift-wingéd one,  
Astraea's child, of cruel Death  
The sluggish brother, mixing false  
With true, prescient of future things, 1070  
But oftenest of misery;  
O sire of all things, gate of life,  
Day's respite and the comrade true  
Of night, who com'st impartially  
To king and slaves, with gentle hand  
The wearied spirit comforting;  
Thou who dost force the race of men 1075  
Who quail at mortal doom, to gain  
A foretaste of the sleep of death:  
Subdue and overwhelm him quite  
With heavy stupor; let his limbs,  
Unconquered hitherto, be held  
Fast bound in chains of deepest sleep;  
Take not the spell from his fierce heart,  
Until his former mind return 1080  
To its accustomed course.  
But see, prone on the ground he lies,  
His savage dreams in his fierce heart  
Still hold their sway. Not yet, alas,  
Is his dire madness overcome.

Accustomed to recline his head  
 Upon his heavy club, see now, 1085  
 He feels about with empty hand  
 To find the ponderous trunk, his arms  
 With fruitless motion tossed. Not yet  
 Has all the fever from his veins  
 Been driven out, but rages on;  
 As waves, by mighty tempests vexed,  
 Toss wildly on and swell with rage, 1090  
 Although the winds have ceased to  
 blow.  
 Oh, calm this tempest in his soul;  
 Let piety and manly strength  
 Return; or, rather, let his mind  
 Be still by mad impulses stirred, 1095  
 And his blind error go the way  
 It has begun. For madness now  
 Alone can make him innocent.  
 To have the hands unstained by guilt  
 Is best, but next to this is sin  
 Done in unconsciousness.  
 Now let thy breast resound with blows,  
 And let those arms which once have 1100  
 borne  
 The heavens up be smitten now  
 By thy victorious hands; thy cries  
 Be heard throughout the realms of air,  
 By her who rules the world of night,  
 And Cerberus crouching in his cave, 1105  
 His neck still burdened with thy  
 chains.  
 Let Chaos with the dolorous sound  
 Re-echo, and the widespread waves  
 Of ocean, and the air above  
 Which had thy darts in better use 1110  
 Beheld. Thy breast, with ills beset  
 So mighty, must with no light blow  
 Be smitten With one great sound of grief



DO SHOUTER. WITH ONE GREAT SOUND OF GRIEF

Let heaven, sea, and hell be filled.  
And thou, brave shaft, above his neck  
So long suspended, armament 1115  
And weapon too, thou quiver huge,  
Smite heavily his savage back.  
Thou sturdy club of oak, come beat  
His mighty shoulders, and oppress  
His breast with thy hard-knotted stock. 1120  
Let all his weapons worthily  
Of so great grief lament with him.

[*To the dead children.*]

But you, who in your father's praise  
Can never share, who ne'er from kings  
Have taken deadly recompense,  
Who never in the Argive games  
Have learned to bend your youthful limbs,  
In wrestling and in boxing strong  
To strive; who have but dared as yet 1125  
To poise the slender Scythian dart  
With steady hand, and pierce the stag  
Who safety seeks in flight, but not  
The lion fierce with tawny mane:  
Go to your Stygian refuge, go, 1130  
Ye guiltless shades, who on life's verge  
Have by your father's mad assault  
Been overwhelmed. Poor children, born  
Of an ill-omened, luckless race,  
Fare on along your father's toilsome path, 1135  
To where the gloomy monarchs sit in  
wrath!

## ACT V

*Hercules* [*waking up in his right mind*]: What place is this? What quarter  
of the world?  
Where am I? 'Neath the rising sun, or where

The frozen Bear wheels slowly overhead?  
Or in that farthest land whose shores are washed  
By the Hesperian sea? What air is this 1140  
I breathe? What soil supports my weary frame?  
For surely have I come again to earth.

[*His eyes fall on his murdered children.*]

Whence came those bloody corpses in my house?  
Do I behold them, or not even yet  
Have those infernal visions left my mind? 1145  
Even on earth the ghostly shapes of death  
Still flit before mine eyes. I speak with shame:  
I am afraid. Some great calamity,  
Some hidden ill my prescient soul forebodes.  
Where is my father? Where my faithful wife,  
Proud of that troop of children at her side? 1150  
Why does my left side miss the lion's skin,  
My shield in danger and my couch in sleep?  
Where is my bow, my darts? Who, while I live  
Has dared remove my arms? Who so great spoils  
Has gained? Who then so bold as not to fear 1155  
The very slumber of a Hercules?  
'Twould please me well to see my victor—well.  
Arise, thou victor, whom my sire begot,  
A later wonder, leaving heaven behind;  
At whose begetting, longer than at mine,  
The night stood waiting.

[*He recognizes his dead wife and children.*]

Oh, what sight is this?  
My sons lie murdered, weltering in their blood; 1160  
My wife is slain. What Lycus rules the land?  
Who could have dared to do such things in Thebes,  
And Hercules returned? Whoever dwells  
Along Ismenus' stream, in Attic plains,  
Or in the land Dardanian Pelops rules, 1165  
By two seas lapped, come to my aid, and tell  
The name of him who has this murder done.  
If not, my wrath will turn against you all;  
For he's my foe who shows me not my foe

FOR HE'S MY Foe WHO SHOWS ME NOT MY Foe.  
 Why dost thou hide, Alcides' vanquisher?  
 I care not whether thou dost vengeance seek  
 For those wild horses of the Thracian king,  
 Or Geryon's flock, or Libya's vanquished lords; 1170  
 I do not shun the fight; see, here I stand,  
 Defenseless, even though with my own arms  
 Thou com'st against me, armorless. But why  
 Do Theseus and my father shun my glance?  
 Why do they turn away? Postpone your tears,  
 And tell me who has given my loved ones all 1175  
 To death. What, father, art thou silent still?  
 Then do thou tell me, Theseus, faithful friend.  
 Each turns away in silence, and his face,  
 As if in shame, conceals; while down his cheeks  
 The tears flow stealthily. In so great ills  
 What cause for shame can be? Is this the work  
 Of him who ruthlessly at Argos rules? 1180  
 Has dying Lycus' hostile soldiery  
 With such disaster overwhelmed our house?  
 O father, by the praises of my deeds,  
 By thine own name which ever was to me  
 Propitious, tell, I pray thee, who it is  
 Who hath o'erthrown my house. Whose prey am I? 1185

*Amphitr.:* Let ills like these in silence pass away.

*Hercules:* And I be unavenged?

*Amphitryon:* But vengeance hurts.

*Hercules:* Who has, inactive, ever borne such wrongs?

*Amphitr.:* He who feared greater wrongs.

*Hercules:* Than these my wrongs  
 Can any greater, heavier be feared?

*Amphitr.:* The part thou knowest of thy woes is least.

*Hercules:* Have pity. See, I stretch my suppliant hands.  
 But what is this? He will not touch my hands.  
 In these must be the sin

1190

IN THESE MUST BE THE SIN.

But whence this blood?  
Why is that shaft, once dipped in Hydra's gall,  
Now wet with infant gore? They are my own, 1195  
These arrows that I see; the guilty hand  
I need no longer seek; for who but me  
Could bend that mighty bow, or whose right hand  
Could draw the string that scarcely yields to me?

[*To Amphitryon and Theseus.*]

To you I turn again. O father, tell:  
Is this my deed?

[*Both men hesitate in silence.*] 1200

They hesitate—'tis mine.

*Amphitr.*: Thine is the grief; thy stepdame's is the crime.  
From fault of thine this sad mischance is free.

*Hercules*: Now hurl thy wrathful bolts from all the heavens,  
O sire, who hast forgotten me, thy son;  
Avenge at least, though with a tardy hand,  
Thy grandsons. Let the star-set heavens resound,  
And darting lightnings leap from pole to pole. 1205  
Let me be bound upon the Caspian rocks,  
And let the birds of prey devour my flesh.  
Why lacks Prometheus' cliff a prisoner?  
Prepare for me the bare, steep mountain side  
Of Caucasus, that, on his towering peak,  
The birds and beasts of prey may feed on me.  
Or let the blue Symplegades, which hedge 1210  
The Scythian deep, stretch out my fettered hands  
This way and that; and, when with rhythmic change  
The rocks together clash, which fling to heaven  
The sea that lies between the rushing cliffs,  
May I lie there, the mountains' restless check. 1215  
Or why not heap a mighty pyre of wood,  
And burn my body stained with impious blood?  
Thus, thus it must be done; so Hercules  
Shall to the lower world return again.

*Amphitr.*: Not yet has madness ceased to vex his heart.

But now his wrath has changed, and, fury's sign,  
He rages 'gainst himself. 1220

*Hercules:* Ye dire abodes  
Of fiends, ye prison-house of damnéd shades,  
Ye regions set apart for guilty throngs,  
If any place of exile lie beyond  
Deep Erebus, unknown to Cerberus  
And me, there hide ye me. I'll go and dwell 1225  
Upon the farthest bound of Tartarus.  
O heart, too hard! Who worthily will weep  
For you, my children, scattered through my house?  
This face, woe-hardened, knows not how to weep.  
Bring me my sword, and give me here my darts,  
My mighty club. 1230

*[He addresses the four corpses in order.]*

For thee, poor murdered boy,  
I'll break my shafts; for thee my mighty bow  
Shall be asunder riven; to thy shades  
My heavy club shall burn; and on thy pyre  
My quiver, full of venoméd darts, shall lie.  
My arms shall pay their penalty for sin. 1235  
You, too, my guilty hands, with these shall burn,  
Too prompt to work a cruel stepdame's will.

*Theseus:* Who ever called an act of madness crime?

*Hercules:* Unbridled madness often ends in crime.

*Amphitr.:* Now is there need of Hercules to bear  
This greatest weight of woe.

*Hercules:* Not yet is shame 1240  
So utterly extinguished in my heart,  
That I can bear to see all people flee  
My impious presence. Arms, my Theseus, arms!  
I pray you give them quickly back to me.  
If I am sane, trust weapons to my hands;  
If madness still remains, O father, fly;  
For I shall quickly find the road to death. 1245

*Amphitr.:* By holy ties of birth, and by the name  
 That makes us one, be it of father true,  
 Or foster-father; by these hoary locks  
 Which pious souls revere: I pray thee spare  
 My lonely age and my enfeebled years.  
 Spare thou thyself to me, the only prop  
 Of this my falling house, the only light  
 That's left to cheer my woeful heart. No fruit  
 Of all thy toils have I as yet enjoyed;  
 But ever either stormy seas I've feared,  
 Or monsters. Every savage king who raves  
 In all the world, for impious altars famed,  
 Is cause of dread to me. Thy father longs  
 For joy of thee, to feel and see thee near.

1250

1255

*Hercules:* Why I should longer keep my soul in life,  
 And linger on the earth, there is no cause;  
 For I have lost my all: my balanced mind,  
 My arms, my reputation, children, wife,  
 The glory of my strength—my madness too.  
 There is no remedy for tainted souls;  
 But death alone can cure me of my sin.

1260

*Amphitr.:* And wilt thou slay thy father?

*Hercules:* Lest I do,  
 I'll kill myself.

*Amphitryon:* Before thy father's face?

*Hercules:* Such impious sights I've taught him to behold.

*Amphitr.:* Nay, rather think upon thy worthy deeds,  
 And grant thyself remission of one sin.

1265

*Hercules:* Shall he give absolution to himself,  
 Who granted none to other men? My deeds  
 Which have deserved the praise of men, I did  
 Because another bade. This is my own.  
 Then help me, father, whether piety  
 Or my sad fortune move thee to my aid,

1270

Or the glory of my manhood, now profaned.  
Give me my arms again, that my right hand  
May vanquish fate.

1270

*Theseus:* Thy father's prayers, indeed,  
Are strong enough; but by my pleadings, too,  
Be moved. Rise up, and meet adversity  
With thine accustomed force. Thy strength of mind  
Recall, which no misfortune ever yet  
Has daunted. Now must thou with all thy might  
Contend, and curb the wrath of Hercules.

1275

*Hercules:* If yet I live, I have committed wrong;  
But if I die, then have I suffered it.  
I haste to purge the earth of such as I.  
Now long enough has there been hovering  
Before my eyes that monstrous shape of sin,  
So impious, savage, merciless, and wild.  
Then come, my hand, attempt this mighty task,  
Far greater than the last. Dost hesitate  
Through cowardice? Or art thou brave alone  
'Gainst boys and trembling mothers?

1280

Give my arms,  
Or else I shall from Thracian Pindus strip  
The woods, the groves of Bacchus, and shall burn  
Cithaeron's ridgy heights along with me.  
The homes of Thebes together with their lords,  
The temples with their gods, will I o'erthrow,  
And 'neath a ruined city will I lie.  
And if this weight of walls should prove too light  
For these strong shoulders, and the seven gates  
Be not enough to crush me to the earth,  
The mighty mass of earth which separates  
The upper from the nether skies I'll take,  
And hurl its crushing weight upon my head.

1285

1290

*Amphitr.:* Lo, I return thine arms.

1295

*Hercules:* Now are thy words  
More worthy of the sire of Hercules.

See, by this arrow pierced, my child was slain.

*Amphitr.*: 'Tis true, but Juno shot it by thy hand.

*Hercules*: Then I myself shall use it now.

*Amphitryon*: Behold,  
How throbs his heart within his anxious breast.

*Hercules*: The shaft is ready.

1300

*Amphitryon*: Ah now wilt thou sin,  
Of thine own will and with full consciousness.  
Have then thy will; we make no further prayer.  
For now my grief has gained a safe retreat.  
Thou only canst preserve my son to me;  
Thou canst not take him from me. For my fear  
I've sounded to the depths and feel no more.  
Thou canst no longer give me any pain,  
Though happy thou canst make me even yet.  
Decide then as thou wilt decide: but know  
That here thy cause and reputation stand  
In doubtful balance. Either thou dost live,  
Or thou dost kill thy sire. This fleeting soul,  
Now worn with age and shattered by its grief,  
Is trembling on my lips in act to go.  
Art thou so slow to grant thy father life?  
I can no longer brook delay, nor wait  
To thrust the fatal sword into my breast.  
And this shall be a sane Alcides' crime.

1305

1310

*Hercules*: Now stay, my father, stay; withhold thy hand.  
Yield thee, my manhood; do a father's will.  
Add this task also to thy former toils—  
And live! Lift up my father's fainting form,  
O Theseus, friend; for these my guilty hands  
That pious duty shun.

1315

*Amphitryon*: But I with joy  
Will clasp this hand, with its support I'll walk,  
And to my aching heart I'll clasp it close,  
And cherish all my woes.

1320



AND VANISH all my woes.

*Hercules:* Where shall I flee?

Where hide myself? What land shall bury me  
From human sight? What Tanaïs or Nile,  
What Tigris, with the waves of Persia mad,  
What warlike Rhine, or Tagus, flowing full  
And turgid with Iberia's golden sands, 1325

Can ever cleanse this right hand of its stains?  
Though chill Maeotis pour its icy floods  
Upon me; though the boundless sea should pour  
Its waters o'er my hands; still would they be  
Deep dyed with crime. Where wilt thou take thyself,  
Thou murderer? Wilt flee to east, or west?  
Known everywhere, I have no place of flight. 1330

The whole world shrinks from sight of me; the stars  
Avert their courses from me, and the sun  
Saw even Cerberus with milder face.  
O Theseus, faithful friend, seek out a place,  
Far off from here, where I may hide myself. 1335

Since thou a lenient judge of others' sins  
Hast ever been, grant mercy now to me.  
Restore me to the infernal shades, I beg,  
And load me with the chains thou once didst wear.  
That place will hide me—but it knows me too! 1340

*Theseus:* My land awaits thy coming; there will<sup>[18]</sup> Mars  
Wash clean thy hands, and give thee back thy arms.  
That land, O Hercules, now calls to thee,  
Which even gods from sin is wont to free.

**FOOTNOTES:**

[18] Reading, *restituēt*.

**HIPPOLYTUS OR PHAEDRA**

**HIPPOLYTUS OR PHAEDRA**

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

HIPPOLYTUS	Son of Theseus and Antiope, an Amazon.
<i>Phaedra</i>	Wife of Theseus and stepmother of Hippolytus.
<i>Theseus</i>	King of Athens.
<i>Nurse</i>	Of Phaedra.
<i>Messenger.</i>	
<i>Slaves and attendants.</i>	
<i>Chorus</i>	Of Athenian citizens.

THE SCENE is laid throughout in the court in front of the royal palace at Athens; and the action is confined to the space of one day.

*Theseus had wed Antiope, the Amazon, and of their union had been born Hippolytus. This youth grew up to love the chase, austere and beautiful, shunning the haunts of men, and scorning the love of women. Theseus had meanwhile slain Antiope, and married Phaedra, Cretan Minos' child.*

*And now, for four years past, the king has not been seen upon the earth, for, following the mad adventure of his bosom friend, Pirithoüs, he has descended into Tartara, and thence, men think, he never will return.*

*Deserted by her lord, the hapless Phaedra has conceived a hopeless passion for Hippolytus; for Venus, mindful of that ancient shame, which Phaedra's ancestor, Apollo, had exposed, has sent this madness on her, even as Pasiphaë, her mother, had been cursed with a most mad and fatal malady.*

## ACT I

*Hippolytus [in hunting costume, assigning duties and places to his servants and companions of the hunt]:* Up comrades, and the shadowy groves  
With nets encircle; swiftly range  
The heights of our Cecropian hills;  
Scour well those coverts on the slopes  
Of Parnes, or in Thria's vale  
Whose chattering streamlet roars along 5  
In rapid course; go climb the hills  
Whose peaks are ever white with snows  
Of Scythia. Let others go  
Where woods with lofty alders stand  
In dense array; where pastures lie 10  
Whose springing grass is waked to life  
By Zephyr's breath, dew laden. Go,  
Where calm Ilissus flows along  
The level fields, a sluggish stream,  
Whose winding course the barren sands 15

With niggard water laps. Go ye  
Along the leftward-leading way,  
Where Marathon her forest glades  
Reveals, where nightly with their young  
The suckling mothers feed. Do you, 20  
Where, softened by the warming winds  
From southern lands, Acharnae melts  
His snows, repair; let others seek  
Hymettus' rocky slopes, far famed  
For honey; others still the glades  
Of small Aphidnae. All too long  
That region has unharried lain 25  
Where Sunium with its jutting shore  
Thrusts out the curving sea.  
If any feels the forest's lure,  
Him Phlye calls, where dwells the boar  
Now scarred and known by many a wound,  
The farmers' fear. 30  
Now free the dogs from straining leash,  
That hunt in silence; but the hounds  
Of keen Molossian breed hold fast  
In check; let the savage Cretans strain  
With chaffing necks upon their chains;  
The Spartans hold in strongest curb, 35  
With caution bind, for bold their breed,  
And eager for the prey.  
The time will come when their baying loud  
Through the hollow rocks shall echo; now  
Let them snuff the air with nostrils keen,  
And with lowered muzzles seek the tracks 40  
Of beasts, while yet the dawn is dim,  
And while the dewy earth still holds  
The marks of treading feet. Let some  
On burdened necks the wide nets bear,  
And others haste to bring the snares 45  
Of smooth-wrought cords. Let feathers, dyed  
With crimson, hedge the timid deer

With terrors vain. Do thou use darts  
Of Crete, and thou the heavy spear  
By both hands wielded. Thou shalt sit  
In hiding and with clamors loud 50  
Drive out the frightened beasts; and thou,  
When all is done, with curving blade  
Shalt break the victims.  
And thou, be with thy worshiper,  
O goddess of the chase, whose rule 55  
Extends o'er all the secret haunts  
Of earth; whose darts unerring pierce  
The flying prey; whose thirst is quenched  
By cool Araxes' distant stream,  
Or for whose sport the Ister spreads  
His frozen waves. Thy hand pursues 60  
Gaetulian lions, Cretan deer;  
And now the swiftly fleeing does  
With lighter stroke are pierced. To thee  
The spotted tigers yield, to thee  
The bisons, shaggy backed, and the wild,  
Broad-hornéd oxen of the woods. 65  
Whatever feeds upon the plains  
In desert pasture lands; whate'er  
The needy Garamantian knows,  
Whate'er the Arab rich in woods,  
Or wild Sarmatian, wandering free  
Across the lonely wilderness; 70  
Whate'er the rugged Pyrenees  
Or deep Hyrcanian glades conceal:  
All fear thy bow, thou huntress queen.  
If any worshiper of thine  
Takes to the hunt thy favoring will,  
His nets hold fast the struggling prey; 75  
No birds break from his snares; for him  
The groaning wagons homeward come  
With booty rich; the hounds come back  
With muzzles deeply dyed in blood,  
And all the rustic throng returns

In shouting triumph home.  
But lo, the goddess hears. The hounds  
Are baying loud and clear to announce  
The start. I'm summoned to the woods.  
Here, here I'll hasten where the road  
Most quickly leads away.

80

[*Exit.*]

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*Phaedra:* O mighty Crete, thou mistress of the deep,  
Whose ships uncounted sail through every sea 85  
Wherever Nereus shows their beaks the way,  
E'en to Assyria's shores; why dost thou here  
Compel me thus in woe and tears to live,  
A hostage given to the hated foe,  
And to a foeman wed? Behold my lord, 90  
Deserting me, his bride, is far away,  
And keeps his wonted faith. Through shadows deep  
Of that dark pool which may not be recrossed,  
This doughty follower of a madcap prince  
Has gone, that from the very throne of Dis 95  
He might seduce and bear away his queen.  
With such mad folly linked he went away,  
Restrained by neither fear nor shame. And so,  
In deepest Acheron, illicit love  
This father of Hippolytus desires.  
But other, greater griefs than this oppress  
My sorrowing soul; no quiet rest by night,  
No slumber deep comes to dissolve my cares; 100  
But woe is fed and grows within my heart,  
And there burns hot as Aetna's raging fires.  
My loom stands empty and my listless hands  
Drop idly from their tasks. No more I care  
To make my votive offerings to the gods, 105  
Nor, with the Athenian women mingled, dance  
Around their sacred shrines, and conscious brands

Toss high in secret rites. I have no heart  
With chaste and pious prayers to worship her,  
That mighty goddess who was set to guard  
This Attic land. My only joy is found  
In swift pursuit of fleeing beasts of prey, 110  
My soft hands brandishing the heavy spear.  
But what will come of this? Why do I love  
The forest glades so madly? Ah, I feel  
The fatal malady my mother felt;  
For both have learned within the forest depths  
To sin in love. O mother, now my heart 115  
Doth ache for thee; for, swept away by sin  
Unspeakable, thou boldly didst conceive  
A shameful passion for the savage lord  
Of the wild herd. Untamable was he,  
That stern and lustful leader of the flock;  
And yet he loved. But in my passion's need  
What god can help me? Where the Daedalus 120  
Who can my love relieve? Should he return  
Who shut our monster in the labyrinth,  
He could not by his well-known Attic skill  
Avail to save me from this dire mischance.  
For Venus, filled with deadly hate of us,  
The stock of Phoebus, seeks through me to avenge  
The chains which fettered her in shame to Mars, 125  
And all our house with direful love she fills.  
No princess of our race has ever loved  
In modest wise, but always monstrously.

*Nurse:* O wife of Theseus, glorious child of Jove,  
Drive from thy modest breast these shameful thoughts.  
Put out these flames; and give thyself no hope 130  
Of such dire love as this. Whoe'er at first  
Has set himself to fight and conquer love,  
A safe and easy victory finds. But he,  
Who dallies with its evil sweets, too late  
Refuses to endure the galling yoke  
Which he himself has placed upon his neck. 135

I know full well how scornful of the truth,  
How harsh the swollen pride of princesses,  
How it refuses to be bent aright.  
Whatever outcome chance allots, I'll bear;  
For dawning freedom makes the aged brave.  
To will to live uprightly nor to fall  
From virtue's ways is best; but next to this 140  
Is sense of shame, the knowing when to stop  
A sinful course. What, pray, will be the end  
For thee, poor mistress? Why dost heap thy house  
With further infamy? Wouldst thou outsin  
Thy mother? For thy impious love is worse  
Than her unnatural and monstrous love.  
The first you would impute to character,  
The last to fate. If, since thy husband sees 145  
No more the realms of earth, thou dost believe  
That this thy sin is safe and free from fear,  
Thou art in error. Grant that he is held  
Imprisoned fast in Lethe's lowest depths,  
And must forever feel the bonds of Styx:  
Would he, thy sire, who by his spreading sway  
Encroaches on the sea, who gives their laws 150  
Unto a hundred peoples, e'er permit  
So great a crime as this to lie unknown?  
Keen is a parent's watchful care. And yet,  
Suppose that by our craft and guile we hide  
This crime from him: what of thy mother's sire,  
Who floods the earth with his illumining rays? 155  
And what of him who makes the earth to quake,  
The bolts of Aetna flashing in his hand,  
The father of the gods? And dost thou think  
That it can be that thou couldst hide thy sin  
From these thy grandsires, all-beholding ones?  
But even should the favor of the gods,  
Complaisant, hide thy shame from all the world; 160  
Though to thy lust alone should fall that grace  
Denied to other crimes: still must thou fear.  
What of that ever-present punishment,



The terror of the soul that knows its guilt,  
Is stained with crime and fearful of itself?  
Some women have with safety sinned, but none  
With peace of soul. Then quench these flames, I pray,  
Of impious love, and shun this monstrous crime 165  
Which no barbaric land has ever done,  
No Getan wandering on his lonely plains,  
No savage Taurian, no Scythian.  
Expel from thy chaste soul this hideous thing,  
And, mindful of thy mother's sin, avoid 170  
Such monstrous unions. Wouldst in marriage give  
Thyself to son and father? Wouldst thou take  
In thine incestuous womb a progeny  
So basely mixed? Then go the length of sin:  
O'erthrow all nature with thy shameful fires.  
Why should the monsters cease? Why empty stands  
Thy brother's labyrinth? Shall all the world 175  
Be shocked with prodigies, shall nature's laws  
Be scorned, whene'er a Cretan woman loves?

*Phaedra:* I know that what thou say'st is true, dear nurse;  
But raging passion forces me to take  
The path of sin. Full consciously my soul  
Goes headlong on its downward way, oft-times  
With backward glance, sane counsel seeking still,  
Without avail. So, when the mariner 180  
Would sail his ship against the boisterous waves,  
His toil is all in vain, and, vanquished quite,  
The ship drifts onward with the hurrying tide.  
For what can reason do when passion rules,  
When love, almighty, dominates the soul?  
The wingéd god is lord through all the earth, 185  
And with his flames unquenchable the heart  
Of Jove himself is burned. The god of war  
Has felt his fire; and Vulcan too, that god  
Who forges Jove's three-forkéd thunderbolts;  
Yea, he, who in the hold of Aetna huge 190  
Is lord of ever-blazing furnaces,

By this small spark is burned. Apollo, too,  
Who sends his arrows with unerring aim,  
Was pierced by Cupid's still more certain darts.  
For equally in heaven and earth the god  
Is powerful.

*Nurse:*           The god! 'Tis vicious lust  
That hath his godhead framed; and, that its ends           195  
More fully may be gained, it has assigned  
To its unbridled love the specious name,  
Divinity! 'Tis Venus' son, in sooth,  
Sent wandering through all the earth! He flies  
Through empty air and in his boyish hands  
His deadly weapon bears! Though least of gods,           200  
He holds the widest sway! Such vain conceits  
The love-mad soul adopts, love's goddess feigns,  
And Cupid's bow. Whoe'er too much enjoys  
The smiles of fortune and in ease is lapped,  
Is ever seeking unaccustomed joys.                       205  
Then that dire comrade of a high estate,  
Inordinate desire, comes in. The feast  
Of yesterday no longer pleases; now  
A home of sane and simple living, food<sup>[19]</sup>  
Of humble sort, are odious. Oh, why  
Does this destructive pest so rarely come  
To lowly homes, but chooses rather homes  
Of luxury? And why does modest love                     210  
Beneath the humble roof abide, and bless  
With wholesome intercourse the common throng?  
Why do the poor restrain their appetites,  
Whereas the rich, on empire propped, desire  
More than is right. Who wields too much of power  
Desires to gain what is beyond his power.               215  
What is befitting to thy high estate  
Thou knowest well. Then fitting reverence show  
To thy returning husband's sovereignty.

*Phaedra:* The sovereignty of love is over me,  
The highest rule of all. My lord's return

THE HIGHEST TALE OF ALL. MY LORD'S RETURN,  
I fear it not; for never more has he,  
Who once within the silent depths of night  
Has plunged, beheld again the light of day. 220

*Nurse:* Trust not the power of Dis; for though his realm  
He closely bar, and though the Stygian dog  
Keep watch and ward upon the baleful doors,  
Theseus can always walk forbidden ways.

*Phaedra:* Perchance he'll give indulgence to my love. 225

*Nurse:* But he was harsh e'en to a modest wife;  
His heavy hand Antiope has known.  
But grant that thou canst bend thy angry lord:  
Canst bend as well the stubborn soul of him,  
Hippolytus, who hates the very name  
Of womankind? Inexorable his resolve 230  
To spend his life unwedded. He so shuns  
The sacred rites of marriage, thou wouldst know  
That he of Amazonian stock was born.

*Phaedra:* Though on the tops of snowy hills he hide,  
Or swiftly course along the ragged cliffs,  
Through forests deep, o'er mountains, 'tis my will  
To follow him. 235

*Nurse:* And will he turn again,  
And yield himself unto thy sweet caress?  
Or will he lay aside his modesty  
At thy vile love's behest? Will he give o'er  
His hate of womankind for thee alone,  
On whose account, perchance, he hates them all?

*Phaedra:* Can he not be by any prayers o'ercome?

*Nurse:* He's wild. 240

*Phaedra:* Yes, but the beasts are tamed by love.

*Nurse:* He'll flee.

*Phaedra:* Through Ocean's self I'll follow him.

*Nurse:* Thy sire remember.

*Phaedra:* And my mother too.

*Nurse:* Women he hates.

*Phaedra:* Then I'll no rival fear.

*Nurse:* Thy husband comes.

*Phaedra:* With him Pirithoüs!

*Nurse:* Thy sire!

*Phaedra:* To Ariadne he was kind.

245

*Nurse:* O child, by these white locks of age, I pray,  
This care-filled heart, these breasts that suckled thee,  
Put off this rage; to thine own rescue come.  
The greater part of life is will to live.

*Phaedra:* Shame has not wholly fled my noble soul.  
I yield: let love, which will not be controlled,  
Be conquered. Nor shalt thou, fair fame, be stained.  
This way alone is left, sole hope of woe:  
Theseus I'll follow, and by death shun sin.

250

*Nurse:* Oh, check, my child, this wild, impetuous thought;  
Be calm. For now I think thee worthy life,  
Because thou hast condemned thyself to death.

255

*Phaedra:* I am resolved to die, and only seek  
The mode of death. Shall I my spirit free  
By twisted rope, or fall upon the sword,  
Or shall I leap from yonder citadel?

260

*Nurse:* Shall my old age permit thee thus to die  
Self-slain? Thy deadly, raging purpose stay.  
No one may easily come back to life.

*Phaedra:* No argument can stay the will of one  
Who has resolved to die, and ought to die.  
Quick, let me arm myself in honor's cause.

265

*Nurse:* Sole comfort of my weary age, my child,  
If such unruly passion sways thy heart

if such untimely passion sways thy heart,  
Away with reputation! 'Tis a thing  
Which rarely with reality agrees;  
It smiles upon the ill-deserving man,  
And from the good withholds his meed of praise. 270  
Let us make trial of that stubborn soul.  
Mine be the task to approach the savage youth,  
And bend his will relentless to our own.

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*Chorus:* Thou goddess, child of the foaming sea,  
Thou mother of love, how fierce are the flames, 275  
And how sharp are the darts of thy petulant boy;  
How deadly of aim his bow.  
Deep to the heart the poison sinks  
When the veins are imbued with his hidden flame; 280  
No gaping wound upon the breast  
Does his arrow leave; but far within  
It burns with consuming fire.  
No peace or rest does he give; world wide  
Are his flying weapons sown abroad:  
The shores that see the rising sun, 285  
And the land that lies at the goal of the west;  
The south where raging Cancer glows,  
And the land of the cold Arcadian Bear  
With its ever-wandering tribes—all know  
And have felt the fires of love. 290  
The hot blood of youth he rouses to madness,  
The smouldering embers of age he rekindles,  
And even the innocent breasts of maids  
Are stirred by passion unknown.  
He bids the immortals desert the skies  
And dwell on the earth in forms assumed. 295  
For love, Apollo kept the herds  
Of Thessaly's king, and, his lyre unused,  
He called to his bulls on the gentle pipe.  
How oft has Jove himself put on

The lower forms of life, who rules  
The sky and the clouds. Now a bird he seems, 300  
With white wings hovering, with voice  
More sweet than the song of the dying swan;  
Now with lowering front, as a wanton bull,  
He offers his back to the sport of maids;  
And soon through his brother's waves he floats, 305  
With his hoofs like sturdy oars, and his breast  
Stoutly opposing the waves, in fear  
For the captured maid he bears. For love,  
The shining goddess of the night  
Her dim skies left, and her glittering car 310  
To her brother allotted to guide. Untrained  
In managing the dusky steeds,  
Within a shorter circuit now  
He learns to direct his course. Meanwhile  
The nights no more their accustomed space  
Retained, and the dawn came slowly back, 315  
Since 'neath a heavier burden now  
The axle trembled. Love compelled  
Alcmena's son to lay aside  
His quiver and the threat'ning spoil  
Of that great lion's skin he bore,  
And have his fingers set with gems,  
His shaggy locks in order dressed. 320  
His limbs were wrapped in cloth of gold,  
His feet with yellow sandals bound;  
And with that hand which bore but now  
The mighty club, he wound the thread  
Which from his mistress' spindle fell.  
The sight all Persia saw, and they 325  
Who dwell in Lydia's fertile realm—  
The savage lion's skin laid by,  
And on those shoulders, once the prop  
For heaven's vast dome, a gauzy cloak  
Of Tyrian manufacture spread.  
Accursed is love, its victims know, 330  
And all too strong. In every land,

In the all-encircling briny deep,  
In the airy heavens where the bright stars course,  
There pitiless love holds sway.  
The sea-green band of the Nereids  
Have felt his darts in their deepest waves, 335  
And the waters of ocean cannot quench  
Their flames. The birds know the passion of love,  
And mighty bulls, with its fire inflamed,  
Wage furious battle, while the herd  
Look on in wonder. Even stags, 340  
Though timorous of heart, will fight  
If for their mates they fear, while loud  
Resound the snortings of their wrath.  
When with love the striped tigers burn,  
The swarthy Indian cowers in fear.  
For love the boar whets his deadly tusks 345  
And his huge mouth is white with foam.  
The African lions toss their manes  
When love inflames their hearts, and the woods  
Resound with their savage roars.  
The monsters of the raging deep, 350  
And those great beasts, the elephants,  
Feel the sway of love; since nature's power  
Claims everything, and nothing spares.  
Hate perishes when love commands,  
And ancient feuds yield to his touch.  
Why need I more his sway approve, 355  
When even stepdames yield to love?

#### FOOTNOTES:

[19] Reading, *cibus*.

#### ACT II

[*Enter Nurse from the palace.*]

*Chorus:* Speak, nurse, the news thou bring'st. How fares the queen?  
Do her fierce fires of love know any end?

*Nurse:* I have no hope that such a malady  
Can be relieved; her maddened passion's flames 360  
Will endless burn. A hidden, silent fire  
Consumes her, and her raging love, though shut  
Within her heart, is by her face betrayed.  
Her eyes dart fire; anon, her sunken gaze  
Avoids the light of day. Her restless soul  
Can find no pleasure long in anything. 365  
Her aimless love allows her limbs no rest.  
Now, as with dying, tottering steps, she goes,  
And scarce can hold her nodding head erect;  
And now lies down to sleep. But, sleepless quite,  
She spends the night in tears. Now does she bid  
Me lift her up, and straight to lay her down;  
To loose her locks, and bind them up again. 370  
In restless mood she constantly demands  
Fresh robes. She has no care for food or health.  
With failing strength she walks, with aimless feet.  
Her old-time strength is gone; no longer shines 375  
The ruddy glow of health upon her face.  
Care feeds upon her limbs; her trembling steps  
Betray her weakness, and the tender grace  
Of her once blooming beauty is no more.  
Her eyes, which once with Phoebus' brilliance shone,  
No longer gleam with their ancestral fires.  
Her tears flow ever, and her cheeks are wet 380  
With constant rain; as when, on Taurus' top,  
The snows are melted by a warming shower.  
But look, the palace doors are opening,  
And she, reclining on her couch of gold,  
And sick of soul, refuses one by one 385  
The customary garments of her state.

*Phaedra:* Remove, ye slaves, those bright and gold-wrought robes;  
Away with Tyrian purple, and the webs  
Of silk whose threads the far-off eastern tribes



From leaves of trees collect. Gird high my robes;  
I'll wear no necklace, nor shall snowy pearls, 390  
The gift of Indian seas, weigh down my ears.  
No nard from far Assyria shall scent  
My locks; thus loosely tossing let them fall  
Around my neck and shoulders; let them stream  
Upon the wind, by my swift running stirred.  
Upon my left I'll wear a quiver girt, 395  
And in my right hand will I brandish free  
A hunting-spear of Thessaly; for thus  
The mother of Hippolytus was clad.  
So did she lead her hosts from the frozen shores  
Of Pontus, when to Attica she came,  
From distant Tanaïs or Maeotis' banks, 400  
Her comely locks down flowing from a knot,  
Her side protected by a crescent shield.  
Like her would I betake me to the woods.

*Chorus:* Cease thy laments, for grief will not avail  
The wretched. Rather seek to appease the will  
Of that wild virgin goddess of the woods. 405

*Nurse* [*to Diana*]: O queen of forests, thou who dwell'st alone  
On mountain tops, and thou who only art  
Within their desert haunts adored, convert,  
We pray, to better issue these sad fears.  
O mighty goddess of the woods and groves,  
Bright star of heaven, thou glory of the night,  
Whose torch, alternate with the sun, illumes 410  
The sky, thou three-formed Hecate—Oh, smile,  
We pray, on these our hopes; the unbending soul  
Of stern Hippolytus subdue for us.  
Teach him to love; our passion's mutual flame  
May he endure. May he give ready ear  
To our request. His hard and stubborn heart  
Do thou make soft to us. Enthral his mind. 415  
Though stern of soul, averse to love, and fierce,  
May he yet yield himself to Venus' laws.  
Read all the powers to this. So may thy face

Send all thy powers to this. So may thy face  
Be ever clear, and through the rifted clouds  
Mayst thou sail on with crescent shining bright;  
So, when thou driv'st thy chariot through the sky,  
May no Thessalian mummeries prevail 420  
To draw thee from thy nightly journey down;  
And may no shepherd boast himself of thee.  
Lo, thou art here in answer to our prayer;

[Hippolytus is seen approaching.]

I see Hippolytus himself, alone,  
Approaching to perform the yearly rites  
To Dian due.

[To herself.] 425

Why dost thou hesitate?  
Both time and place are given by fortune's lot.  
Use all thy arts. Why do I quake with fear?  
It is no easy task to do the deed  
Enjoined on me. Yet she, who serves a queen,  
Must banish from her heart all thought of right;  
For sense of shame ill serves a royal will.

430

[Enter Hippolytus.]

*Hippolytus:* Why dost thou hither turn thine aged feet,  
O faithful nurse? Why is thy face so sad,  
Thy brow so troubled? Truly is my sire  
In safety, Phaedra safe, and their two sons.

*Nurse:* Thou need'st not fear for them; the kingdom stands  
In prosperous estate, and all thy house 435  
Rejoices in the blessings of the gods.  
But Oh, do thou with greater kindness look  
Upon thy fortune. For my heart is vexed  
And anxious for thy sake; for thou thyself  
With grievous sufferings dost bruise thy soul.  
If fate compels it, one may be forgiven  
For wretchedness; but if, of his own will, 440  
A man prefers to live in misery,

Brings tortures on himself, then he deserves  
To lose those gifts he knows not how to use.  
Be mindful of thy youth; relax thy mind.  
Lift high the blazing torch on festal nights;  
Let Bacchus free thee from thy weighty cares; 445  
Enjoy this time which speeds so swiftly by.  
Now is the time when love comes easily,  
And smiles on youth. Come, let thy soul rejoice.  
Why dost thou lie upon a lonely couch?  
Dissolve in pleasures that grim mood of thine,  
And snatch the passing joys; <sup>[20]</sup> let loose the reins. 450  
Forbid that these, the best days of thy life,  
Should vanish unenjoyed. Its proper hue  
Has God allotted to each time of life,  
And leads from step to step the age of man.  
So joy becomes the young, a face severe  
The agéd. Why dost thou restrain thyself,  
And strangle at their birth the joys of life?  
That crop rewards the farmer's labor most 455  
Which in the young and tender sprouting-time  
Runs riot in the fields. With lofty top  
That tree will overspread the neighboring grove,  
Which no begrudging hand cuts back or prunes.  
So do our inborn powers a richer fruit  
Of praise and glory bear, if liberty,  
Unchecked and boundless, feed the noble soul. 460  
Thou, harsh, uncouth, and ignorant of life,  
Dost spend thy youth to joy and love unknown.  
Think'st thou that this is man's allotted task,  
To suffer hardships, curb the rushing steeds,  
And fight like savage beasts in bloody war? 465  
When he beheld the boundless greed of death,  
The mighty father of the world ordained  
A means by which the race might be renewed.  
Suppose the power of Venus over men  
Should cease, who doth supply and still renew 470  
The stream of life, then would this lovely world  
Become a foul unsightly thing indeed.

Become a fool, and rightly thing indeed.

The sea would bear no fish within its waves,  
The woods no beasts of prey, the air no birds;  
But through its empty space the winds alone  
Would rove. How various the forms of death  
That seize and feed upon our mortal race:

475

The wrecking sea, the sword, and treachery!  
But say that these are lacking: still we fall  
Of our own gravity to gloomy Styx.

Suppose our youth should choose a mateless life,  
And live in childless state: then all this world  
Of teeming life which thou dost see, would live  
This generation only, and would fall

480

In ruins on itself. Then spend thy life  
As nature doth direct; frequent the town,  
And live in friendly union with thy kind.

*Hippolytus:* There is no life so free, so innocent,  
Which better cherishes the ancient rites,  
Than that which spurns the crowded ways of men  
And seeks the silent places of the woods.

485

His soul no maddening greed of gain inflames  
Who on the lofty levels of the hills  
His blameless pleasures finds. No fickle breath  
Of passing favor frets him here, no sting  
Of base ingratitude, no poisonous hate.

He fears no kingdom's laws; nor, in the quest  
Of power, does he pursue the phantom shapes  
Of fame and wealth. From hope and fear alike  
Is he removed. No black and biting spite  
With base, malicious tooth preys on him here.  
He never hears of those base, shameful things  
That spawn amid the city's teeming throngs.

490

It is not his with guilty heart to quake  
At every sound; he need not hide his thoughts  
With guileful words; in pride of sinful wealth  
He seeks to own no lordly palace propped  
Upon a thousand pillars, with its beams  
In flaunting arrogance incased with gold.

495

No streams of blood his pious altars drench;  
No hecatombs of snowy bullocks stand  
Foredoomed to death, their foreheads sprinkled o'er 500  
With sacred meal; but in the spacious fields,  
Beneath the sky, in fearless innocence,  
He wanders lord of all. His only guile,  
To set the cunning snare for beasts of pray;  
And, when o'erspent with labors of the chase,  
He soothes his body in the shining stream  
Of cool Ilissus. Now swift Alpheus' banks 505  
He skirts, and now the lofty forest's deep,  
Dense places treads, where Lerna, clear and cool,  
Pours forth her glimmering streams.  
Here twittering birds make all the woods resound,  
And through the branches of the ancient beech  
The leaves are all a-flutter in the breeze. 510  
How sweet upon some vagrant river's bank,  
Or on the verdant turf, to lie at length,  
And quaff one's fill of deep, delicious sleep,  
Whether in hurrying floods some copious stream  
Pours down its waves, or through the vernal flowers  
Some murmuring brook sings sweetly as it flows.  
The windfall apples of the wood appease 515  
His hunger, while the ripening berries plucked  
From wayside thickets grant an easy meal.  
He gladly shuns the luxuries of kings.  
Let mighty lords from anxious cups of gold  
Their nectar quaff; for him how sweet to catch  
With naked hand the water of the spring! 520  
More certain slumber soothes him, though his couch  
Be hard, if free from care he lay him down.  
With guilty soul he seeks no shameful deeds  
In nooks remote upon some hidden couch,  
Nor timorous hides in labyrinthine cell;  
He courts the open air and light of day,  
And lives before the conscious eye of heaven. 525  
Such was the life, I think, the ancients lived,

1  
nose primal men who mingled with the gods.  
They were not blinded by the love of gold;  
No sacred stone divided off the fields  
And lotted each his own in judgment there.  
Nor yet did vessels rashly plow the seas;  
But each his native waters knew alone. 530  
Then cities were not girt with massive walls,  
With frequent towers set; no soldier there  
To savage arms his hands applied, nor burst  
The close-barred gates with huge and heavy stones  
From ponderous engines hurled. As yet the earth  
Endured no master's rule, nor felt the sway 535  
Of laboring oxen yoked in common toil;  
But all the fields, self-fruitful, fed mankind,  
Who took and asked no more. The woods gave wealth,  
And shady grottoes natural homes supplied.  
Unholy greed first broke these peaceful bonds,  
And headlong wrath, and lust which sets aflame 540  
The hearts of men. Then came the cruel thirst  
For empire; and the weak became the prey  
Of strong, and might was counted right. At first  
Men fought with naked fists, but soon they turned  
Rough clubs and stones to use of arms. Not yet 545  
Were cornel spears with slender points of iron,  
And long, sharp-pointed swords, and crested helms.  
Such weapons wrath invented. Warlike Mars  
Produced new arts of strife, and forms of death  
In countless numbers made. Thence streams of gore 550  
Stained every land, and reddened every sea.  
Then crime, o'erleaping every bound, ran wild;  
Invaded every home. No hideous deed  
Was left undone: but brothers by the hand  
Of brothers fell, parents by children's hands, 555  
Husbands by wives', and impious mothers killed  
Their helpless babes. Stepmothers need no words;  
The very beasts are kind compared with them.  
Of all these evils woman was the cause,  
The leader she. She with her wicked arts

Besets the minds of men; and all for her  
And her vile, lustful ways, unnumbered towns 560  
Lie low in smoking heaps; whole nations rush  
To arms; and kingdoms, utterly o'erthrown,  
Drag down their ruined peoples in their fall.  
Though I should name no other, Aegeus' wife  
Would prove all womankind a curséd race.

*Nurse:* Why blame all women for the crimes of few? 565

*Hippolytus:* I hate them all. I dread and shun and curse  
Them all. Whether from reason, instinct, blind  
And causeless madness, this I know—I hate.  
And sooner shall you fire and water wed;  
Sooner shall dangerous quicksands friendly turn  
And give safe anchorage; and sooner far 570  
Shall Tethys from her utmost western bounds  
Bring forth the shining day, and savage wolves  
Smile kindly on the timid does, than I,  
O'ercome, feel ought but hate to womankind.

*Nurse:* But oft doth love put reins on stubborn souls,  
And all their hatred to affection turns. 575  
Behold thy mother's realm of warlike dames;  
Yet even they the sway of passion know.  
Of this thy birth itself is proof enough.

*Hippolytus:* My comfort for my mother's loss is this,  
That now I'm free to hate all womankind.

*Nurse:* As some hard crag, on every side unmoved, 580  
Resists the waves, and dashes backward far  
The opposing floods, so he doth spurn my words.  
But hither Phaedra comes with hasty step,  
Impatient of delay. What fate is hers?  
Or to what action doth her madness tend?

[*Phaedra enters and falls fainting to the earth.*]

But see, in sudden fainting fit she falls, 585  
And deathlike pallor overspreads her face.

[*Hippolytus hastens to raise her up in his arms.*]

Lift up thy face, speak out, my daughter, see,  
Thine own Hippolytus embraces thee.

*Phaedra* [*recovering from her faint*]: Who gives me back to griefs, and  
floods again  
My soul with heavy care? How well for me  
Had I sunk down to death!

590

*Hippolytus*: But why, poor soul,  
Dost thou lament the gift of life restored?

*Phaedra* [*aside*]: Come dare, attempt, fulfil thine own command.  
Speak out, and fearlessly. Who asks in fear  
Suggests a prompt refusal. Even now  
The greater part of my offense is done.  
Too late my present modesty. My love,  
I know, is base; but if I persevere,  
Perchance the marriage torch will hide my sin.  
Success makes certain sins respectable.  
Come now, begin.

595

[*To Hippolytus*].

Bend lower down thine ear,  
I pray; if any comrade be at hand,  
Let him depart, that we may speak alone.

600

*Hippolytus*: Behold, the place is free from witnesses.

*Phaedra*: My lips refuse to speak my waiting words;  
A mighty force compels my utterance,  
A mightier holds it back. Ye heavenly powers,  
I call ye all to witness, what I wish—

605

*Hippolytus*: Thy heart desires and cannot tell its wish?

*Phaedra*: Light cares speak out, the weighty have no words.

*Hippolytus*: Into my ears, my mother, tell thy cares.

*Phaedra*: The name of mother is too proud and high;  
My heart dictates some humbler name than that.  
Pray call me sister—slave, Hippolytus.  
Yes, slave I'd be. I'll bear all servitude;  
And shouldst thou bid me tread the driven snows,

610



To walk along high Pindus' frozen peaks,  
I'd not refuse; no, not if thou shouldst bid  
Me go through fire, and serried ranks of foes,  
I would not hesitate to bare my breast 615  
Unto the naked swords. Take thou the power  
Which was consigned to me. Make me thy slave.  
Rule thou the state, and let me subject be.  
It is no woman's task to guard this realm  
Of many towns. Do thou, who in the flower  
Of youth rejoicest, rule the citizens 620  
With strong paternal sway. But me receive  
Into thy arms, and there protect thy slave  
And suppliant. My widowhood relieve.

*Hippolytus*: May God on high this omen dark avert!  
My father will in safety soon return.

*Phaedra*: Not so: the king of that fast-holding realm 625  
And silent Styx has never opened back  
The doors of earth to those who once have left  
The realms above. Think'st thou that he will loose  
The ravisher of his couch? Unless, indeed,  
Grim Pluto has at last grown mild to love.

*Hippolytus*: The righteous gods of heaven will bring him back.  
But while the gods still hold our prayers in doubt,  
My brothers will I make my pious care, 630  
And thee as well. Think not thou art bereft;  
For I will fill for thee my father's place.

*Phaedra* [*aside*]: Oh, hope of lovers, easily beguiled!  
Deceitful love! Has he<sup>[21]</sup> not said enough?  
I'll ply him now with prayers. 635

[*To Hippolytus.*]

Oh, pity me.  
Hear thou the prayers which I must only think.  
I long to utter them, but am ashamed.

*Hippolytus*: What is thy trouble then?

*Phaedra*: A trouble mine



in heaven's starry vault thou shinest, thee,  
Oh, thee I call to aid my hapless cause,  
So like thine own. One house has overthrown  
Two sisters, thee the father, me the son. 665

[To Hippolytus.]

Behold, as suppliant, fallen to thy knees,  
A royal princess kneels. Without a spot  
Of sin, unstained and innocent, was I;  
And thou alone hast wrought the change in me.  
See at thy feet I kneel and pray, resolved  
This day shall end my misery or life.  
Oh, pity her who loves thee— 670

*Hippolytus:* God in heaven,  
Great ruler of all gods, dost thou this sin  
So calmly hear, so calmly see? If now  
Thou hurlest not thy bolt with deadly hand,  
What shameful cause will ever send it forth?  
Let all the sky in shattered ruins fall,  
And hide the light of day in murky clouds. 675  
Let stars turn back, and trace again their course  
Athwart their proper ways. And thou, great star  
Of stars, thou radiant Sun, let not thine eyes  
Behold the impious shame of this thy stock;  
But hide thy face, and to the darkness flee  
Why is thy hand, O king of gods and men,  
Inactive? Why by forkéd lightning's brands 680  
Is not the world in flames? Direct thy bolts  
At me; pierce me. Let that fierce darting flame  
Consume me quite, for mine is all the blame.  
I ought to die, for I have favor found  
In my stepmother's eyes.

[To Phaedra.]

Did I seem one  
To thee to do this vile and shameful thing?  
Did I seem easy fuel to thy fire,  
I only? Has my virtuous life deserved 685  
Such estimate? Thou, worse than all thy kind!  
Thou woman, who hast in thy heart conceived

THOU woman, who hast in thy heart CONCEIVED  
A deed more shameful than thy mother's sin,  
Whose womb gave monstrous birth; thou worse than she!  
She stained herself with vilest lust, and long  
Concealed the deed. But all in vain: at last, 690  
Her two-formed child revealed his mother's crime,  
And by his fierce bull-visage proved her guilt.  
Of such a womb and mother art thou born.  
Oh, thrice and four times blesséd is their lot  
Whom hate and treachery give o'er and doom 695  
To death. O father, how I envy thee!  
Thy stepdame was the Colchian; but this,  
This woman is a greater curse than she.

*Phaedra:* I clearly see the destiny of my house:  
We follow ever what we should avoid.  
But I have given over self-control;  
I'll follow thee through fire, through raging sea,  
O'er ragged cliffs, through roaring torrents wild— 700  
Wherever thou dost go, in mad pursuit  
I shall be borne. Again, O haughty one,  
I fall in suppliance and embrace thy knees.

*Hippolytus:* Away from my chaste body with thy touch  
Impure! What more? She falls upon my breast!  
I'll draw my sword and smite as she deserves. 705  
See, by her twisted locks, I backward bend  
Her shameless head. No blood more worthily  
Was ever spilled, O goddess of the bow,  
Upon thy altars.

*Phaedra:* Now, Hippolytus, 710  
Thou dost fulfil the fondest wish of mine;  
Thou sav'st me from my madness; greater far  
Than all my hopes, that by the hands I love,  
By thine own hands, I perish ere I sin.

*Hippolytus:* Then live, be gone! Thou shalt gain naught from me.  
And this my sword, defiled by thy base touch,  
No more shall hang upon my modest side.

*[He throws his sword from him.]*

What Tanaïs will make me clean again?  
Or what Maeotis rushing to the sea,  
With its barbaric waves? Not Neptune's self,  
With all his ocean's waters could avail  
To cleanse so foul a stain. O woods! O beasts!

715

*[He rushes off into the depths of the forest.]*

*Nurse* [*in soliloquy, while Phaedra seems to have fallen in a fainting fit*]:

Now is her fault discovered. Soul of mine,  
Why dost thou stand in dumb amaze? This crime  
We must throw back upon the man himself,  
And charge him with a guilty love, ourselves. 720  
Sin must be hid by sin. The safest way  
Is to go straight forward on the course you fear.  
Who is to know, since no one saw the deed,  
Whether we dared, ourselves, or suffered ill?

[*Raising her voice in a loud cry.*]

Help! Help! ye dames of Athens! Faithful band  
Of slaves, bring aid! Behold Hippolytus, 725  
With vile adultery, attacks the queen!  
He has her in his power! He threatens death!  
At point of sword he storms her chastity!  
There, he has gone in haste, and left behind  
His sword in trembling, panic-stricken flight.  
This proof of guilt we'll keep. But first restore  
The stricken queen to life. Let all remain 730  
Just as they are, her locks disheveled, torn,  
To show how great a wrong she has endured.  
Back to the city bear her now. Revive,  
My mistress. Why dost seek to harm thyself  
And shun thy comrades' eyes. For be thou sure  
Not circumstance but will can make impure. 735

[*Exeunt.*]

*Chorus:* He fled away like the storm-blast wild,  
More swift than cloud-compelling winds;  
And swifter than the comet's torch,  
When, driven before the wind, it speeds  
With long-drawn, trailing fires. 740  
Let fame, that boasts of her olden times,  
Compare with thine all ancient charms:  
Beyond compare does thy beauty shine,  
Clear and bright as the full-orbed moon.

When, with waxing hours in splendor joined, 745  
Night long she speeds her shining car,  
And her ruddy face so brightly gleams,  
That the fires of the lesser stars are dimmed.  
He is fair as the messenger of night,  
When he leads the evening shadows in,  
Himself new bathed in the ocean's foam; 750  
Or when, the darkness put to flight,  
He heralds the dawn—bright Lucifer.  
And thou of the thyrsus, Indian Bacchus,  
With the flowing locks of endless youth,  
With thine ivy-clad spear the tigers driving, 755  
And thy turban set on thy hornéd head:  
Not thus will thy glorious locks outshine  
The unadorned hair of Hippolytus.  
And admire not thy beauty over much,  
For fame has spread the story far,  
How Phaedra's sister preferred to thee, 760  
O Bromius, a mortal man.  
Ah beauty, a doubtful boon art thou,  
The gift of a fleeting hour! How swift  
On flying feet thou glidest away!  
So flowery meadows of the spring  
The summer's burning heat devours, 765  
When midday's raging sun rides high,  
And night's brief round is hurried through.  
As the lilies languish on their stems,  
So pleasing tresses fail the head;  
And swiftly is the radiance dimmed 770  
Which gleams from the tender cheeks of  
youth!  
Each day hath its spoil from the lovely form;  
For beauty flees and soon is gone.  
Who then would trust a gift so frail?  
Nay, use its joys, while still thou mayst;  
For silent time will soon destroy thee, 775  
And hours to baser hours steal on.

Why seek the desert wilds? Thy form  
Is no more safe in pathless ways.  
If in the forest's depths thou hide,  
When Titan brings the noonday heat,  
The saucy Nāids will surround thee, 780  
Who are wont in their clear springs to snare  
The lovely youth; and 'gainst thy sleep  
The wanton goddesses of groves,  
The Dryads, who the roving Pans  
Drive in pursuit, will mischief plot.  
Or else that glowing star, whose birth 785  
The old Arcadians beheld,  
Will see thee from the spangled sky,  
And straight forget to drive her car.  
Of late she blushed a fiery red,  
And yet no staining cloud obscured  
Her shining disk. But we, in fear  
For her troubled face, clashed cymbals loud, 790  
Deeming her harried by the charms  
Of Thessaly. But for thee alone  
Was all her toil; thou wast the cause  
Of her long delay; for, seeing thee,  
The night's fair goddess checked her course.  
If only winter's blasts would beat 795  
Less fiercely on that face of thine;  
If less it felt the sun's hot rays,  
More bright than Parian marble's gleam  
Would it appear. How beautiful  
The manly sternness in thy face,  
Thy brow's dark frowning majesty!  
Compare with Phoebus' that fair neck. 800  
His hair o'er his shoulders flowing free,  
Unbound by fillet, ornaments  
And shelters him. A shaggy brow  
Becomes thee best; thee, shorter locks,  
In tossing disarray. 'Tis thine  
The rough and warlike gods to meet 805  
In strife, and by thy mighty strength



To overcome them. Even now,  
 The muscles of a Hercules  
 Thy youthful arms can match. Thy breast  
 Is broader than the breast of Mars.  
 If on a horny-footed steed  
 Thou'rt pleased to mount, not Castor's self  
 More easily could hold in check 810  
 The Spartan Cyllarus.  
 Take thong in hand; with all thy strength  
 Discharge the javelin: not so far,  
 Though they be trained to hurl the dart,  
 Will Cretans send the slender reed.  
 Or if it please thee into air, 815  
 In Parthian style, to shoot thy darts,  
 None will descend without its bird,  
 Fixed deep within the throbbing breast;  
 From out the very clouds thy prey  
 Thou wilt regain.  
 By few has beauty been possessed  
 (The voice of history proclaims)  
 Without some loss or suffering. 820  
 But thee, unharmed, may God pass by  
 More merciful, and may thy form,  
 Now famous for its beauty, show  
 At last the marks of ugly age.  
 What crime would woman's fury leave undared?  
 She plans against this harmless youth some fraud. 825  
 Behold her scheme! For by her tumbled hair,  
 All torn, she seeks sure credence for her tale.  
 She wets her cheeks with tears; and every art  
 That woman's shrewdness knows, does she employ.  
 [*A man is seen approaching, who proves to be Theseus.*]  
 But who is that who comes with grace of kings  
 Displayed upon his face, his lofty head 830  
 Held high in kingly pride? In countenance,  
 How like the young Pirithoüs he seems,  
 Were not his cheeks too deadly pale and wan,  
 And if his hair fell not in locks unkempt

AND IN HIS HAND TEN HOT IRON ROCKS UNKEMPT.  
Behold, 'tis Theseus' self returned to earth.

**FOOTNOTES:**

[20] Reading, *luxus*.

[21] Reading, *dixit*.

**ACT III**

*Theseus:* At last have I escaped from endless night,  
That shadowy realm which close confines the 835  
dead.

And now my eyes can scarce endure the light  
Which I have long desired. Eleusin now  
Has four times reaped her ripened grain, the gift  
Triptolemus bestowed; thrice and again  
Has Libra measured equal day and night,  
Since dubious battling with an unknown fate  
Has held me in the toils of life and death.

To me, though dead to all things else, one part 840  
Of life remained, the consciousness of ill.

Alcides was the end. When he came down  
To bring the dog by force from Tartarus,  
He brought me also to the upper world.

But ah, my wearied frame has lost the strength 845  
It had of old; I walk with faltering steps.

Alas! how great a task it was to reach  
The world of light from lower Phlegethon,  
To flee from death and follow Hercules!

But why this sound of wailing in my ears?  
Let someone tell; for agonies of woe 850

And grief and lamentations sad I meet  
Upon the very threshold of my home—  
A fitting welcome to a guest from hell.

*Nurse:* The queen is obstinately bent on death,

And scorns the strong remonstrance of our tears. 855

*Theseus:* Why should she die, her husband safe  
returned?

*Nurse:* That very cause compels her speedy death.

*Theseus:* Thy words are dark and hide some weighty truth.  
Speak out and tell what grief weighs down her soul.

*Nurse:* She tells her grief to none. Some secret woe  
She hides within her heart, and is resolved 860  
To take her secret with her to the grave.  
But speed thee to her; there is need of haste.

*Theseus:* Unbar the close-shut portals of my house.

*[The doors are opened and Theseus encounters his wife just within.]*

*Theseus [to Phaedra]:* My queen, is't thus thou dost receive thy lord,  
And welcome back thy husband long desired?  
Nay, put away the sword from thy right hand, 865  
And give me heart again. Reveal to me  
The cause that forces thee to flee from life.

*Phaedra:* Alas, great Theseus, by thy kingly power,  
And by thy children's souls, by thy return, 870  
And by my ashes, suffer me to die.

*Theseus:* What cause compels thy death?

*Phaedra:* The fruit of death  
Would perish if I let its cause be known.

*Theseus:* None else shall hear it save myself alone.

*Phaedra:* A chaste wife fears her husband most of all.

*Theseus:* Speak out; I'll hide thy secret in my heart. 875

*Phaedra:* The secret thou wouldst have another guard,  
First guard thyself.

*Theseus:* No chance of death thou'lt find.

*Phaedra:* Death cannot fail the heart that's bent on death.

*Theseus:* Confess what sin must be atoned by death.

*Phaedra:* My life.

*Theseus:* Will not my tears avail with thee?

880

*Phaedra:* That death is best which one's own friends lament.

*Theseus:* She still persists in silence. By the lash  
And chains shall her old nurse be forced to tell  
What she will not declare. Put her in chains.  
Now let the lash lay bare her hidden thoughts.

*Phaedra:* Hold, stay thy hand, for I myself will speak.

885

*Theseus:* Why dost thou turn thy grieving face away,  
And hide the quickly rising shower of tears  
Behind thy robe?

*Phaedra:* Thee, thee do I invoke,  
O father of the gods, and thee, O Sun,  
Thou shining glory of the heavenly dome,  
On whom as founder doth our house depend,  
I call ye both to witness that I strove  
Against his prayers, though sorely tried. To threats  
Of death my spirit did not yield; but force  
O'ercame my body. This the shameful stain  
Upon my honor which my blood must cleanse.

890

*Theseus:* Come, tell, who hath defiled our honor so?

*Phaedra:* Whom thou wouldst least expect.

895

*Theseus:* But who is he?  
I wait to hear his name.

*Phaedra:* This sword shall tell,  
Which in his terror at our loud laments,  
The adulterer left, fearing the citizens.

*Theseus:* Ah me! What villainy do I behold?  
What monstrous deed is this? The royal sword,  
Its ivory hilt with tiny signs engraved,  
Shines out the glory of the Athenian race

But he—where has he gone? 900

*Phaedra:* These slaves have seen  
How, borne on speeding feet, he fled away.

*Theseus:* Oh, holy piety! O thou who reign'st 905

In heaven, and thou who rulest in the seas,  
Whence came this base infection of our race?

Was he of Grecian birth, or did he spring 905  
From Scythian Taurus or some Colchian stream?

The type reverts to its ancestral stock,  
And blood ignoble but repeats its source.

This is the madness of that savage race,  
To scorn all lawful love, and prostitute 910

At last the long-chaste body to the crowd. 910  
Oh, loathsome race, restrained by no good laws

Which milder climes revere! The very beasts  
Shun love incestuous, and keep the laws

Of nature with instinctive chastity.  
Where is that face, that feigned austerity, 915

That rough and careless garb that sought to ape 915  
The ancient customs? Where that aspect stern,

That sour severity which age assumes?  
O life, two-faced! How thou dost hide thy thoughts!

For fairest faces cover foulest hearts;  
The chaste demeanor hides in chastity; 920

The gentle, boldness; seeming goodness, sin. 920  
False men approve the truth; the faint of heart

Affect a blustering mood. O thou, of woods  
Enamored, savage, rough and virgin pure,

Didst thou reserve thyself for me alone?  
On my couch first and with so fell a crime 925

Wast thou inclined to try thy manly powers? 925  
Now, now I thank the kindly gods of heaven

That long ago I slew Antiope;  
That, when I went below to Stygian caves,

I did not leave thy mother for thy lust.  
Go, get thee far away to unknown lands;

1

And there, though to her utmost bounds removed,  
The earth should hem thee off by ocean's wastes; 930  
Though thou shouldst dwell at the Antipodes;  
Though to the frigid northern realms thou go,  
And deep within her farthest caverns hide;  
Or, though beyond the reach of winter placed,  
And drifting snows, thou leave the boisterous threats 935  
Of frosty Boreas in mad pursuit:  
Thou still shalt meet thy fitting punishment.  
Persistent shall I chase thee in thy flight  
Through all thy hiding-places. Ways remote,  
Hemmed in, secluded, hard and trackless ways,  
I'll traverse in pursuit. No obstacle  
Shall block my way. Thou know'st whence I return. 940  
And whither spears cannot be hurled at thee  
I'll hurl my prayers. My father of the sea  
Once promised me that thrice I might prevail  
With him in prayer, and ratified the boon  
By oath upon the inviolable Styx.

[*To Neptune.*]

Thou ruler of the sea, the boon bestow,  
And grant my prayer: let not Hippolytus 945  
Live to behold another sun's bright rays,  
But may he go to meet those shades of hell  
Enraged at my escape. O father, now  
I pray that aid which still I deprecate.  
This last of thy three boons I would not use,  
If I were not beset by grievous ills. 950  
Amidst the depths of hell and dreadful Dis,  
Amidst the infernal king's pursuing threats,  
I did not call on thee. But now I claim  
Thy promise, father. Why delay thine aid?  
Why are thy waves inactive? Let the winds  
That drive the blackening clouds bring darkness on; 955  
Snatch stars and sky from sight; pour forth the sea;  
Arouse thy watery monsters, and let loose  
On him from ocean's depths thy swelling waves.

[*Exit* Theseus.]

*Chorus:* Great nature, mother of the gods,  
And thou, fire-girt Olympus' lord, 960  
Who speedest through the flying skies  
The scattered stars, the wandering ways  
Of constellations, and the heavens  
Upon their whirling axes turn'st:  
Why is thy care so great to keep  
The annual highways of the air,  
That now the hoary frosts may strip 965  
The woods of leaves, and now the trees  
May spread once more their pleasant shade;  
That now the summer's fervent heat  
May ripen Ceres' gift, and soon  
Her strength the Autumn may subdue? 970  
But why, though thou dost rule so wide,  
Though in thy hand the ponderous worlds  
Are poised, and calmly wheel along  
Their appointed ways, why dost thou shun  
The affairs of men and have no care  
For them? Art not solicitous  
That good should prosper, and that sin 975  
Receive its just deserts? But no:  
Blind Fortune rules the affairs of men,  
Dispensing with unthinking hand  
Her gifts, oft favoring the worst.  
And so the violent oppress 980  
The innocent; and fraud holds sway  
In highest places. To the hands  
Of brutish men the rabble most  
Rejoice to trust their government;  
The same they honor and they hate,  
With fickle will. Sad virtue finds  
Her recompense for righteousness  
All gone away; and poverty, 985  
Relentless, follows innocence;  
While deep intrenched in wickedness.

....., deep .....  
The adulterer sits secure, and reigns.  
O modesty—an empty name!  
And worth—a glorious cheat!  
But what would yonder messenger announce,  
Who comes in haste, with woeful countenance?

990

## ACT IV

[*Enter Messenger.*]

*Messenger:* O slavery, thou hard and bitter lot,  
Why must I voice these woes unspeakable?

*Theseus:* Fear not, but boldly tell the worst mischance;  
For mine a heart not unprepared for grief.

*Messenger:* My tongue can find no words to voice its woe.

955

*Theseus:* But speak, what evil fortune still besets  
My shattered house?

*Messenger:* Hippolytus is dead!

*Theseus:* The father knew long since his son had died;  
But now the adulterer has met his end.  
Tell me, I pray, the manner of his death.

*Messenger:* When, fleeing forth, he left the city's walls,  
With maddened speed he hurried on his way,  
And quickly yoked his chargers to his car,  
And curbed them to his will with close-drawn reins.  
And then, with much wild speech, and cursing loud  
His native land, oft calling on his sire,  
He fiercely shook the reins above his steeds;  
When suddenly, far out the vast sea roared,  
And heaved itself to heaven. No wind was there  
To stir the sea, no quarter of the sky  
Broke in upon its peace; the rising waves  
Were by their own peculiar tempest raised.

1000

1005

1010



NO DIAST SO GREAT HAD EVER STIRRED THE STRAITS  
Of Sicily, nor had the deep e'er swelled  
With such wild rage before the north wind's breath,  
When high cliffs trembled with the shock of waves,  
And hoary foam smote high Leucate's top.  
The sea then rose into a mighty heap,  
And, big with monstrous birth, was landward borne. 1015  
For no ship's wrecking was this swelling pest  
Intended; landward was its aim. The flood  
Rolled shoreward heavily, something unknown  
Within its laden bosom carrying.  
What land, new born, will lift its head aloft?  
Is some new island of the Cyclades 1020  
Arising? Now the rocky heights are hid,  
Held sacred to the Epidaurian god,  
And those high crags well known for Sciron's crime;  
No longer can be seen that land whose shores  
Are washed by double seas. While in amaze  
We look in fear and wonder, suddenly 1025  
The whole sea bellows, and on every side  
The towering cliffs re-echo with the roar;  
While all their tops the leaping spray bedews.  
The deep spouts forth and vomits up its waves  
In alternating streams, like some huge whale  
Which roves the ocean, spouting up the floods. 1030  
Then did that mound of waters strongly heave  
And break itself, and threw upon the shore  
A thing more terrible than all our fears.  
The sea itself rushed landward, following  
That monstrous thing. I shudder at the thought.  
What form and bearing had the monster huge!  
A bull it was in form, with dark-green neck 1035  
Uplifted high, its lofty front adorned  
With verdant mane. Its ears with shaggy hair  
Were rough; its horns with changing color flashed,  
Such as the lord of some fierce herd would have,  
Both earth and ocean-born. He vomits flames;  
With flames his fierce eyes gleam. His glossy neck 1040

Great couch-like muscles shows, and as he breathes,  
His spreading nostrils quiver with the blast  
Of his deep panting. Breast and dewlap hang  
All green with clinging moss; and on his sides  
Red lichens cling. His hinder parts appear  
In monstrous shape, and like some scaly fish 1045  
His vast and shapeless members drag along;  
As are those monsters of the distant seas  
Which swallow ships, and spout<sup>[22]</sup> them forth again.  
The country-side was panic stricken; herds  
In frenzied terror scattered through the fields; 1050  
Nor did the herdsmen think to follow them.  
The wild beasts in the forest pastures fled  
In all directions, and the hunters shook  
With deadly fear. Hippolytus alone  
Was not afraid, but curbed his frantic steeds  
With close-drawn reins, and with his well-known 1055  
voice  
He cheered them on. The road to Argos<sup>[23]</sup> runs  
Precipitous along the broken hills,  
On one side bordered by the roaring sea.  
Here does that massive monster whet himself  
And kindle hot his wrath; then, when he felt  
His courage strong within his breast, and when  
His power to attempt the strife he had rehearsed,  
He charged Hippolytus with headlong course, 1060  
The ground scarce touching with his bounding feet;  
And, fearful, stopped before the trembling steeds.  
But this thy son, with savage countenance,  
Stood steadfast, threatening, before the foe.  
His features changed not, while he thundered loud:  
"This empty terror cannot daunt my soul, 1065  
For 'twas my father's task to vanquish bulls."  
But straightway, disobedient to the reins,  
The horses hurried off the car. And now,  
The highway leaving, maddened by their fear,  
They plunged along where'er their terror led, 1070

And took their way among the rocky fields. 1070  
But he, their driver, as some captain strong  
Holds straight his bark upon the boisterous sea,  
Lest she oppose her side against the waves,  
And by his art escapes the yawning floods;  
Not otherwise he guides the whirling car.  
For now with tight-drawn reins he curbs his steeds, 1075  
And now upon their backs he plies the lash.  
But doggedly that monster kept along,  
Now running by their side, now leaping straight  
Upon them as they came, from every hand  
Great fear inspiring. Soon all further flight  
Was checked; for that dread, hornéd, ocean beast 1080  
With lowering front charged full against their  
course.  
Then, truly, did the horses, wild with fear,  
Break loose from all control; and from the yoke  
They madly struggled to withdraw their necks,  
Their master hurling to their stamping feet.  
Headlong among the lossened reins he fell,  
His form all tangled in their clinging strands. 1085  
The more he struggled to release himself  
The tighter those relentless fetters bound.  
The steeds perceived what they had done, and now,  
With empty car, and no one mastering them,  
They ran where terror bade. Just so, of old,  
Not recognizing their accustomed load,  
And hot with anger that the car of day 1090  
Had been entrusted to a spurious sun,  
The steeds of Phoebus hurled young Phaëthon  
Far through the airs of heaven in wandering course.  
Now far and wide he stains the fields with blood,  
His head rebounding from the smitten rocks.  
The bramble thickets pluck away his hair,  
And that fair face is bruised upon the stones. 1095  
His fatal beauty which had been his bane,  
Is ruined now by many a wound. His limbs  
Are dragged along upon the flying wheels.

At last, his bleeding trunk upon a charred  
And pointed stake is caught, pierced through the groin;  
And for a little, by its master held,  
The car stood still. The horses by that wound 1100  
Were held awhile, but soon they break delay—  
And break their master too. While on they rush,  
The whipping branches cut his dying form,  
The rough and thorny brambles tear his flesh,  
And every bush retains its part of him.  
Now bands of servants scour those woeful fields,  
Those places where Hippolytus was dragged, 1105  
And where his bloody trail directs the way;  
And sorrowing dogs trace out their master's limbs.  
But not as yet has all this careful toil  
Of grieving friends sufficed to gather all.  
And has it come to this, that glorious form? 1110  
But now the partner of his father's realm,  
And his acknowledged heir, illustrious youth,  
Who shone refulgent like the stars—behold  
His scattered fragments for the funeral pile  
They gather up and heap them on the bier!

*Theseus:* O mother Nature, all too potent thou!  
How firmly dost thou hold me by the ties  
Of blood! How thou dost force me to obey 1115  
Thy will! I wished to slay my guilty son,  
While yet he lived; but now I mourn his loss.

*Messenger:* One may not rightly mourn what he has willed. [\[24\]](#)

*Theseus:* This is indeed the crowning woe, I think,  
When chance fulfils the prayers we should not make. 1120

*Messenger:* If still you hate your son, why weep for him?

*Theseus:* Because I slew, not lost my son, I weep.

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*Chorus:* How on the wheel of circumstance

We mortals whirl! 'Gainst humble folk  
Does fate more gently rage, and God  
More lightly smites the lightly blest. 1125  
A life in dim retirement spent  
Insures a peaceful soul; and he  
Who in a lowly cottage dwells  
May live to tranquil age at last.  
The mountain tops that pierce the skies,  
Feel all the stormy winds that blow,  
Fierce Eurus, Notus, and the threats  
Of Boreas, and Corus too,  
Storm bringer. 1130  
The vale low lying seldom feels  
The thunder's stroke; but Caucasus,  
The huge, and the lofty Phrygian groves  
Of mother Cybele have felt  
The bolts of Jove the Thunderer. 1135  
For Jupiter in jealousy  
Attacks the heights too near his skies;  
But never is the humble roof  
Uptorn by jealous heaven's assaults.  
Round mighty kings and homes of kings  
He thunders. 1140  
The passing hour on doubtful wings  
Flits ever; nor may any claim  
Swift Fortune's pledge. Behold our king,  
Who sees at last the glowing stars  
And light of day, the gloom of hell  
Behind him left, a sad return  
Laments; for this his welcome home 1145  
He finds more sorrowful by far  
Than dismal, dark Avernus' self.  
O Pallas, by the Athenian race  
In reverence held, that once again  
Thy Theseus sees the light of day,  
And has escaped the pools of Styx, 1150  
Thou owest naught to greedy Dis;  
For still the number of the shades

Within the infernal tyrant's power  
Remains the same.  
But why the sounds of wailing that we hear?  
And what would Phaedra with her naked sword?

1155

#### FOOTNOTES:

[22] Reading, *reddit*.

[23] Reading, *Argos*.

[24] Reading, *haud quisquam honeste flere, quod voluit, potest*.

#### ACT V

[*Enter Phaedra with a drawn sword in her hand.*]

*Theseus* [*to Phaedra*]: What madness pricks thee on, all wild with grief?  
What means that sword? or why these loud laments?  
Why weepest thou above the hated corpse?

*Phaedra*: Me, me, O savage ruler of the deep,  
Attack; against me send the monstrous shapes  
That breed within the caverns of the sea, 1160  
Whatever Tethys in her heart conceals,  
And ocean hides within his wandering waves.  
O Theseus, always ill of omen thou!  
Oh, never to thy loved ones safe returned,  
Since son and father by their death have paid  
For thy home-coming. Thou of thine own house 1165  
Art the destroyer; ever baneful thou,  
Whether in love or hatred of thy wives.

[*Turning to the mangled corpse.*]

Hippolytus, is this thy face I see?  
Have I brought thee to this? What Sinis wild,  
What pitiless Procrustes mangled thee?  
What Cretan bull-man, filling all the cave 1170  
Of Daedalus with his vast bellowings,

Has rent thee thus upon his savage horns?  
Ah me! where now is fled thy beauty bright,  
Thy eyes, my stars? Dost thou all lifeless lie?  
Come back a little while and hear my words. 1175  
'Tis nothing base I speak. With my own hand  
I'll make thee full atonement, and will plunge  
The avenging sword within my sinful breast,  
And so be free from life and guilt at once.  
Thee will I follow through Tartarean pools.  
Across the Styx, through streams of liquid fire. 1180  
Let me appease the spirit of the dead. 1180  
Accept the spoils I offer, take this lock  
Torn from my bleeding forehead. 'Twas not right  
To join our souls in life; but surely now  
We may by death unite our fates.

[*To herself.*]

Now die,  
If thou art undefiled, to appease thy lord;  
But if defiled, die for thy lover's sake. 1185  
Is't meet that I should live and seek again  
My husband's couch, by such foul incest stained?  
This wrong was lacking still, that, as if pure,  
Thou shouldst enjoy that union, justified.  
O death, thou only cure for evil love,  
For injured chastity the last resort:  
I fly to thee; spread wide thy soothing arms. 1190  
Hear me, O Athens; thou, O father, hear, 1190  
Thou worse than stepdame: I have falsely sworn.  
The crime, which I myself within my heart,  
With passion mad, conceived, I basely charged  
To him. An empty vengeance hast thou wrought  
Upon thy son; for he in chastity, 1195  
Through fault of the unchaste, lies there, unstained 1195  
And innocent.

[*To Hippolytus.*]

Regain thine honor now;  
Behold my impious breast awaits the stroke  
Of justice and my blood makes sacrifice

Of justice, and my blood makes sacrifice  
Unto the spirit of a guiltless man.

[To Theseus.]

How thou mayst recompense thy murdered son,  
Learn now from me—and seek the Acheron.

1200

[*She falls upon her sword and dies.*]

*Theseus:* Ye jaws of wan Avernus, and ye caves  
Of Taenara, ye floods of Lethe's stream,  
A soothing balm to hearts o'ercome with grief,  
Ye sluggish pools: take ye my impious soul  
And plunge me deep in your eternal woes.  
Now come, ye savage monsters of the deep,  
Whatever Proteus hides within his caves,  
And drown me in your pools, me who rejoice 1205  
In crime so hideous. O father, thou  
Who ever dost too readily assent  
Unto my wrathful prayers, I merit not  
An easy death, who on my son have brought  
A death so strange, and scattered through the fields  
His mangled limbs; who, while, as austere judge,  
I sought to punish evil falsely charged, 1210  
Have fallen myself into the pit of crime.  
For heaven, hell, and seas have by my sins  
Been peopled; now no further lot remains;  
Three kingdoms know me now. Was it for this  
That I returned? Was heaven's light restored  
To me that I might see two funerals,  
A double death? That I, bereft of wife 1215  
And son, should with one torch upon the pyre  
Consume them both? Thou giver of the light  
Which has so baleful proved, O, Hercules,  
Take back thy boon, and give me up again  
To Dis; restore me to the curséd shades  
Whom I escaped. Oh, impious, in vain  
I call upon that death I left behind.  
Thou bloody man, well skilled in deadly arts, 1220



Who hast contrived unwonted ways of death  
And terrible, now deal unto thyself  
The fitting punishment. Let some great pine  
Be bent to earth and hurl thee high in air;  
Or let me headlong leap from Sciron's cliff.  
More dreadful punishments have I beheld, 1225  
Which Phlegethon upon the guilty souls  
Encircled by his fiery stream inflicts.  
What suffering awaits me, and what place,  
Full well I know. Make room, ye guilty shades;  
On me, me only, let that rock be placed,  
The everlasting toil of Sisyphus,  
And let these wearied hands upbear its weight; 1230  
Let cooling waters lap and mock my lips;  
Let that fell vulture fly from Tityos,  
And let my vitals ever living be  
For punishment. And thou, Ixion, sire  
Of my Pirithoüs, take rest awhile, 1235  
And let the wheel that never stops its flight  
Bear these my limbs upon its whirling rim.  
Now yawn, O earth, and chaos dire, receive,  
I pray, receive me to your depths; for thus  
'Tis fitting that I journey to the shades.  
I go to meet my son. And fear thou not,  
Thou king of dead men's souls; I come in 1240  
peace  
To that eternal home, whence ne'er again  
Shall I come forth.

My prayers move not the gods.  
But if some impious plea I made to them,  
How ready would they be to grant my prayer!

*Chorus:* Theseus, thou hast unending time to mourn.  
Now pay the funeral honors due thy son,  
And bury these poor torn and scattered limbs. 1245

*Theseus:* Then hither bring the pitiful remains  
Of that dear corpse, and heap together here  
That shapeless mass of flesh, those mangled limbs

That shapeless mass of flesh, those mangled limbs.  
Is this Hippolytus? I realize  
My depth of crime, for I have murdered thee. 1250  
And lest but once and I alone should sin,  
A parent, bent to do an impious thing,  
My father did I summon to my aid.  
Behold, my father's boon do I enjoy.  
O childlessness, a bitter loss art thou  
For broken age! But come, embrace his limbs,  
Whatever of thy hapless son is left,  
And clasp them, wretched father, to thy breast. 1255  
Arrange in order those dismembered parts,  
And to their proper place restore them. Here  
His brave right hand should be. Place here the left,  
Well trained to curb his horses with the reins.  
The marks of his left side I recognize; 1260  
And yet how large a part is lacking still  
Unto our tears. Be firm, ye trembling hands,  
To do the last sad offices of grief;  
Be dry, my cheeks, and stay your flowing tears,  
While I count o'er the members of my son,  
And lay his body out for burial. 1265  
What is this shapeless piece, on all sides torn  
With many a wound? I know not what it is,  
Save that 'tis part of thee. Here lay it down.  
Not in its own, but in an empty place.  
That face, that once with starry splendor gleamed,  
That softened by its grace e'en foemen's eyes, 1270  
Has that bright beauty come to this? O fate,  
How bitter! Deadly favor of the gods!  
And is it thus my son comes back to me  
In answer to my prayers? These final rites  
Thy father pays, receive, O thou my son,  
Who often to thy funeral must be borne.  
And now let fires consume these dear remains.  
Throw open wide my palace, dark with death, 1275  
And let all Athens ring with loud laments.  
Do some of you prepare the royal pyre,

And others seek yet farther in the fields  
His scattered parts.

[*Pointing to Phaedra's corpse.*]

Let earth on her be spread,  
And may it heavy rest upon her head.

1280

## HERCULES OETAÆUS

### HERCULES OETAÆUS

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#### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- HERCULES Son of Jupiter and Alcmena.  
*Hyllus* Son of Hercules and Deianira.  
*Alcmena* Daughter of Electryon, king of Mycenae.  
*Deianira* Daughter of Oeneus, king of Aetolia, and wife of Hercules.  
*Iole* Daughter of Eurytus, king of Oechalia.  
*Nurse* Of Deianira.  
*Philoctetes* A prince of Thessaly, son of Poeas, and the faithful friend of Hercules.  
*Lichas* The messenger (*persona muta*) of Deianira to Hercules.

*Chorus* Of Aetolian women, faithful to Deianira.

*Band* Of Oechalian maidens, suffering captivity in company with Iole.

THE SCENE is laid, first in Euboea, and later at the home of Hercules in Trachin.

*The long, heroic life of Hercules has neared its end. His twelve great tasks, assigned him by Eurystheus through Juno's hatred, have been done. His latest victory was over Eurytus, king of Oechalia. Him he slew and overthrew his house, because the monarch would not give him Iole to wife.*

*And now the hero, having overcome the world, and Pluto's realm beneath the earth, aspires to heaven. He sacrifices to Cenaeon Jove, and prays at last to be received into his proper home.*

## ACT I

[*On the Cenaeon promontory of the island of Euboea.*]

*Hercules* [about to sacrifice to *Cenaean Jove*]: O sire of gods, from whose  
almighty hand  
Both homes of Phoebus feel thy darting bolt:  
Rule now serene, for I have 'stablished peace  
Wherever Nereus checks the spreading lands.  
Now let thy thunders rest; for treacherous kings  
And savage tyrants are in ruin laid. 5  
Whatever merited thy blasting darts  
Have I o'erthrown and crushed. But, father, why  
Is heaven still denied to me, thy son?  
For surely have I ever shown myself  
A worthy child of Jove; and Juno's self,  
My hard task-mistress, testifies to this,  
That I am born of thee. Why dost thou still  
Contrive delays? Am I thy cause of fear? 10  
Will Atlas not avail to prop the skies  
If to their bulk the weight of Hercules  
Be superadded? Why, O father, why  
Dost thou deny the stars to me? To thee  
Did death restore me; every monstrous shape  
Which had its source in earth or sea or air,  
Or hell itself, has yielded to my arms. 15  
No lion treads the Arcadian cities now;  
Stymphalus fears no more its noxious birds;  
The wondrous stag of Maenalus is dead;  
The watchful dragon spattered with its blood  
The golden grove; the hydra's force is gone;  
Those famous horses to the Hebrus known,  
Which fattened on the blood of murdered guests,  
Have I destroyed, and spoils of war obtained 20  
In victory o'er my Amazonian foe.  
I saw the silent realms; nor all alone  
Did I return, but shuddering day beheld  
Dark Cerberus, and he beheld the sun.  
No more Antaeus, Libya's monarch huge,  
His strength renews; before his bloody shrines  
Busiris lies o'erthrown; by my sole hand 25

The threefold Geryon was o'ercome and slain,  
And that dread terror of a hundred tribes,  
The Cretan bull, yea all the monstrous things  
To which the hostile world has given birth,  
Have fallen in utter ruin by my hand.  
If now the earth can show no monsters more,  
If now my stepdame has her wrath fulfilled, 30  
Restore the father to his son; yea, more—  
Admit the hero to his proper skies.  
I ask not that thou point the way to me;  
Permit it only, father, and the way  
I'll find. Or, if thou fearest that the earth  
Shall to the light new shapes of terror bring,  
Let them make haste to come, whate'er they be,  
While still the earth beholds her Hercules. 35  
For who will e'er again these fearsome things  
Attack, or who, throughout the towns of Greece,  
Will e'er be worthy of great Juno's hate?  
In truth, my praises have I safe bestowed,  
Since now there is no land but sings of me.  
The Scythian, dwelling in the frozen North,  
The Indian, smitten by the burning rays 40  
Of Phoebus, and the tropic African:  
All know my fame. O glowing Sun, I thee  
As witness call: I have encountered thee  
Where'er thou shin'st; nor have thy darting beams  
Availed to follow my triumphant course.  
I've gone beyond the reaches of the sun,  
And daylight halted far within my bounds. 45  
The world of nature yielded; for my steps  
No earth remained. She was exhausted first.  
But night and utter chaos met me there.  
From that dark realm whence no one e'er returns,  
Have I come back to earth. Old Ocean's threats  
Have I endured; no raging storm of his  
Has e'er prevailed to overcome the bark 50  
In which I fared. How small a part I tell!<sup>[25]</sup>  
Exhausted is the air and can no more

EXHAUSTED IS THE AIR AND CAN NO MORE

Suffice to feed the hatred of thy wife;  
The earth in fear brings forth no monster more  
For me to conquer, no wild beasts of prey.  
These are denied to me, and in the stead  
Of monster have I come myself to be. 55

How many evils have I overcome,  
Though all unarmed! Whatever monstrous thing  
Opposed, these empty hands have overthrown;  
Nor did there ever live a savage beast  
Which I as boy or infant feared to meet.  
My bidden labors have seemed always light,  
And no day ever dawned that brought to me  
No strenuous toil. How many monstrous tasks 60  
Have I fulfilled which no king set to me!

A harder master has my courage been  
Than ever Juno was. But what avails  
That I have saved the human race from fear?  
The gods in consequence have lost their peace.  
The freed earth sees whatever she has feared  
Now set in heaven; for Juno thitherward 65  
Hath borne the beasts I slew. Restored to life,  
The Crab fares safely in his torrid path,  
A constellation now in southern skies,  
And ripens Libya's waving fields of grain.

The Lion to the heavenly Virgin gives  
The flying year; but he, with beaming mane  
Upon his wild neck tossing, dries the winds 70  
Which drip with moisture, and the clouds devours.

Behold, the beasts have all invaded heaven,  
Forestalling me. Though victor, here I stand  
Upon the earth, and view my labors there.  
For Juno to the monsters and the beasts  
Has given stars, that so the heavenly realm  
Might be for me a place of terror made. 75

But no! Though in her wrath she fill the skies  
With monsters, though she make the heavens worse  
Than earth and hell, yet shall a place be given

To Hercules. If, after beasts and wars,  
If, after I subdued the Stygian dog,  
I have not earned a place among the stars,  
Then shall Sicilian Pelorus touch 80  
Hesperia's shores, and both shall be one land.  
I'll put the intervening sea to flight;  
Or, if thou wilt that severed seas be joined,  
Then Isthmus shall give passage to the waves,  
And Attic vessels by a new-found way  
Shall sail united seas. I'll change the world.  
Along new channels shall the Hister flow, 85  
And Tanaïs find new passage to the sea.  
Grant, grant, O Jupiter, this boon to me,  
That I at least may shield the gods from harm.  
There mayst thou lay aside thy thunderbolts,  
Where I stand guard against thy enemies.  
Whether thou bid'st me guard the icy pole,  
Or o'er the torrid regions watch, be sure 90  
That on that side the gods may be at rest.  
Apollo earned the shrine of Pythia  
And heaven, because he slew the Python huge;  
But Oh, how many Pythons did I slay  
In that dire hydra! Bacchus, Perseus, too,  
Have found a place among the heavenly gods. 95  
How small that eastern portion of the earth  
Which he subdued! How meager is the spoil  
Which Perseus in the stony Gorgon gained!  
What son of thine from Juno born has earned  
A place in heaven because of his renown?  
I seek the skies which I myself have borne.

*[Turning to Lichas.]*

But thou, O Lichas, comrade of my toils,  
Go tell my triumphs over Eurytus,  
His lares conquered and his realm o'erthrown. 100

*[To his attendants.]*

Do you with speed the victims hurry on  
To where the temple of Cenean Jove  
Looks off upon the wild Euboean sea.



*Band of captive Oechalian maidens:* The mate of the immortals he,  
 Whose life and fortune hand in hand  
 Go on apace. But worse than death  
 Is life, dragged on with many groans. 105  
 Whoe'er has trodden under foot  
 The greedy fates, and can disdain  
 The boat that plies on death's dark stream,  
 Will never feel the galling chains  
 Upon his captive arms; nor grace,  
 As noble spoil, the victor's train. 110  
 For he who faces death with joy  
 Can ne'er be wretched. Should his bark  
 Be wrecked upon the stormy sea  
 Where Africus with Boreas,  
 And Zephyrus with Eurus strive,  
 And rend the seas; he does not seek  
 To gather up the broken parts  
 Of his wrecked ship, that, far at sea, 115  
 He still may cherish hopes of land.  
 For he, who ever ready stands  
 To give his life, alone is safe  
 From all the perils of the storm.  
 But we are held by shameful grief,  
 The gaunt, drawn face, the streaming tears,  
 By the ashes of our fatherland  
 Besprinkled. Us no whirling flame,  
 Nor crash of falling walls o'erwhelms. 120  
 Thou dost pursue the fortunate,  
 O death, but fleest from wretched souls.  
 Behold, we live: but Oh, no more,  
 Our country's walls<sup>[26]</sup> remain; their place  
 Shall soon be hidden by the woods,  
 And all our temples fall away  
 To squalid hovels. Even now  
 The cold Dolopian will come 125  
 And o'er the ashes, glowing yet,  
 Sad remnants of Oechalia

Will drive his flocks. And soon, alas,  
Within our walls, the shepherd rude  
Shall sing upon his rustic pipes,  
With doleful voice, our history.  
And when the hand of God shall speed 130  
A few more generations on,  
The very place where once we dwelt  
Will be forgotten. Happy once,  
I kept no barren hearth at home;  
Not mine the hungry acres then  
Of Thessaly. But now I'm called  
To Trachin's rough and stony land, 135  
To ridges parched and jungle-set,  
To groves which e'en the mountain goat  
Would not inhabit. But, perchance,  
Some milder fate the captives calls.  
Then will they see the Inachus,  
Whose rapid waves shall bear them on,  
Or dwell within Dircaean walls 140  
Where flows Ismenus' scanty stream—  
And where was once the mother wed  
Of mighty Hercules.  
False is that tale of doubled night,  
When overlong the stars delayed  
Within the skies, and Hesperus  
In place of Lucifer arose,  
And Delia with tardy car 145  
Kept back the sun. What Scythian crag  
Begot thee, or what stony mount?  
Like some wild Titan wast thou born  
On Rhodope, or Athos rough?  
What savage beast on Caspian shores,  
What spotted tigress, suckled thee? 150  
Impervious to wounds is he.  
Sharp spears are blunted, steel is bent  
Against his heart; and glittering swords,  
Upon his naked members struck,

In broken fragment drop apart;  
 Stones strike, but harmlessly rebound.  
 And so he scorns the deadly fates,  
 And, all invincible, provokes 155  
 His death. No spears can pierce his heart,  
 No arrow shot from Scythian bow,  
 No darts which cold Sarmatians bear,  
 Or they who dwell beneath the dawn,  
 The Parthians, whose fatal shafts  
 More deadly than the Cretan dart,  
 The neighboring Nabathaeans wound. 160  
 Oechalia's walls he overthrew  
 With his bare hands. Naught can withstand  
 His onslaught. For whate'er he plans  
 To overcome, is by that fact  
 Already overcome. How few  
 The foes who by his wounds have fallen!  
 His angry countenance means death;  
 And to have met his threatening gaze 165  
 Is worse than death. What Gyas huge,  
 What vast Briareus, who stood  
 Upon Thessalia's mountain heap  
 And clutched at heaven with snaky hands,  
 Would not have frozen at the glance  
 Of that dread face? But mighty ills  
 Have mighty recompense: no more 170  
 Is left to suffer—we have seen,  
 Oh, woe! the angry Hercules!

*Iole:* But I, unhappy one, must mourn,  
 Not temples with their gods o'erthrown,  
 Not scattered hearths and burning homes,  
 Where lie in common ruin mixed  
 Fathers with sons, and gods with men,  
 Temples and towns—the common woe; 175  
 But fortune calls my tears away  
 To other grief. Fate bids me weep  
 O'er other ruins. What lament  
 180

Shall I make first? what greatest ill  
 Shall I bewail? All equally  
 I'll weep. Ah me, that mother earth  
 Hath not more bosoms given me,  
 That worthily they might resound  
 Unto my grief. But, O ye gods,  
 Transform me to a weeping rock  
 On Sipylus; or set me where,  
 Between its grassy banks, the Po 185  
 Glides on, where grieving woods respond  
 To the mourning of the sisters sad  
 Of Phaëthon; or to the shores  
 Of Sicily transport me. There,  
 Another Siren, let me mourn  
 The woeful fate of Thessaly. 190  
 Or bear me to the Thracian woods,  
 Where, underneath Ismarian shade,  
 The Daulian bird bewails her son.  
 Give me a form to fit my tears,  
 And let rough Trachin echo back  
 My cries of woe. The Cyprian maid 195  
 Still soothes her grieving heart with tears;  
 Still Ceyx's royal spouse bemoans  
 Her vanished lord; and Niobe,  
 Surviving life and grief, weeps on;  
 Her human form has Philomel  
 Escaped, and now with doleful notes  
 The Attic maid bewails her dead. 200  
 Oh, that my arms were feathered wings!  
 Oh, then, how happy would I be,  
 When, hidden in the forest depths,  
 I might lament in plaintive strain,  
 And live in fame as Iole, 205  
 The maiden bird. I saw, alas,  
 I saw my father's dreadful fate,  
 When, smitten with that deadly club,  
 He fell, in mangled fragments dashed  
 Throughout the palace hall. If then 210

His fate had granted burial,  
How often had I searched, O sire,  
For all thy parts!  
How could I look upon thy death,  
O Toxeus, with thy tender cheeks  
Unbearded yet, thy boyish veins  
Not yet with manhood's vigor filled?  
But why do I bewail your fates,  
O parents, whom to safety now  
Kind death has borne? My fortune bids  
That I bewail myself instead.  
Soon, ah too soon, in captive state,  
Shall I the flying spindle turn  
For some proud mistress in her hall.  
O cruel beauty, how hast thou  
Decreed my death! For thee alone  
Am I and all my house undone,  
Since when my sire to Hercules  
Refused my hand, because he feared  
Great Hercules as son-in-law.  
And now, not wife, but captive maid,  
I seek my haughty mistress' home.

215

220

*Chorus:* Why dost thou, foolish, ever dwell  
Upon thy sire's illustrious realm,  
And on thy own unhappy fate?  
Forget thy former station now;  
For only is he happy who,  
As king or slave, knows how to bear  
His lot, and fit his countenance  
To changing circumstance. For he  
Who bears his ills with steadfast soul  
Has from misfortune reft away  
Its strength and heaviness.

225

230

#### FOOTNOTES:

[25] Reading, *quam prosequor*.

[26] Reading, *patriae moenibus*.

## ACT II

[*In the palace of Deianira at Trachin.*]

*Nurse of Deianira:* Oh, bitter is the rage a woman feels,  
When in one house both wife and mistress dwell!  
No wrecking Scylla, no Charybdis dire, 235  
The wild upheavers of Sicilia's waves,  
No savage beast, is more untamed than she.  
For when the maiden's beauty was revealed,  
And Iole shone like the cloudless sky,  
Or gleaming stars within the heavens serene,  
Then did Alcides' bride like one distraught 240  
Stand gazing fiercely on the captive maid;  
As when a tigress, lying with her young  
Beneath some rock in far Armenia,  
Leaps up to meet an enemy's approach;  
Or as a Maenad, by the god inspired,  
And bidden shake the thyrsus, stands awhile  
In wonder whither she shall take her way.  
Then she throughout the house of Hercules 245  
Goes madly rushing; nor does all the house  
Give space enough. Now here, now there she  
runs,  
At random wandering; and now she stands,  
Her face reflecting woe in every line,  
The inmost feelings of her heart revealed.  
She threatens fiercely, then a flood of tears  
Succeeds to threats. No mood for long endures, 250  
Nor can one form of rage content her long.  
Now flame her cheeks with wrath; pale terror  
now  
Drives out the flush of anger, and her grief  
Takes every form that maddened sorrow knows:  
Complainings, prayers, and groans. But now the doors

Are creaking: see, she comes in frenzied haste,  
With words confused revealing all her heart.

255

[*Enter Deianira.*]

*Deianira:* O wife of Jove, where'er in heaven thou dwell'st,  
Against Alcides send some raging beast  
That shall be dire enough to sate my wrath.

If any hydra rears its fertile head

Too vast to be contained in any pool,

Impossible of conquest, send it forth.

If anything is worse than other beasts,

Enormous, unrelenting, horrible,

260

From which the eye of even Hercules

Would turn in fear, let such an one come out

From its huge den. But if no beasts avail,

This heart of mine into some monster change;

For of my hate can any shape be made

That thou desir'st. Oh, mould my woman's form

To match my grief. My breast cannot contain

265

Its rage. Why dost thou search the farthest bounds

Of earth, and overturn the world? Or why

Dost thou demand of hell its evil shapes?

This breast of mine will furnish for thy use

All fearful things. To work thy deadly hate

Use me as tool. Thou canst destroy him quite.

270

Do thou but use these hands for what thou will.

Why dost thou hesitate, O goddess? See,

Use me, the raging one. What impious deed

Dost thou command? Decide. Why doubtful stand?

Now mayst thou rest awhile from all thy toils,

For my rage is enough.

275

*Nurse:* O child of mine,

These sad outpourings of thy maddened heart

Restrain, quench passion's fire, and curb thy grief.

Show now that thou art wife of Hercules.

*Deianira*: Shall captive Iole unto my sons  
Give brothers, and a lowly slave become  
The daughter-in-law of Jove? In common course  
Will fire and rushing torrent never run; 280  
The thirsty Bear will never taste the sea—  
And never shall my woes go unavenged.  
Though thou didst bear the vasty heavens up,  
Though all the world is debtor unto thee,  
'Twill not avail thee now, for thou shalt find  
A monster greater far than Hydra's rage,  
An angry wife's revenge, awaiting thee.  
The flames that leap from Aetna's top to heaven 285  
Burn not so fiercely as my passion's fire  
Which shall outvie whate'er thou hast o'ercome.  
Shall then a captive slave usurp my bed?  
Before, I feared the monsters dire; but now,  
Those pests have vanished quite, and in their stead  
This hated rival comes. O mighty God, 290  
Of all gods ruler, O thou lustrous Sun,  
'Tis only in his perils, then, it seems,  
Have I been wife to Hercules. The gods  
Have granted to the captive all my prayers;  
For her behoof have I been fortunate.  
Ye heard, indeed, my prayers, O gods of heaven,  
And Hercules is safe returned—for her! 295  
O grief, that no revenge can satisfy,  
Seek out some dreadful means of punishment,  
By man unthought of and unspeakable.  
Teach Juno's self how slight her hatred is.  
She knows not how to rage. O Hercules,  
For me didst thou thy mighty battles wage;  
For me did Acheloüs dye his waves 300  
With his own blood in mortal strife with thee,  
When now a writhing serpent he became,  
Now to a threatening bull he turned himself,  
And thou a thousand beasts didst overcome  
In one sole enemy. But now, alas,  
Am I no longer pleasing in thy sight.



And this base captive is preferred to me.  
But this she shall not be. For that same day  
Which ends our married joys shall end thy life. 305  
But what is this? My rage begins to fail  
And moderate its threats. My anger's gone.  
Why dost thou languish thus, O wretched grief?  
Wilt thou give o'er thy passion, be again  
The faithful, uncomplaining wife? Ah no!  
Why dost thou strive to check the flames of wrath?  
Why quench its fire? Let me but keep my rage, 310  
And I shall be the peer of Hercules,  
And I shall need to seek no heavenly aid.  
But still, though all uncalled, will Juno come  
To guide my hands.

*Nurse:* What crime dost thou intend,  
O foolish one? Wilt slay thy noble lord,  
Whose praises from the east to west are known, 315  
Whose fame extends from earth to highest  
heaven?  
For all the earth will rise to avenge his death;  
And this thy father's house and all thy race  
Will be the first to fall. Soon rocks and brands  
Will be against thee hurled, since every land 320  
Will its protector shield; and thou alone  
Wilt suffer many, many penalties.  
Suppose thou canst escape the world of men;  
Still must thou face the thunderbolts of Jove,  
The father of Alcides. Even now  
His threat'ning torches gleam athwart the sky,  
And all the heavens tremble with the shock. 325  
Nay, death itself, wherein thou hop'st to find  
A place of safe retreat—fear that as well;  
For there Alcides' uncle reigns supreme.  
Turn where thou wilt, O wretched woman; there  
Shalt thou behold thy husband's kindred gods. 330

*Deianira:* A fearful crime it is, I do confess;  
But O, my passion bids me do it still

But Oh, my passion bids me do it still.

*Nurse:* Thou'lt die.

*Deianira:* But as the wife of Hercules  
I'll die; no night shall ever bring the day  
That shall behold me cheated of my own,  
Nor shall a captive mistress have my bed.  
Sooner shall western skies give birth to day; 335  
Sooner shall men of India make their home  
Beneath the icy pole, and Phoebus tan  
With his hot rays the shivering Scythians,  
Than shall the dames of Thessaly behold  
My downfall. For with my own blood I'll quench  
The marriage torches. Either he shall die,  
Or slay me with his hand. To all the beasts 340  
Whom he has slaughtered let him add his wife;  
Let me be numbered 'mongst his mighty deeds;  
But in my death my body still shall claim  
The couch of Hercules. Oh, sweet, 'tis sweet  
To fare to Hades as Alcides' bride,  
And not without my vengeance. If, indeed, 345  
From Hercules my rival has conceived,  
With my own hands I'll tear the child away  
Untimely, and that shameless harlot face  
Within her very wedding torches' glare.  
And though in wrath upon his nuptial day  
He slay me as a victim at the shrine,  
Let me but fall upon my rival's corse,  
And I shall die content. For happy he  
Who drags with him his enemy to death. 350

*Nurse:* Why dost thou feed thy passion's flames, poor  
child,  
And nurse thy grief? Why cherish needless fear?  
He did feel love for Iole, 'tis true;  
But in the time while yet her father reigned,  
And while she was a haughty monarch's child.  
The princess now has fallen to the place  
Of slave and love has lost its power to charm

OF slave, and love has lost its power to charm,  
Since her unhappy state has stol'n from her 355  
Her loveliness. The unattainable  
Is ever sought in love. But from the thing  
That is within his reach love turns away.

*Deianira:* Nay: fallen fortunes fan the flames of love;  
And for this very reason does he love,  
Because her home is lost, and from her head  
The crown of gleaming gold and gems has fallen. 360  
For these her woes he pities her—and loves.  
'Twas e'er his wont to love his captive maids.

*Nurse:* 'Tis true, he loved the captive Trojan maid,  
Young Priam's sister; but he gave her up.  
Recall how many dames, how many maids  
Aforetime he has loved, this wandering swain. 365  
The Arcadian maiden Auge, while she led  
The choral dance of Pallas, roused his love  
And suffered straight his passionate embrace.  
But from his heart she quickly fell away,  
And now retains no traces of his love.  
Why mention others? The Thespiades  
Enjoyed the passing love of Hercules, 370  
But are forgotten. Soon, a wanderer  
Upon Timolus, he caressed the queen  
Of Lydia, and, smitten by her love,  
He sat beside the whirling distaff there,  
His doughty fingers on the moistened thread.  
His neck no longer bears the lion's spoil;  
But there he sits, a languid, love-sick slave,  
His shaggy locks with Phrygian turban bound, 375  
And dripping with the costly oil of myrrh.  
Yes, everywhere he feels the fires of love,  
But always does he glow with transient flame.

*Deianira:* But lovers after many transient flames,  
Are wont at last to choose a single love.

*Nurse:* And could Alcides choose instead of thee  
A slave, the daughter of his enemy?

A slave, the daughter of his enemy!

380

*Deianira:* As budding groves put on a joyous form  
When spring's warm breezes clothe the naked boughs;  
But, when the northwind rages in their stead,  
And savage winter strips the leaves away,  
Thou seest naught but bare and shapeless trunks:  
So this my beauty, which has traveled far  
Along the road of life, has lost its bloom, 385  
And gleams less brightly than in former years.  
Behold that loveliness—but Oh, whate'er  
Was once by many suitors sought in me,  
Has vanished quite; for toils of motherhood  
Have stolen my beauty, and with speeding foot  
Advancing age has hurried it away.  
But, as thou seest, this slave has not yet lost 390  
Her glorious charms. Her queenly robes, 'tis true,  
Have yielded to the garb of poverty;  
Still, through her very grief her beauty shines,  
And nothing save her kingdom has she lost  
By this hard stroke of fate. This fear of her  
Doth vex my heart and take away my sleep. 395  
I once was in the eyes of all the world  
The wife most to be praised; and every bride  
Longed for a mate like mine with envious prayers;  
And every soul that asked the gods for aught,  
Took me as type and measure of her vows.  
What father shall I ever find, O nurse, 400  
To equal Jove? What husband like to mine  
In all the world? Though he, Eurystheus' self,  
Beneath whose power my Hercules is placed,  
Should take me for his wife, 'twould not suffice.  
A trifling thing, to miss a royal couch;  
But far she falls who loses Hercules. 405

*Nurse:* But children often win a husband's love.

*Deianira:* My rival's child perchance will win him too.

*Nurse:* I think that slave is but a gift for thee.

*Deianira:* This fellow whom thou seest wandering  
Throughout our Grecian cities, big with fame, 410  
A tawny lion's spoils upon his back,  
And in his dreadful hand a massive club;  
Who takes their realms away from haughty kings,  
And gives them to the weak; whose praise is sung  
By men of every land throughout the world:  
This man is but a trifler, without thought 415  
Of winning deathless glory for himself.  
He wanders through the earth, not in the hope  
That he may rival Jupiter, or go  
With great renown throughout the towns of Greece;  
His quest is ever love, the maiden's couch.  
He takes by force what is refused to him;  
He rages 'gainst the nations, seeks his brides 420  
Amidst the ruins of a people's hopes.  
And this wild carnival of lustful crime  
Is by the honored name, heroic, called.  
But now, illustrious Oechalia fell;  
One sun, one day beheld it stand—and fall.  
And of the strife the only cause was love.  
As often as a father shall refuse  
To give his daughter unto Hercules, 425  
And be the father of his enemy,  
So often need he be in mortal fear.  
If he is not accepted as a son,  
He smites in rage. Why then do I preserve  
In harmless inactivity these hands,  
Until he feign another fit of rage,  
And stretch his bow with deadly aim at me,  
And slaughter both his wife and child at once?  
Thus 'tis his wont to put away his wives; 430  
And such his cruel method of divorce.  
But he cannot be held the guilty one!  
For he contrives to make the world believe  
That Juno is the cause of all his crimes.  
O sluggish passion, why inactive stand?

Anticipate his crime, and act at once  
While still thy hands are burning for the deed.

435

*Nurse:* Wilt kill thy husband?

*Deianira:* And my rival's too.

*Nurse:* The son of Jove?

*Deianira:* Alcmena's son as well.

*Nurse:* With the sword?

*Deianira:* The sword.

*Nurse:* If not?

*Deianira:* With guile I'll slay.

*Nurse:* What madness this?

*Deianira:* That which I learned of him.

*Nurse:* Whom Juno could not harm wilt thou destroy?

440

*Deianira:* Celestial anger only wretched makes  
Those whom it touches; mortal wrath destroys.

*Nurse:* Oh, spare thy husband, wretched one, and fear.

*Deianira:* The one who first has learned the scorn of death,  
Scorns everything. 'Tis sweet to meet the sword.

*Nurse:* Thy grief is all too great, my foster-child;  
Let not his fault claim more than equal hate.  
Why dost so sternly judge a light offense?  
Nay, suit thy grieving to thine injury.

445

*Deianira:* But dost thou call a mistress light offense?  
Of all that feeds my grief, count this the worst.

*Nurse:* And has thy love for great Alcides fled?

*Deianira:* Not fled, dear nurse, believe me; still it lies  
Securely fixed within my inmost heart.  
But outraged love is poignant misery.

450

*Nurse:* By magic arts united to their prayers  
Do wives full oft their wandering husbands bind

DO WIVES TALK OF THEIR WANDERING HUSBANDS BIRD.

I have myself in midst of winter's cold  
Commanded trees to clothe themselves in green,  
The thunderbolt to stop; I've roused the sea  
When no wind blew, and calmed the swollen  
waves; 455

The thirsty plain has opened at my touch  
To springs of water; rocks give way to me,  
And doors fly open; when I bid them stand  
The shades of hell obey, and talk with me;  
The infernal dog is still at my command;  
Midnight has seen the sun, midday the night. 460  
For sea, land, heaven, and hell obey my will,  
And nothing can withstand my potent charms.  
Then let us bend him; charms will find the way.

*Deianira:* What magic herbs does distant Pontus yield,  
Or Pindus 'neath the rocks of Thessaly, 465  
Where I may find a charm to bend his will?  
Though Luna leave the stars and fall to earth,  
Obedient to thy magic; though the crops  
In winter ripen; though the hurtling bolt  
Stand still at thy command; though all the laws  
Of nature be reversed, and stars shine out 470  
Upon the noonday skies—he would not yield.

*Nurse:* But Love has conquered e'en the heavenly gods.

*Deianira:* Perhaps by one alone he will himself  
Be conquered, and give spoils of war to him,  
And so become Alcides' latest task.  
But by each separate god of heaven I pray,  
By this my fear: what secret I disclose 475  
Keep hidden thou and close within thy breast.

*Nurse:* What secret wouldst thou then so closely guard?

*Deianira:* I mean no weapons, arms, or threatening flames.

*Nurse:* I can give pledge of faith, if it be free  
From sin; for sometimes faith itself is sin. 480

*Deianira:* Lest someone hear my secret, look about;  
In all directions turn thy watchful gaze.

*Nurse:* Behold, the place is free from curious eyes.

*Deianira:* Deep hidden, far within this royal pile, 485  
There is a cave that guards my secret well.  
Neither the rising sun can reach the spot  
With its fresh beams; nor can its latest rays,  
When Titan leads the weary day to rest,  
And plunges 'neath the ruddy ocean's waves.  
There lies a charm that can restore to me 490  
The love of Hercules. I'll tell thee all.  
The giver of the charm was Nessus, he  
Whom Nephele to bold Ixion bore,  
Where lofty<sup>[27]</sup> Pindus towers to the skies,  
And high above the clouds cold Othrys stands.  
For when, compelled by dread Alcides' club 495  
To shift with ready ease from form to form  
Of beasts, and, overcome in every form,  
At last bold Acheloüs bowed his head  
With its one horn defiled; then Hercules,  
Exulting in his triumph, claimed his bride  
And bore me off to Argos. Then, it chanced, 500  
Evenus' stream that wanders through the plain,  
Its whirling waters bearing to the sea,  
Was swollen beyond its banks<sup>[28]</sup> with turbid flood.  
Here Nessus, well accustomed to the stream,  
Required a price for bearing me across; 505  
And on his back, where beast and human join,  
He took me, boldly stemming every wave.  
Now was fierce Nessus well across the stream,  
And still in middle flood Alcides fared,  
Breasting with mighty strides the eager waves;  
When he, beholding Hercules afar,  
Cried, "Thou shalt be my wife, my booty thou, 510  
For Hercules is held within the stream;"  
And clasping me was galloping away.



BUT now the waves could not thwart Hercules.  
"O faithless ferryman," he shouted out,  
"Though Ganges and the Ister join their floods,  
I shall o'ercome them both and check thy flight." 515  
His arrow sped before his words were done,  
Transfixing Nessus with a mortal wound,  
And stayed his flight. Then he, with dying eyes  
Seeking the light, within his hand caught up  
The flowing<sup>[29]</sup> gore; and in his hollow hoof, 520  
Which he with savage hand had wrenched away,  
He poured and handed it to me, and said:  
"This blood, magicians say, contains a charm,  
Which can a wavering love restore; for so  
Thessalian dames by Mycale were taught,  
Who only, 'midst all wonder-working crones, 525  
Could lure the moon from out the starry skies.  
A garment well anointed with this gore  
Shalt thou present to him," the centaur said,  
"If e'er a hated rival steal thy couch,  
If e'er thy husband in a fickle mood  
To heavenly Jove another daughter give. 530  
Let not the light of day shine on the charm,  
But in the thickest darkness let it lie.  
So shall the blood its magic power retain."  
So spake he; o'er his words a silence fell,  
And the sleep of death upon his weary limbs.  
Do thou, who knowest now my secret plans, 535  
Make haste and bring this charm to me, that so  
Its force, imparted to a gleaming robe,  
May at the touch dart through his soul, his limbs,  
And through the very marrow of his bones.

*Nurse:* With speed will I thy bidding do, dear child.  
And do thou call upon the god of love,  
Invincible, who with his tender hand  
Doth speed his arrows with unerring aim. 540

[*Exit Nurse.*]

*Deianira* [*invoking Cupid*]: O wingéd boy, by earth and heaven feared,  
By creatures of the sea, and him who wields  
The bolts in Aetna forged; and dreaded too  
By thy relentless mother, queen of love:  
Aim with unerring hand thy swiftest dart.  
Not harmless be the shaft, but choose, I pray  
One of thy keenest arrows, which thy hand 545  
Has never used; for such must be thy dart  
If mighty Hercules be forced to love.  
Make firm thy hands and strongly bend thy bow;  
Now, now that shaft let loose which once thou aim'dst  
At Jove the terrible, what time the god 550  
Laid down his thunderbolts, and as a bull  
With swelling forehead clove the boisterous sea,  
And bore the Assyrian maiden as his prize.  
Now fill his heart with love; let him surpass  
All who have ever felt thy passion's power—  
And learn to love his wife. If Iole 555  
Has kindled flames of love within his heart,  
Extinguish them, and let him dream alone  
Of me. Thou who hast often conquered Jove,  
The Thunderer, and him whose scepter dark  
Holds sway within the gloomy underworld,  
The king of countless throngs, the lord of Styx;  
Whom angry Juno cannot quell: win thou 560  
Alone this triumph over Hercules.

*Nurse* [*returning with robe and charm ready*]: The charm from its dark  
hiding-place is brought,  
And that fair robe upon whose cunning web  
Thy maidens all have wrought with wearied hands.  
Now bring the poisoned blood and let the robe  
Drink in its magic power, while by my prayers 565  
Will I the charm augment.

[*Enter Lichas.*]

But at the word  
The faithful Lichas comes. Quick! hide the charm,  
Lest by his mouth our plot may be revealed

*Deianira* [to Lichas]: O Lichas, ever faithful to thy lord,  
A name which mighty houses may not boast: 570  
Take thou this garment woven by my hands,  
While Hercules was wandering o'er the earth,  
Or, spent with wine, was holding in his arms  
The Lydian queen, or calling Iole.  
And yet, perchance, I still may turn his heart  
To me again by wifely service. Thus  
Have evil men full often been reclaimed. 575  
Before my husband puts this tunic on,  
Bid him burn incense and appease the gods,  
His rough locks wreathed with hoary poplar leaves.  
[Lichas takes the robe and departs upon his mission.]  
I will myself within the palace go  
And pray the mother of relentless love. 580  
[To her Aetolian attendants.]  
Do ye, who from my father's house have come,  
Bewail the sad misfortunes of your queen.

[Exit.]

*Chorus of Aetolian women*: We weep for thee, O lady dear,  
And for thy couch dishonored—we,  
The comrades of thy earliest years,  
Weep and lament thy fate. 585  
How often have we played with thee  
In Acheloüs' shallow pools,  
When now the swollen floods of spring  
Had passed away, and gently now,  
With graceful sweep, the river ran;  
When mad Lycormas ceased to roll  
His headlong waters on. 590  
How oft have we, a choral band,  
To Pallas' altars gone with thee;  
How oft in Theban baskets borne  
The sacred Bacchic mysteries, 595  
When now the wintry stars have fled,

When each third summer calls the sun;  
And when, the sacred rites complete  
To Ceres, queen of golden grain,  
Eleusin hides her worshipers  
Within her mystic cave.  
Now too, whatever fate thou fear'st, 600  
Accept us as thy trusted friends;  
For rare is such fidelity  
When better fortune fails.  
O thou, who wield'st the scepter's power,  
Whoe'er thou art, though eagerly  
The people throng within thy courts, 605  
And press for entrance at thy doors;  
And though the crowds press thick about  
Where'er thou tak'st thy way: be sure  
That in so many seeming friends,  
Scarce one is true.  
Erinyes keeps the gilded gate;  
And when the great doors swing apart, 610  
Then cunning treachery creeps in  
And fraud, and murderous dagger points.  
Whene'er thou think'st to walk abroad,  
Base envy as thy comrade goes.  
As often as the morning dawns  
Be sure a king from fear of death 615  
Has been delivered. Few there are  
Who love the king, and not his power.  
For 'tis the glitter of the throne  
That fires most hearts to loyalty.  
Now one is eager next the king  
To walk before the gaze of men,  
And so gain luster for himself;  
For greed of glory burns his heart. 620  
Another from the royal stores  
Seeks to supply his own desires;  
And yet not all the precious sands  
Of Hister's streams could satisfy,  
Nor Ivdia sate his thirst for gold.

— Nor that far land where Zephyr blows,  
Which looks in wonder on the gleam  
Of Tagus' golden sands. 625  
Were all the wealth of Hebrus his;  
If rich Hydaspes were his own;  
If through his fields, with all its stream,  
He saw the Ganges flowing: still  
For greed, base greed 'twould not suffice. 630  
One honors kings and courts of kings,  
Not that his careful husbandmen  
Forever stooping o'er the plow  
May never cease their toil for him;  
Or that his peasantry may till  
His thousand fields: but wealth alone, 635  
Which he may hoard away, he seeks.  
Another worships kings, that so  
All other men he may oppress,  
May ruin many, none assist;  
And with this sole aim covets power,  
That he may use it ill.  
How few live out their fated span!  
Whom yesternight saw radiant 640  
With joy, the newborn day beholds  
In wretched case. How rare it is  
To find old age and happiness  
Combined. More soft than Tyrian couch,  
The greensward soothes to fearless sleep;  
But gilded ceilings break our rest, 645  
And sleepless through the night we lie  
On beds of luxury.  
Oh, should the rich lay bare their hearts,  
What fears which lofty fortune breeds  
Would be revealed! The Bruttian coast  
When Corus lashes up the sea 650  
Is calmer far. Not so the poor:  
His heart is ever full of peace.  
From shallow beechen cups he drinks,

But not with trembling hands; his food  
Is cheap and common, but he sees  
No naked sword above his head. 655  
'Tis in the cup of gold alone  
That blood is mingled with the wine.  
The poor man's wife no necklace wrought  
Of costly pearls, the red sea's gift,  
May wear; no gems from eastern shores 660  
Weigh down her ears; nor does she wear  
Soft scarlet wools in Tyrian dye  
Twice dipped; not hers with Lydian art  
To 'broider costly silks whose threads  
The Serians under sunlit skies 665  
From orient treetops gather; she  
With common herbs must dye the web  
Which she with unskilled hands has wov'n:  
But still her husband is her own,  
Her couch by rivals undisturbed. 670  
But favored brides, whose wedding day  
The thronging people celebrate,  
Fate with her cruel torch pursues.  
The poor no happiness can know  
Unless he sees the fortunate  
From their high station fallen.  
Whoever shuns the middle course  
Can never in safe pathways go. 675  
When once bold Phaëthon essayed  
Within his father's car to stand  
And give the day, and did not fare  
Along the accustomed track, but sought  
With wandering wheels to make his way  
With Phoebus' torch 'midst unknown stars 680

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Himself he ruined and the earth  
In one destruction. Daedalus  
The middle course of heaven pursued,  
And so to peaceful shores attained  
And gave no sea its name. His son.

Young Icarus, dared rival birds 685  
 In flight, despised his father's wings,  
 And soared high up into the realm  
 Of Phoebus' rays: headlong he fell  
 And to an unknown sea his name  
 He gave. So are great fortunes joined  
 To mighty ills. 690  
 Let others then as fortunate  
 And great be hailed; I wish no share  
 Of popular renown. My boat  
 Is frail and needs must hug the shore.  
 And let no strong wind force my bark  
 Far out to sea; for fortune spares 695  
 Safe-harbored boats, but seeks the ships  
 In mid sea proudly sailing on,  
 Their topsails in the clouds.  
 But why with pallid face, in fear,  
 Like some Bacchante smitten sore 700  
 With madness, comes our princess forth?  
 What new reverse of fortune's wheel  
 Has come to vex thy tortured soul?  
 For though thou speakest ne'er a word, poor queen,  
 Whate'er thou hidest, in thy face is seen.

#### FOOTNOTES:

[27] Reading, *celsus*.

[28] Reading, *ripis*.

[29] Reading, *fluentem*.

### ACT III

*Deianira* [*hurrying distractedly out of the palace*]: A nameless terror fills  
 my stricken limbs,  
 My hair stands up in horror, and my soul, 705  
 But now so passion tossed, is dumb with fear.

But now so passion tossed, is dumb with fear,  
My heart beats wildly, and my liver throbs  
With pulsing veins. As when the storm-tossed sea  
Still heaves and swells, although the skies are clear 710  
And winds have died away; so is my mind  
Still tossed and restless, though my fear is stayed.  
When once the fortunate begin to feel  
The wrath of god, their sorrows never cease.  
For so does fortune ever end in woe.

*Nurse:* What new distress, poor soul, has come to thee? 715

*Deianira:* But now, when I had sent away the robe  
With Nessus' poisoned blood besmeared, and I,  
With sad forebodings, to my chamber went,  
Some nameless fear oppressed my anxious heart,  
A fear of treachery. I thought to prove  
The charm. Fierce Nessus, I bethought me then,  
Had bidden me to keep the blood from flame;  
And this advice itself foreboded fraud. 720  
It chanced the sun was shining, bright and warm,  
Undimmed by clouds. As I recall it now,  
My fear scarce suffers me to tell the tale. [30]  
Into the blazing radiance of the sun  
I cast the blood-stained remnant of the cloth 725  
With which the fatal garment had been smeared.  
The thing writhed horribly, and burst aflame  
As soon as Phoebus warmed it with his rays.  
Oh, 'tis a dreadful portent that I tell!  
As when the snows on Mimas' sparkling sides  
Are melted by the genial breath of spring;  
As on Leucadia's crags the heaving waves 730  
Are dashed and break in foam upon the beach;  
Or as the incense on the holy shrines  
Is melted by the warming altar fires:  
So did the woolen fragment melt away.  
And while in wonder and amaze I looked, 735  
The object of my wonder disappeared.  
Nay, e'en the ground itself began to foam,



And what the poison touched to shrink away.

[*Hyllus is seen approaching.*]

But hither comes my son with face of fear,  
And hurrying feet.

740

[*To Hyllus.*]

What tidings dost thou bear?

*Hyllus:* Oh, speed thee, mother, to whatever place  
On land or sea, among the stars of heaven,  
Or in the depths of hell, can keep thee safe  
Beyond the deadly reach of Hercules.

*Deianira:* Some great disaster doth my mind presage.

745

*Hyllus:* Hie thee to Juno's shrine, the victor's realm;  
This refuge waits thee 'midst the loss of all.

*Deianira:* Tell what disaster hath o'erta'en me now.

*Hyllus:* That glory and sole bulwark of the world,  
Whom in the place of Jove the fates had given  
To bless the earth, O mother, is no more.  
A strange infection wastes Alcides' limbs;  
And he who conquered every form of beast,  
He, he, the victor is o'ercome with woe.  
What wouldst thou further hear?

750

*Deianira:* All wretched souls  
Are e'er in haste to know their miseries.  
Come, tell, what present fate o'erhangs our house?  
O wretched, wretched house! Now, now indeed,  
Am I a widow, exiled, fate-o'ercome.

755

*Hyllus:* Not thou alone dost weep for Hercules;  
For in his fall the universe laments.  
Think not on private griefs; the human race  
Lifts up the voice of mourning. All the world  
Is grieving with the selfsame grief thou feel'st.  
Thou shar'st thy misery with every land.  
Thou hast, indeed, forestalled their grief, poor soul;  
Thou first, but not alone, dost weep for him.

760

*Deianira:* Yet tell me, tell, I pray, how near to death  
Lies my Alcides now. 765

*Hyllus:* Death flees his grasp,  
Death whom he conquered once in its own realm;  
Nor will the fates permit so great a crime.  
Perchance dread Clotho from her trembling hand  
Has thrown aside her distaff, and in fear  
Refuses to complete Alcides' fate. 770  
O day, O awful day! and must this be  
The final day for mighty Hercules?

*Deianira:* To death and the world of shades, to that dark realm,  
Dost say that he has gone already? Why,  
Oh, why may I not be the first to go?  
But tell me truly, if he still doth live.

*Hyllus:* Euboea stands with high uplifted head,  
On every side lashed by the tossing waves. 775  
Here high Caphereus faces Phrixus' sea,  
And here rough Auster blows. But on the side  
Which feels the blast of snowy Aquilo,  
Euripus restless leads his wandering waves;  
Seven times his heaving tides he lifts on high,  
Seven times they sink again, before the sun 780  
His weary horses plunges in the sea.  
Here on a lofty cliff, 'midst drifting clouds,  
An ancient temple of Cenean Jove  
Gleams far and wide. When at the altars stood  
The votive herd, and all the grove was full  
Of hollow bellowings of the gilded bulls;  
Then Hercules put off his lion's skin 785  
With gore besmeared, his heavy club laid down,  
And freed his shoulders of the quiver's weight.  
Then, gleaming brightly in the robe thou gav'st,  
His shaggy locks with hoary poplar wreathed,  
He lit the altar fires, and prayed: "O Jove,  
Not falsely called my father, take these gifts 790  
And let the sacred fire blaze brightly up

With copious incense, which the Arab rich  
From Saba's trees in worship of the sun  
Collects. All monsters of the earth, the sea,  
The sky have been subdued at last, and I,  
As victor over all, am home returned.  
Lay down thy thunderbolt." So prayed he then. 795  
But even as he prayed a heavy groan  
Fell from his lips, and he was horror struck  
And mute awhile. And then with dreadful cries  
He filled the air. As when a votive bull  
Feels in his wounded neck the deep-driven ax,  
And flees away, retaining still the steel,  
And fills with loud uproar the spacious hall;  
Or as the thunder rumbles round the sky: 800  
So did Alcides smite the very stars  
And sea with his loud roarings. Chalcis heard,  
The Cyclades re-echoed with the sound,  
Caphereus' rocky crags and all the grove  
Resounded with the groans of Hercules. 805  
We saw him weep. The common people deemed  
His former madness had come back to him.  
His servants fled away in fear. But he,  
With burning gaze, seeks one among them all,  
Ill-fated Lichas, who, with trembling hands  
Upon the altar, even then forestalled 810  
Through deadly fear the bitter pangs of death,  
And so left meager food for punishment.  
Then did Alcides grasp the quivering corpse  
And cried: "By such a hand as this, ye fates,  
Shall it be said that I was overcome?  
Has Lichas conquered Hercules? See then  
Another slaughter: Hercules in turn  
Slays Lichas. Be my noble deeds by this 815  
Dishonored; let this be my crowning task."  
He spake, and high in air the wretched boy  
Was hurled, the very heavens with his gore  
Besprinkling. So the Getan arrow flies,  
Far leaping from the bowman's hand; so flies

The Cretan dart, but far within the mark. 820  
His head against the jagged rocks is dashed,  
His headless body falls into the sea,  
Death<sup>[31]</sup> claiming both. "But hold," Alcides said,  
"No madness steals my reason as of yore;  
This is an evil greater far than rage  
Of madness; 'gainst myself alone I turn."  
He stays him not to tell his cause of woe, 825  
But rages wildly, tearing at his flesh,  
His huge limbs rending with his savage hands.  
He strove to tear away the fatal robe;  
But this alone of all his mighty deeds  
Alcides could not do. Yet striving still  
To tear the garment off, he tore the flesh.  
The robe seemed part of that gigantic form,  
Yea, part and parcel of the flesh itself. 830  
The cause of this dire suffering is hid,  
But yet there is a cause. His pain at length  
Unable to endure, prone on the earth  
He grovels; now for cooling water calls.  
But water has no power to soothe his pain.  
He seeks the shore and plunges in the sea, 835  
The while his servant's hands direct his steps.  
Oh, bitter lot, that mighty Hercules  
Should come to be the mate of common men!  
And now a vessel from Euboea's shore  
Bears off the ponderous bulk of Hercules,  
The gentle southwind wafting it along.  
His spirit from his mighty frame has fled, 840  
And o'er his eyes have fall'n the shades of night.

*Deianira:* Why dost thou hesitate? why stand amazed,  
O soul, that thus at last the deed is done?<sup>[32]</sup>  
But Jove demands again his son of thee;  
Juno, her rival; yea, to all the world  
Must he be given back. Vain such appeal.  
Make then what reparation<sup>[33]</sup> yet thou mayst:  
Through this my guilty body let the sword

through this my guilty body let the sword  
Be driven. Thus, thus, 'tis well that it be done. 845  
But can this puny hand of mine atone  
For crime so great? O sire of Hercules,  
Destroy me with thy hurtling thunderbolt,  
Thy guilty daughter. With no common dart  
Arm thine avenging hand; but use that shaft  
With which, had Hercules ne'er sprung from thee,  
Thou wouldst have scorched the hydra. As a pest 850  
Unprecedented smite me, as a scourge  
Far worse to bear than any stepdame's wrath.  
Such bolt as once at wandering Phaëthon  
Thou hurledst, aim at me. For I myself  
Have ruined all mankind in Hercules.  
But why demand a weapon of the gods? 855  
For 'tis her shame that great Alcides' wife  
Should pray for death. Let prayers give way to deeds,  
And from myself let me demand my death.  
Take then the sword in haste. But why the sword?  
Whate'er can work my death is sword enough.  
From some heaven-piercing cliff I'll cast me down.  
Yea, let our neighboring Oeta be my choice, 860  
Whose top is first to greet the newborn day.  
From its high peak I'll hurl me down to death.  
May I be rent asunder on its crags,  
And every rock demand some part of me;  
Let sharp projections pierce my mangled hands,  
And all the rugged mountainside be red  
With blood. One death is not enough, 'tis true; 865  
But still its agony can be prolonged.  
O hesitating soul, thou canst not choose  
What form of death to die. Oh, that the sword  
Of Hercules within my chamber hung!  
How fitting 'twere by such a sword to die!  
But is't enough that by one hand I fall?  
Assemble, all ye nations of the world, 870  
And hurl upon me rocks and blazing brands;  
Let no hand shirk its task of punishment,

For your avenger have I done to death.  
Now with impunity shall cruel kings  
Their scepters wield; and monstrous ills shall rise  
With none to let; again shall shrines be sought, 875  
Where worshiper and victim are alike  
In human form. A broad highway for crime  
Have I prepared; and, by removing him  
Who was their bulwark, have exposed mankind  
To every form of monstrous man and beast  
And savage god. Why dost thou cease thy work,  
O wife of thundering Jove? Why dost thou not, 880  
In imitation of thy brother, snatch  
From his own hand the fiery thunderbolt,  
And slay me here thyself? For thou hast lost  
Great praise and mighty triumph by my act:  
I have forestalled thee, Juno, in the death  
Of this thy rival.

*Hyllus:* Wouldst to ruin doom  
Thy house already tottering? This crime,  
Whate'er it is, is all from error sprung.  
He is not guilty who unwitting sins. 885

*Deianira:* Whoe'er ignores his fate and spares himself,  
Deservedly has erred, deserves to die.

*Hyllus:* He must be guilty who desires to die.

*Deianira:* Death, only, makes the erring innocent.

*Hyllus:* Fleeing the sun— 890

*Deianira:* The sun himself flees me.

*Hyllus:* Wouldst leave thy life?

*Deianira:* A wretched life indeed;  
I long to go where Hercules has gone.

*Hyllus:* He still survives, and breathes the air of heaven.

*Deianira:* Alcides died when first he was o'ercome.

*Hyllus:* Wilt leave thy son behind? forestall thy fates?

*Deianira:* She whom her own son buries has lived long.

*Hyllus:* Follow thy husband.

*Deianira:* Chaste wives go before.

*Hyllus:* Who dooms himself to death confesses sin.

*Deianira:* No sinner seeks to shirk his punishment.

*Hyllus:* The life of many a man has been restored  
Whose guilt in judgment not in action lay. 900  
Who blames the lot by fate assigned to him?

*Deianira:* He blames it to whom fate has been unkind.

*Hyllus:* But Hercules himself killed Megara,  
And by his raging hands with deadly darts  
Transfixed his sons. Still, though a parricide, 905  
Thrice guilty, he forgave himself the deed,  
Blaming his madness. In Cinyphian waves  
In Libya's land he washed his sin away,  
And cleansed his hands. Then why, poor soul, shouldst thou  
So hastily condemn thine own misdeeds?

*Deianira:* The fact that I have ruined Hercules  
Condemns my deeds. I welcome punishment. 910

*Hyllus:* If I know Hercules, he soon will come  
Victorious over all his deadly woe;  
And agony, o'ercome, will yield to him.

*Deianira:* The hydra's venom preys upon his frame;  
A boundless pestilence consumes his limbs. 915

*Hyllus:* Think'st thou the poison of that serpent, slain,  
Cannot be overcome by that brave man  
Who met the living foe and conquered it?  
He slew the hydra, and victorious stood,  
Though in his flesh the poisonous fangs were fixed,  
And o'er his limbs the deadly venom flowed. 920  
Shall he, who overcame dread Nessus' self,  
By this same Nessus' blood be overcome?

*Deianira:* 'Tis vain to stay one who is bent on death.  
It is my will at once to flee the light.  
Who dies with Hercules has lived enough.

*Nurse:* Now by these hoary locks, as suppliant,  
And by these breasts which suckled thee, I beg: 925  
Abate thy wounded heart's wild threatenings,  
Give o'er thy dread resolve for cruel death.

*Deianira:* Whoe'er persuades the wretched not to die  
Is cruel. Death is sometimes punishment,  
But oft a boon, and brings forgiveness oft. 930

*Nurse:* Restrain at least thy hand, unhappy child,  
That he may know the deed was born of fraud,  
And was not purposed by his wife's design.

*Deianira:* I'll plead my cause before the bar of hell,  
Whose gods, I think, will free me from my guilt,  
Though I am self-condemned; these guilty hands  
Will Pluto cleanse for me. Then, on thy banks, 935  
O Lethe, with my memory clean I'll stand,  
A grieving shade, awaiting him I love.  
But thou, who rulest o'er the world of gloom,  
Prepare some toil for me, some dreadful toil;  
For this my fault outweighs all other sins  
That heart of man has ever dared to do.  
Nay, Juno's self was never bold enough  
To rob the grieving world of Hercules. 940  
Let Sisyphus from his hard labor cease,  
And let his stone upon my shoulders press;  
Let vagrant waves flee from my eager lips,  
And that elusive water mock my thirst.  
Upon thy whirling spokes have I deserved  
To be stretched out, O king of Thessaly. 945  
Let greedy vultures feed upon my flesh.  
One from the tale of the Danaïdes  
Is lacking<sup>[34]</sup> yet; let me the number fill.  
Ye shades, make room for me; O Colchian wife,



Receive me as thy comrade there below. 950  
My deed is worse, far worse than both thy crimes,  
Though thou as mother and as sister, too,  
Hast sinned. Thou also, cruel queen of Thrace,  
Take me as comrade of thy crimes. And thou,  
Althaea, take thy daughter, for indeed  
Thou shalt discern in me thy daughter true.  
And yet not one of you has ever done 955  
Such deed as mine. O all ye faithful wives,  
Who have your seats within the sacred groves,  
Expel me from Elysium's blessed fields.  
But faithless wives, who with their husbands' blood  
Have stained their hands, who have forgotten quite  
Their marriage vows and stood with naked sword 960  
Like Belus' bloody daughters, they will know  
My deeds for theirs and praise them as their own.  
To such a company of wives 'tis meet  
That I betake myself; but even they  
Will shun such dire companionship as mine.  
O husband, strong, invincible, believe  
My soul is innocent, although my hands  
Are criminal. O mind too credulous! 965  
O Nessus, false and skilled in bestial guile!  
Striving my hated rival to remove,  
I have destroyed myself. O beaming sun,  
And thou, O life, that by thy coaxing arts  
Dost strive to hold the wretched in the light,  
Begone! for every day is vile to me  
That shineth not upon my Hercules. 970  
Oh, let me bear, myself, thy sufferings  
And give my life for thee. Or shall I wait  
And keep myself for death at thy right hand?  
Hast still some strength in thee, and can thy hands  
Still bend the bow and speed the fatal shaft?  
Or do thy weapons lie unused, thy bow 975  
No more obedient to thy nerveless hand?  
But if, perchance, thou still art strong to slay,  
Undaunted husband, I await thy hand;

Yea, for this cause will I postpone my death.  
As thou didst Lichas crush, though innocent,  
Crush me, to other cities scatter me,  
Yea, hurl me to a land to thee unknown. 980  
Destroy me as thou didst the Arcadian boar,  
And every monster that resisted<sup>[35]</sup> thee.  
But Oh, from them, my husband, thou didst come  
Victorious and safe.

*Hyllus:* Give o'er, I pray,  
My mother; cease to blame thy guiltless fates.  
Thy deed was but an error, not a fault.

*Deianira:* My son, if thou wouldst truly filial be,  
Come, slay thy mother. Why with trembling hand  
Dost thou stand there? Why turn away thy face? 985  
Such crime as this is truest piety.  
Still dost thou lack incentive for the deed?  
Behold, this hand took Hercules from thee,  
Took that great sire through whom thou dost derive  
Thy blood from thundering Jove. I've stolen from thee  
A greater glory than the life I gave  
At birth. If thou art all unskilled in crime, 990  
Learn from thy mother; wouldst thou thrust the sword  
Into my neck, or sheath it in my womb,  
I'll make thy soul courageous for the deed.  
Thou wilt not be the doer of this crime;  
For though 'tis by thy hand that I shall fall,  
'Twill be my will. O son of Hercules, 995  
Art thou afraid? Wilt thou not be like him,  
Perform thy bidden tasks, the monsters slay?  
Prepare thy dauntless hand. Behold my breast,  
So full of cares, lies open to thy stroke.  
Smite: I forgive the deed; the very fiends, 1000  
The dread Eumenides, will spare thy hand.  
But hark! I hear their dreadful scourges sound.  
See! Who is that who coils her snaky locks,  
And at her ugly temples brandishes

Two deadly<sup>1005</sup> darts? Why dost thou follow me,  
 O dire Megaera, with thy blazing brand? 1005  
 Dost thou seek penalty for Hercules?  
 I will discharge it. O thou dreadful one,  
 Already have the arbiters of hell  
 Passed judgment on me? Lo, I see the doors  
 Of that sad prison-house unfold for me.  
 Who is that ancient man who on his back,  
 Worn with the toil, the stone's huge burden heaves?  
 And even as I look the conquered stone 1010  
 Rolls back again. Who on the whirling wheel  
 Is racked? And see! There stands Tisiphone,  
 With ghastly, cruel face; she seeks revenge.  
 Oh, spare thy scourge, Megaera, spare, I pray,  
 Thy Stygian brands. 'Twas love that prompted me.  
 But what is this? The earth is tottering, 1015  
 The palace roof is crashing to its fall.  
 Whence comes that threatening throng? Against me comes  
 The whole world rushing; see, on every side  
 The nations gnash at me, demanding back  
 Their savior. O ye cities, spare, I pray.  
 Oh, whither shall I hide me from their rage? 1020  
 Death is the only haven left to me.  
 By gleaming Phoebus' fiery disk I swear,  
 By all the gods of heaven: I go to death,  
 But leave Alcides still upon the earth.

*[She rushes from the scene.]*

*Hyllus:* Ah me, in mood of frenzy has she fled.  
 My mother's part in this sad tragedy  
 Is self-assigned; she is resolved to die. 1025  
 My part remains to thwart her dread resolve.  
 O wretched piety! O filial love!  
 If now my mother's death I should prevent,  
 I wrong my father; if I let her die,  
 'Gainst her I sin. Crime stands on either hand;  
 Yet must I check her and true crime withstand. 1030

---

*Chorus:* The sacred singer's word was true  
Which once on Thracian Rhodope,  
Orpheus, the heavenly Muse's son,  
Sang to his lute Pierian:  
That naught for endless life is made. 1035  
At his sweet strains the rushing stream  
Its uproar stilled, and all its waves  
Paused in forgetfulness of flight;  
And while the waters stayed to hear, 1040  
The tribes far down the Hebrus' stream  
Deemed that their river was no more.  
All wingéd creatures of the wood  
And e'en the woods themselves came near  
To listen; or, if far on high  
Some bird was wheeling through the air, 1045  
To that sweet music swift he fell  
On drooping wings. The mountains came:  
Rough Athos with its Centaur herd,  
And Rhodope, its drifted snows  
Loosed by the magic of that song, 1050  
Stood by to hear. The Dryads left  
The shelter of their oaken trunks  
And gathered round the tuneful bard.  
The beasts came, too, and with them came 1055  
Their lairs; hard by the fearless flocks  
The tawny Afric lion crouched;  
The timid does feared not the wolves;  
And serpents crawled forth to the light,  
Their venom quite forgot. 1060  
When through the doors of Taenara  
He made his way to the silent land,  
Sounding his mournful lyre the while,  
The glooms of Tartara were filled  
With his sad song; and the sullen gods

Of Erebus were moved to tears. 1065  
He feared not the pool of the Stygian stream  
By whose dread waves the heavenly gods  
Make oath unbreakable.  
The whirling rim of the restless wheel  
Stood still, its breathless speed at rest.  
The immortal liver of Tityos 1070  
Grew, undevoured, while at the song  
The spellbound birds forgot their greed.  
Thou, too, didst hear, O boatman grim,  
And thy bark that plies the infernal stream  
With oars all motionless came on.  
Then first the hoary Phrygian 1075  
Forgot his thirst, although no more  
The mocking waters fled his lips  
But stood enchanted; now no more  
He reaches hungry hands to grasp  
The luscious fruit.  
When thus through that dark world of souls  
Sweet Orpheus poured such heavenly strains 1080  
That the impious rock of Sisyphus  
Was moved to follow him;  
Then did the goddesses of fate  
Renew the exhausted thread of life  
For fair Eurydice. But when,  
Unmindful of the law they gave, 1085  
And scarce believing that his wife  
Was following, the hapless man  
Looked back, he lost his prize of song;  
For she, who to the very verge  
Of life had come again, fell back  
And died again.  
Then, seeking solace still in song, 1090  
Orpheus unto the Getans sang:

---

The gods themselves are under law,  
Yea he, who through the changing year

Directs the seasons in their course.

1095

---

Dead Hercules bids us believe  
The bard, that not for any man  
The fates reweave the broken web;  
And that all things which have been born,  
And shall be, are but born to die. 1100  
When to the world the day shall come  
On which the reign of law shall cease,  
Then shall the southern heavens fall,  
And overwhelm broad Africa  
With all her tribes; the northern skies 1105  
Shall fall upon those barren plains  
Where sweep the blasts of Boreas.  
Then from the shattered heaven the sun  
Shall fall, and day shall be no more.  
The palace of the heavenly ones 1110  
Shall sink in ruins, dragging down  
The east and western skies. Then death  
And chaos shall o'erwhelm the gods  
In common ruin; and at last, 1115  
When all things else have been destroyed,  
Death shall bring death unto itself.  
Where shall the earth find haven then?  
Will hades open wide her doors  
To let the shattered heavens in?  
Or is the space 'twixt heaven and earth 1120  
Not great enough (perchance too great)  
For all the evils of the world?  
What place is great enough to hold  
Such monstrous ills of fate?<sup>[37]</sup> What place  
Will hold the gods? Shall one place then  
Contain three kingdoms—sea and sky 1125  
And Tartara?—  
But what outrageous clamor this  
That fills our frightened ears? Behold,  
It is the voice of Hercules

IT IS THE VOICE OF HERCULES.

1130

#### FOOTNOTES:

[30] Lines 725-28 follow the text of Schroeder.

[31] Reading, *funus*.

[32] Reading, *quid stupes factum scelus?*

[33] Reading, *reddi*.

[34] Reading, *vacat*.

[35] Reading, *restitit*.

[36] Reading, *atras*.

[37] Reading, *fati*.

#### ACT IV

[*Enter Hercules in the extremity of suffering.*]

*Hercules:* Turn back thy panting steeds, thou shining sun,  
And bid the night come forth. Blot out the day,  
And let the heavens, with pitchy darkness filled,  
Conceal my dying pains from Juno's eyes.  
Now, father, were it fitting to recall  
Dark chaos; now the joinings of the skies  
Should be asunder rent, and pole from pole  
Be cleft. Why, father, dost thou spare the stars?  
Thy Hercules is lost. Now, Jupiter,  
Look well to every region of the heavens,  
Lest any Gyas hurl again the crags  
Of Thessaly, and Othrys be again  
An easy missile for Enceladus.  
Now, even now will haughty Pluto loose  
The gates of hell, strike off his father's chains,  
And give him back to heaven. Since Hercules,  
Who on the earth has seen thy thunderbolt  
And lightning flash, must turn him back to Styx;  
Enceladus the fierce will rise again

1135

1140



Enceladus the fierce with fire again,  
And hurl against the gods that mighty weight 1145  
Which now oppresses him. O Jupiter,  
My death throughout the kingdom of the sky  
Shall shake thy sovereignty. Then, ere thy throne  
Become the giants' spoil, give burial  
Beneath the ruined universe to me;  
Oh, rend thy kingdom ere 'tis rent from thee.

*Chorus:* No empty fears, O Thunderer's son,  
Dost thou express: for soon again  
Shall Pelion on Ossa rest;  
And Athos, heaped on Pindus, thrust  
Its woods amidst the stars of heaven.  
Then shall Typhoeus heave aside  
The crags of Tuscan Ischia; 1155  
Enceladus, not yet o'ercome  
By thunderbolts, shall bear aloft  
The huge Aetnaean furnaces,  
And rend the gaping mountain side.  
So shall it be; for even now  
The skies are tottering with thy fall.

*Hercules:* Lo I, who have escaped the hands of death, 1160  
Who scorned the Styx, and thence through Lethe's pool  
Returned with spoil so grim and terrible,  
That Titan from his reeling chariot  
Was well-nigh thrown; I, whom three realms have felt:  
I feel the pangs of death, and yet no sword  
Has pierced my side, nor has some mighty crag, 1165  
All Othrys, been the weapon of my death;  
No giant with his fierce and gaping jaws  
Has heaped high Pindus on my lifeless corpse.  
Without an enemy am I o'erwhelmed;  
And, what brings greater anguish to my soul 1170  
(Shame to my manhood!), this my final day  
Has seen no monster slain. Ah, woe is me!  
My life is squandered—and for no return.  
O thou, whose rule is over all the world;

Ye gods of heaven who have beheld my deeds;  
O earth, is't fitting that your Hercules  
Should die by such a death? Oh, cruel shame! 1175  
Oh, base and bitter end—that fame should say  
Great Hercules was by a woman slain,  
He who in mortal combat has o'ercome<sup>[38]</sup>  
So many men and beasts! If changeless fate  
Had willed that I by woman's hand should die,  
And if to such base end my thread of life, 1180  
Alas, must lead, Oh, that I might have fallen  
By Juno's hate. 'Twould be by woman's hand,  
But one who holds the heavens in her sway.  
If that, ye gods, were more than I should ask,  
The Amazon, beneath the Scythian skies  
Brought forth, might better have o'ercome my strength.  
But by what woman's hand shall I be said,  
Great Juno's enemy, to have been slain? 1185  
This is for thee, my stepdame, deeper shame.  
Why shouldst thou call this day a day of joy?  
What baleful thing like this has earth produced  
To sate thy wrath? A mortal woman's hate  
Has far excelled thine own. 'Twas late thy shame,  
To feel thyself by Hercules alone 1190  
Outmatched; but now must thou confess thyself  
By two o'ercome. Shame on such heavenly wrath!  
Oh, that the Nemean lion of my blood  
Had drunk his fill, and Oh, that I had fed  
The hydra with his hundred snaky heads  
Upon my gore! Oh, that the centaurs fierce 1195  
Had made a prey of me; or 'midst the shades  
I, bound upon the everlasting rock,  
Were sitting, lost in misery! But no:  
From every distant land I've taken spoil,  
While fate looked on amazed; from hellish Styx  
Have I come back to earth; the bonds of Dis  
I have o'ercome. Death shunned me everywhere, 1200  
That I might lack at last a glorious end.  
Alas for all the monsters I have slain!

.....  
Oh, why did not three-headed Cerberus,  
When he had seen the sunlight, drag me back  
To hell? Why, far away 'neath western skies,  
Did not the monstrous shepherd lay me low?  
And those twin serpents huge—ah, woe is me,  
How often have I 'scaped a glorious death!  
What honor comes from such an end as this? 1205

*Chorus:* Dost see how, conscious of his fame,  
He does not shrink from Lethe's stream?  
Not grief for death, but shame he feels  
At this his cause of death; he longs  
Beneath some giant's vasty bulk  
To draw his final breath, to feel 1210  
Some mountain-heaving Titan's weight  
Oppressing him, to owe his death  
To some wild, raging beast. But no,  
Poor soul, because of thine own hand  
There is no deadly monster more.  
What worthy author of thy death, 1215  
Save that right hand of thine, is left?

*Hercules:* Alas, what Scorpion, what Cancer, torn  
From Summer's burning zone, inflames my breast?  
My lungs, once filled with pulsing streams of blood,  
Are dry and empty now; my liver burns, 1220  
Its healthy juices parched and dried away;  
And all my blood is by slow creeping fires  
Consumed. Destruction on my skin feeds first,  
Then deep within my flesh it eats its way,  
Devours my sides, my limbs and breast consumes, 1225  
Dries up the very marrow of my bones.  
There in my empty bones the pest remains;  
Nor can my massive frame for long endure,  
But even now, with broken, crumbling joints,  
Begins to fall away. My strength is gone,  
And e'en the limbs of mighty Hercules 1230  
Are not enough to satisfy this pest.

Aias, now mighty must that evil be,  
 When I confess it great! Oh, cruel wrong!  
 Now see, ye cities, see what now remains  
 Of famous Hercules. Dost know thy son,  
 O father Jove? Was't with such arms as these 1235  
 That I crushed out the Nemean monster's life?  
 Did this hand stretch that mighty bow of mine  
 Which brought to earth from out the very stars  
 The vile Stymphalian birds? These sluggish feet—  
 Did they outstrip the swiftly fleeing stag,  
 With golden antlers gleaming on his head?  
 Did rocky Calpe, shattered by these hands,  
 Let out the sea? So many monstrous beasts, 1240  
 So many cruel men, so many kings—  
 Did these poor hands of mine destroy them all?  
 Upon these shoulders did the heavens rest?  
 Is this my mighty frame? Is this my neck?  
 Are these the hands which once the tottering skies  
 Upheld? Oh, can it be that ever I  
 The Stygian watchdog dragged into the light?  
 Where are those powers, which ere their proper 1245  
 time  
 Are dead and buried? Why on Jupiter  
 As father do I call? Why, wretched one,  
 Do I lay claim to heaven by right of him?  
 For now, Oh, now will I be thought the son  
 Of old Amphitryon. O deadly pest,  
 Whate'er thou art which in my vitals lurk'st,  
 Come forth. Why with a hidden agony  
 Dost thou afflict my heart? What Scythian sea 1250  
 Beneath the frozen north, what Tethys slow,  
 What Spanish Calpe nigh the Moorish shore  
 Begot and brought thee forth? O evil dire!  
 Art thou some crested serpent brandishing  
 Its hideous head; or some fell thing of ill  
 As yet unknown to me, produced perchance 1255  
 From Hydra's poisonous gore, or left on earth  
 By Cerberus, the deadly dog of Styx?

Oh, every ill art thou, and yet no ill.  
What are thy form and features? Grant at least  
That I may know the thing by which I die.  
Whate'er thy name, whatever monster thou, 1260  
Come out, and show thy terror to my face.  
What enemy has made a way for thee  
Unto my inmost heart? Behold my hands  
Have torn aside my burning skin and so  
My bleeding flesh disclosed. But deeper yet  
Its hiding-place. Oh, woe invincible  
As Hercules! But whence these grievous cries?  
And whence these tears which trickle down my 1265  
cheeks?  
My face, unmoved by grief, has never yet  
Been wet with tears; but now, Oh, shame to me,  
Has learned to weep. Where is the day, the land,  
That has beheld the tears of Hercules?  
Dry-eyed have I my troubles ever borne.  
To thee alone, dire pest, to thee alone 1270  
That strength has yielded which so many ills  
Has overcome. Thou first, yea, first of all  
Hast forced the tear-drops from these stubborn eyes.  
For, harder than the bristling crag, or steel,  
Or than the wandering Symplegades,  
Hast thou my stern face softened, and my tears,  
Unwilling, forced to flow. And now the world, 1275  
O thou most mighty ruler of the skies,  
Has seen me giving way to tears and groans;  
And, that which brings me greater anguish still,  
My stepdame too has seen. But lo, again  
The scorching heat flames up and burns my heart.  
Oh, slay me, father, with thy heavenly dart.

*Chorus:* Where is the strength that can withstand  
The power of suffering? But now  
More hard than Thracian Haemus' crags,  
Sternier than savage northern skies, 1280  
He is by agony subdued.

His fainting head upon his breast  
Falls low; his massive frame he shifts  
From side to side; now and again  
His manly courage dries his tears. 1285  
So, with however warm a flame  
Bright Titan labors to dissolve  
The arctic snows, still are his fires  
By those bright, icy rays outshone.

*Hercules:* O father, turn and look upon my woes. 1290  
Never till now has great Alcides fled  
To thee for aid; not when around my limbs  
The deadly hydra, fertile in its death,  
Its writhing serpents folded. 'Mid the pools  
Of hell, by that thick pall of death I stood  
Surrounded close; and yet I called thee not.  
How many dreadful beasts have I o'ercome, 1295  
How many kings and tyrants; yet my face  
Have I ne'er turned in suppliance to the sky.  
This hand of mine alone has been the god  
Who heard my prayers. No gleaming thunderbolts  
Have ever flashed from heaven on my account.  
But now at last has come a woeful time  
Which bids me ask for aid. This day, the first 1300  
And last, shall hear the prayers of Hercules.  
One thunderbolt I ask, and only one.  
Consider me a giant storming heaven.  
Yea, heaven I might have stormed in very truth;  
But, since I deemed thee sire, I spared the skies.  
Oh, whether thou be harsh or merciful, 1305  
Stretch forth thy hand and grant me speedy death,  
And gain this great renown unto thy name.  
Or, if thy righteous hand refuse a task  
So impious, send forth from Sicily  
Those burning Titans, who with giant hands  
May Pindus huge upheave, and Ossa too, 1310  
And overwhelm me with their crushing weight.  
Let dire Bellona burst the bars of hell,

And with her gleaming weapon pierce my heart;  
Or let fierce Mars be arméd for my death;  
He is my brother; true, but Juno's son.  
Thou also, sprung from father Jove, and so  
Alcides' sister, bright Athene, come, 1315  
And hurl thy spear against thy brother's breast.  
And e'en to thee I stretch my suppliant hands,  
O cruel stepdame; thou at least, I pray,  
Let fly thy dart (so by a woman's hand  
I may be slain), thine anger soothed at last,  
Thy thirst for vengeance sated. Why dost thou  
Still nurse thy wrath? Why further seek revenge? 1320  
Behold Alcides suppliant to thee,  
Which no wild beast, no land has ever seen.  
But now, O Juno, when I need thy wrath,  
Is now thine anger cooled, thy hate forgot?  
Thou giv'st me life when 'tis for death I pray.  
O lands, and countless cities of the earth, 1325  
Is there no one among you all to bring  
A blazing torch for mighty Hercules?  
Will no one give me arms? Why take away  
My weapons from my hands? Then let no land  
Bring forth dire monsters more when I am dead,  
And let the world not ask for aid of mine.  
If other ills are born into the world,  
Then must another savior come as well. 1330  
Oh, bring ye heavy stones from every side  
And hurl them at my wretched head; and so  
O'erwhelm at last my woes. Ungrateful world,  
Dost thou refuse? Hast thou forgot me quite?  
Thou wouldst thyself have been a helpless prey  
To evil monsters, had not I been born.  
Then, O ye peoples, rescue me from ill, 1335  
Your champion. This chance is given you,  
By slaying me to cancel all you owe.

[*Enter* Alcmena.]

*Alcmena:* Where shall Alcides' wretched mother go?  
Where is my son? Lo, if I see aright,  
Yonder he lies with burning fever tossed  
And throbbing heart. I hear his groans of pain.  
Ah me, his life is at an end. My son, 1340  
Come, let me fold thee in a last embrace,  
And catch thy parting spirit in my mouth;  
These arms of mine upon thine own I'll lay.  
But where are they? Where is that sturdy neck  
Which bore the burden of the starry heavens?  
What cause has left to thee so small a part  
Of thy once massive frame? 1345

*Hercules:* Thou seest, indeed,  
The shadow and the piteous counterfeit  
Of thine Alcides. Come, behold thy son.  
But why dost turn away and hide thy face?  
Art thou ashamed that such as I am called  
Thy son?

*Alcmena:* What land, what world has given birth  
To this new monster? What so dire a thing  
Has triumphed over mighty Hercules? 1350

*Hercules:* By my own wife's deceits am I undone.

*Alcmena:* What fraud is great enough to conquer thee?

*Hercules:* Whate'er is great enough for woman's wrath.

*Alcmena:* How got the pest so deep within thy frame? 1355

*Hercules:* Through a poisoned robe sent by a woman's  
hands.

*Alcmena:* Where is the robe? I see thy limbs are bare.

*Hercules:* With me 'tis all consumed.

*Alcmena:* How can it be?

*Hercules:* I tell thee, mother, through my vitals roam  
The hydra and a thousand poisonous beasts.  
What flames as hot as these invade the clouds 1360



What flames do not as these invade the clouds  
O'er Aetna's top? What glowing Lemnian fires,  
What torrid radiance of the burning heavens,  
Within whose scorching zone the day comes not?  
O comrades, take and throw me in the sea,  
Or in the river's rushing stream—alas,  
Where is the stream that will suffice for me? 1365  
Though greater than all lands, not ocean's self  
Can cool my burning pains. To ease my woe  
All streams were not enough, all springs would fail.  
Why, O thou lord of Erebus, didst thou  
To Jove return me? Better had it been  
To hold me fast. Oh, take me back again,  
And show me as I am to those fell shades 1370  
Whom I subdued. Naught will I take away.  
Thou hast no need to fear Alcides more.  
Come death, attack me; have no fear of me;  
For I at length am fain to welcome thee.

*Alcmena:* Restrain thy tears at least; subdue thy pains.  
Come, show thyself unconquered still by woe;  
And death and hell, as is thy wont, defy. 1375

*Hercules:* If on the heights of Caucasus I lay  
In chains, to greedy birds of prey exposed,  
While Scythia wailed in sympathy with me,  
No sound of woe should issue from my lips;  
Or should the huge, unfixed Symplegades  
Together clash and threaten me with death, 1380  
I'd bear unmoved the threatened agony.  
Should Pindus fall upon me, Haemus too,  
Tall Athos which defies the Thracian seas,  
And Mimas at whose towering peaks are hurled  
The bolts of Jove—if e'en the sky itself  
Should fall upon my head, and Phoebus' car 1385  
In blazing torture on my shoulders lie:  
No coward cry of pain would ever show  
The mind of Hercules subdued. Nay more:  
Although a thousand monstrous beasts at once

Should rush upon and rend me limb from limb;  
Though here Stymphalus' bird with clangor wild,  
And there with all his strength the threat'ning 1390  
bull,

And all fierce, monstrous things, should press me hard;  
Nay, though the very soil of earth should rise  
And shriek<sup>[39]</sup> its rage at me from every side;  
Though Sinis dire should hurl me through the air:  
Though sore bestead and mangled, still would I  
In silence bear it all. No beasts, no arms,  
No weapon wielded by the hand of man,  
Could force from me a single word of pain. 1395

*Alcmena:* No woman's poison burns thy limbs, my son;  
But thy long years of work, thy constant toils,  
Have for thy woe some evil sickness bred.

*Hercules:* Sicknes, say'st thou? Where may this sickness be?  
Does any evil still upon the earth  
Exist, with me alive? But let it come.  
Let someone quickly bring my bow to me—  
But no: my naked hands will be enough. 1400  
Now bid the monster come.

*Alcmena:* Alas, his pains,  
Too great, have reft his senses quite away.  
Remove his weapons, take those deadly shafts  
Out of his reach, I pray. His burning cheeks  
Some violence portend. Oh, where shall I, 1405  
A helpless, aged woman hide myself?  
That grief of his has changed to maddened rage,  
And that alone is master of him now.  
Why should I, therefore, foolish that I am,  
Seek hiding-place or flight? By some brave hand  
Alcmena has deserved to meet her death.  
So let me perish even impiously,  
Before some craven soul command my death, 1410  
Or some base creature triumph over me.  
But see, outworn by woe, his weary heart  
Is in the soothing hands of slumber bound.

IS IN THE SOUTHING BONDS OF STUMBLER BOUND,  
His panting chest with labored breathing heaves.  
Have mercy, O ye gods. If ye from me  
Have willed to take my glorious son, at least 1415  
Spare to the world, I pray, its champion.  
Let all his pains depart, and once again  
Let great Alcides' frame renew its strength.

[*Enter Hyllus.*]

*Hyllus:* O bitter light, O day with evil filled!  
Dead is the Thunderer's daughter, and his son  
Lies dying. I alone of all survive. 1420  
By my own mother's crime my father dies,  
But she by guile was snared. What aged man,  
Throughout the round of years, in all his life,  
Will e'er be able to recount such woes?  
One day has snatched away my parents both.  
But though I say naught of my other ills, 1425  
And cease to blame the fates, still must I say:  
My sire, the mighty Hercules, is gone.

*Alcmena:* Restrain thy words, child of illustrious sire,  
And matched with sad Alcmena in her grief;  
Perchance long slumber will assuage his pain.  
But see, repose deserts his weary heart,  
And gives him back to suffering, me to grief. 1430

*Hercules [awakening in delirium]:* Why, what is this? Do I with waking  
eyes  
See little Trachin on her craggy seat,  
Or, set amongst the stars, have I at length  
Escaped the race of men? Who opes for me  
The gate of heaven? Thee, father, now I see,  
Thee, and my stepdame too at last appeased. 1435  
What heavenly sound is this that fills my ears?  
Great Juno calls me son! Now I behold  
The gleaming palace of the heavenly world,  
And Phoebus' path worn by his burning wheels.

[*Resuming to come out of his delirium.*]

[*Beginning to come out of his delirium.*]

I see night's couch; her shadows call me hence. 1440  
But what is this? who shuts me out of heaven,  
And from the stars, O father, leads me down?  
I felt the glow of Phoebus on my face,  
So near to heaven was I; but now, alas,  
'Tis Trachin that I see. Oh, who to earth  
Has given me back again? A moment since, 1445  
And Oeta's lofty peak stood far below,  
And all the world was lying at my feet.  
How sweet the respite that I had from thee,  
O grief. Thou mak'st me to confess—but stay,  
Let not such shameful words escape thy lips.

[*To Hyllus.*]

This woe, my son, is of thy mother's gift.  
Oh, that I might crush out her guilty life  
With my great club, as once the Amazons 1450  
I smote upon the snowy Caucasus.  
O well-loved Megara, to think that thou  
Wast wife of mine when in that fit I fell  
Of maddened rage! Give me my club and bow;  
Let my hand be disgraced, and with a blot  
Let me destroy the luster of my praise—  
My latest conquest on a woman gained! 1455

*Hyllus:* Now curb the dreadful threatenings of thy wrath;  
She has her wound—'tis over—and has paid  
The penalty which thou wouldst have her pay:  
For now, self-slain, my mother lies in death.

*Hercules:* O grief, still with me! She deserved to die  
Beneath the hands of angry Hercules. 1460  
O Lichas, thou hast lost thy mate in death.  
So hot my wrath, against her helpless corpse  
I still would rage. Why does her body lie  
Secure from my assaults? Go cast it out  
To be a banquet for the birds of prey.

*Hyllus:* She suffered more than even thou wouldst wish.  
Self-slain and grieving sore for thee she died

self slain, and grieving sore for thee, she died.  
But 'tis not by a cruel wife's deceit, 1465  
Nor by my mother's guile, thou liest low.  
By Nessus was this deadly plot conceived,  
Who, smitten by thine arrow, lost his life.  
'Twas in the centaur's gore the robe was dipped, 1470  
And by thy pains he doth requite his own.

*Hercules:* Then truly are his pains well recompensed,  
And my own doubtful oracles explained.  
This fate the talking oak foretold to me,  
And Delphi's oracle, whose sacred voice  
Shook Cirrha's temples and Parnassus' slopes: 1475  
"By hand of one whom thou hast slain, some day,  
Victorious Hercules, shalt thou lie low.  
This end, when thou hast traversed sea and land,  
And the realm of spirits, is reserved for thee."  
Now will we grieve no more; such end is meet;  
Thus shall no conqueror of Hercules  
Survive to tell the tale. Now shall my death 1480  
Be glorious, illustrious, renowned,  
And worthy of myself. This final day  
Will I make famous in the ears of men.  
Go, cut down all the woods, and Oeta's groves  
Bring hither, that a mighty funeral pyre  
May hold great Hercules before he dies.  
And thee, dear son of Poeas, thee I ask 1485  
To do this last, sad office for thy friend,  
And all the sky illumine with the flames  
Of Hercules. And now to thee this prayer,  
This last request, Hyllus, my son, I make:  
Among my captives is a beauteous maid,  
Of noble breeding and of royal birth.  
'Tis Iole, the child of Eurytus. 1490  
Her would I have thee to thy chamber lead  
With fitting marriage rites; for, stained with blood,  
Victorious, I robbed her of her home  
And fatherland; and in return, poor girl,  
Naught save Alcides have I given her:

And he is gone. Then let her soothe her woes  
In the embrace of him who boasts the blood  
Of Jove and Hercules. Whatever seed  
She has conceived of me let her to thee  
Bring forth. 1495

[To Alcmena.]

And do thou cease thy plaints, I pray,  
For me, great mother; thy Alcides lives;  
And by my might have I my stepdame made  
To seem but as the concubine of Jove.  
Whether the story of the night prolonged 1500  
At Hercules' begetting be the truth,  
Or whether I was got of mortal sire—  
Though I be falsely called the son of Jove,  
I have indeed deserved to be his son;  
For I have honored him, and to his praise  
My mother brought me forth. Nay, Jove himself 1505  
Is proud that he is held to be my sire.  
Then cease thy tears, O mother; thou shalt be  
Of high degree among Argolic dames.  
For no such son as thine has Juno borne,  
Though she may wield the scepter of the skies,  
The Thunderer's bride. And yet, though holding heaven, 1510  
She grudged Alcides to a mortal birth,  
And wished that she might call him son of hers.  
Now, Titan, must thou go thy way alone;  
For I, who have thy constant comrade been,  
Am bound for Tartara, the world of shades.  
Yet down to hell I bear this noble praise:  
That openly no monster conquered me, 1515  
But that I conquered all—and openly.

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*Chorus:* Bright sun, thou glory of the world,  
At whose first rays wan Hecate  
Unyokes the weary steeds of night,  
To east and west the message tell. 1520

to east and west the message tell,  
To those who suffer 'neath the Bear,  
And who, beneath thy burning car  
Are tortured: Hercules prepares  
To speed him to the world of shades, 1525  
The realm of sleepless Cerberus,  
Whence he will<sup>[40]</sup> ne'er again return.  
Let thy bright rays be overcast  
With clouds; gaze on the mourning world  
With pallid face; and let thy head  
In thick and murky mists be veiled.  
When, Titan, where, beneath what sky, 1530  
Shalt thou behold upon the earth  
Another such as Hercules?  
Whom shall the wretched land invoke,  
If any hundred-headed pest,  
In Lerna born, spring up anew 1535  
And spread destruction; if again  
Some boar in ancient Arcady  
Infest the woods; or if again  
Some son of Thracian Rhodope,  
With heart more hard than the frozen lands  
That lie 'neath snowy Helice,  
Should stain his stalls with human gore?  
Who will give peace to the trembling 1540  
folk  
If angry gods with monstrous birth  
Should curse the world again? Behold,  
The mate for common man he lies,  
Whom earth produced a mate for Jove.  
Let lamentations loud resound  
Through all the world; with streaming 1545  
hair  
Let women smite their naked arms;  
Let all the temples of the gods  
Be closed save Juno's; she alone  
Is free from care.  
To Lethe and the Stygian shore

Now art thou going, whence no keel 1550  
Will ever bring thee back. Thou goest,  
Lamented one, unto the shades,  
Whence, death o'ercome, thou once return'dst  
In triumph with thy prize; but now,  
An empty shade, with fleshless arms,  
Wan face, and slender, drooping neck,  
Thou goest back. Nor will the skiff 1555  
(Which once bore only thee and feared  
That even so 'twould be o'erturned)  
Bear thee alone across the stream.  
But not with common shades shalt thou  
Be herded. Thou with Aeacus<sup>[41]</sup>  
And pious kings of Crete shalt sit  
In judgment on the deeds of men,  
And punish tyrants. O ye kings, 1560  
Be merciful, restrain your hands.  
'Tis worthy praise to keep the sword  
Unstained with blood; while thou didst reign,  
Upon thy realm to have allowed  
Least privilege to bloody<sup>[42]</sup> fate.  
But place among the stars is given  
To manly virtue. Shalt thou hold 1565  
Thy seat within the northern skies,  
Or where his fiercest rays the sun  
Sends forth? Or in the balmy west  
Wilt shine, where thou mayst hear the waves  
On Calpe's shore resound? What place  
In heaven serene shalt thou obtain?  
When great Alcides is received 1570  
Among the stars, who will be free  
From fear? May Jove assign thy place  
Far from the raging Lion's seat,  
And burning Crab, lest at sight of thee  
The frightened stars confuse their laws  
And Titan quake with fear.  
So long as blooming flowers shall come 1575



With wakening spring; while winter's  
frosts  
Strip bare the trees, and summer suns  
Reclothe them with their wonted green;  
While in the autumn ripened fruits  
Fall to the ground: no lapse of time  
Shall e'er destroy thy memory 1580  
Upon the earth. For thou shalt live  
As comrade of the sun and stars.  
Sooner shall wheat grow in the sea,  
Or stormy straits with gentle waves  
Beat on the shore; sooner descend  
The Bear from out his frozen sky  
And bathe him in forbidden waves:  
Than shall the thankful people cease 1585  
To sing thy praise.

And now to thee,  
O father of the world, we pray:  
Let no dread beast be born on earth,  
No monstrous pest; keep this poor world  
From abject fear of heartless kings;  
Let no one hold the reins of power  
Who deems his kingdom's glory lies 1590  
In the terror of his naked sword.  
But if again some thing of dread  
Appear upon the earth, Oh, give,  
We pray, another champion.  
But what is this? The heavens resound.  
Behold Alcides' father mourns, 1595  
He mourns his son. Or is't the sound  
Of grieving gods, or the cry of fear  
Of the timid stepdame? Can it be  
That at the sight of Hercules  
Great Juno flees the stars? Perchance  
Beneath the added weight of heaven  
Tall Atlas reels. Or do the shades  
Cry out in fear of Hercules, 1600  
While Cerberus with broken chains

In panic flees the sight? Not so:  
Behold, 'tis Poeas' son, who comes  
With looks of gladness. See, he bears  
The well-known quiver and the shafts  
Of Hercules. 1605

**FOOTNOTES:**

[38] Reading, *auctor*.

[39] Reading, *fremens*.

[40] Reading, *remeabit*.

[41] Reading, *Aeacon*.

[42] Reading, *minimum cruentis*.

**ACT V**

[*Enter Philoctetes.*]

*Nurse:* Speak out, good youth, and tell the end, I pray,  
Of Hercules. How did he meet his death?

*Philoctetes:* More gladly than another meets his life.

*Nurse:* What? Did he then rejoice him in the fire?

*Philoctetes:* He showed that burning flames were naught to him.  
What is there in the world which Hercules 1610  
Has left unconquered? He has vanquished all.

*Nurse:* What chance for glory on the funeral pyre?

*Philoctetes:* One evil thing remained upon the earth  
Which he had not o'ercome—the power of fire.  
But this has now been added to the beasts, 1615  
And fire is one of great Alcides' toils.

*Nurse:* But tell us in what way he conquered fire.

*Philoctetes:* When all his sorrowing friends began to fell

The trees on Oeta's slopes, beneath one hand  
The beech-tree lost its foliage and lay,  
Its mighty trunk prone on the ground. One hand  
With deadly stroke attacked the towering pine,  
Which lifted to the stars its threatening top, 1620  
And called it from the clouds. In act to fall,  
It shook its rocky crag, and with a crash  
Whelmed all the lesser forest in its fall.  
Within the forest was a certain oak,  
Wide-spreading, vast, like that Chaonian tree  
Of prophecy, whose shade shuts out the sun,  
Embracing all the grove<sup>[43]</sup> within its arms. 1625  
By many a blow beset, it groans at first  
In threatening wise, and all the wedges breaks;  
The smiting axe bounds back, its edges dulled,  
Too soft for such a task. At length the tree,  
Long wavering, falls with widespread ruin down.  
Straightway the place admits the sun's bright rays;  
The birds, their tree o'erthrown, fly twittering round, 1630  
And seek their vanished homes on wearied wing.  
Now every tree resounds; even the oaks  
Feel in their sacred sides the piercing steel,  
Nor does its ancient sanctity protect  
The grove. The wood into a pile is heaped; 1635  
Its logs alternate rising high aloft,  
Make all too small a pyre for Hercules:  
The pine inflammable, tough-fibered oak,  
The ilex' shorter trunks. But poplar trees,  
Whose foliage adorned Alcides' brow, 1640  
Fill up the space and make the pyre complete.  
But he, like some great lion in the woods  
Of Libya lying, roaring out his pain,  
Is borne along—but who would e'er believe  
That he was hurrying to his funeral pyre?  
His gaze was fixed upon the stars of heaven,  
Not fires of earth, when to the mount he came 1645  
And with his eyes surveyed the mighty pyre.  
The great beams groaned and broke beneath his weight

THE great beams groaned and broke beneath his weight.  
Now he demands his bow. "Take this," he said,  
"O son of Poeas, take this as the gift  
And pledge of love from Hercules to thee.  
These deadly shafts the poisonous hydra felt;  
With these the vile Stymphalian birds lie low; 1650  
And every other monster which I slew  
With distant aim. O noble youth, go on  
In victory, for never 'gainst thy foes  
Shalt thou send these in vain. Wouldst wish to bring  
Birds from the very clouds? Down shall they fall,  
And with them come thine arrows sure of prey.  
This bow shall never disappoint thy hand. 1655  
Well has it learned to poise the feathered shaft  
And send it flying in unerring course.  
The shafts themselves as well, loosed from the string,  
Have never failed to find their destined mark.  
But do thou in return, my only prayer,  
Bring now the funeral torch and light the pyre.  
This club," he said, "which never hand but mine 1660  
Has wielded, shall the flames consume with me.  
This weapon, only, shall to Hercules  
Belong. But this, too, thou shouldst have from me  
If thou couldst bear its weight. But let it serve  
To aid its master's pyre." Then he required  
The shaggy spoil of the dire Nemean beast 1665  
To burn with him. The huge skin hid the pyre.  
Now all the gazing crowd begin to groan,  
And tears of woe to fall from every eye.  
His mother bares her breast in eager grief  
And smites her body stripped e'en to the loins  
For unrestrained lament; then all the gods 1670  
And Jupiter himself she supplicates,  
While all the place re-echoes with her shrieks.  
"Thou dost disgrace the death of Hercules,  
O mother, check thy tears," Alcides said;  
"Within thy heart thy woman's grief confine.  
Why shouldst thou make this day a time of joy 1675

For Juno with thy tears? For she, be sure, 1075  
Rejoices to behold her rival weep.

Then this unworthy grief, my mother, check.  
It is not meet to abuse the breast that nursed,  
And the womb that bore Alcides." Thus he spake;  
Then with a dreadful cry, as when he led

The awful dog throughout the towns of Greece, 1680  
Returned triumphant o'er the shades of hell,  
Scorning the lord of death and death itself,  
So did he lay him down upon the pyre.

What victor in his chariot ever shone  
With such triumphant joy? What tyrant king  
With such a countenance e'er uttered laws  
Unto his subject tribes? So deep his calm

Of soul. All tears were dried, our sorrows shamed 1685  
To silence, and we groaned no more to think  
That he must perish. E'en Alcmena's self,  
Whose sex is prone to mourn, now tearless stood,  
A worthy mother of her noble son.

1690  
*Nurse:* But did he, on the verge of death, no prayer  
To heaven breathe, no aid from Jove implore?

*Philoctetes:* With peaceful soul he lay, and scanned the skies,  
As searching from what quarter of the heavens  
His sire would look on him, and thus he spake, 1695  
With hands outstretched: "O father, whencesoe'er

From heaven thou lookest down upon thy son—  
He truly is my father for whose sake  
One day of old was swallowed up in night—  
If both the bounds of Phoebus sing my praise,

If Scythia, and all the sun-parched lands; 1700  
If peace fills all the world; if cities groan  
Beneath no tyrant's hand, and no one stains  
With blood of guests his impious altar stones;

If horrid crimes have ceased: then, take, I pray,  
My spirit to the skies. I have no fear  
Of death, nor do the gloomy realms of Dis 1705  
Affright my soul; but Oh, I blush with shame

To go, a naked shade, unto those gods  
Whom I myself aforetime overcame.  
Dispel the clouds and ope the gates of heaven,  
That all the gods may see Alcides burn.  
Though thou refuse me place among the stars,  
Thou shalt be forced to grant my prayer. Ah no:  
If grief can palliate my impious words, 1710  
Forgive; spread wide the Stygian pools for me,  
And give me up to death. But first, O sire,  
Approve thy son. This day at least shall show  
That I am worthy of the skies. All deeds  
Which I have done before seem worthless now;  
This day shall prove me worthy, or condemn." 1715  
When he had spoken thus he called for fire:  
"Come hither now, comrade of Hercules,  
With willing hand take up the funeral torch.  
Why dost thou tremble? Does thy timid hand  
Shrink from the deed as from an impious crime?  
Then give me back my quiver, coward, weak. 1720  
Is that the hand which fain would bend my bow?  
Why does such pallor sit upon thy cheeks?  
Come, ply the torch with that same fortitude  
That thou dost see in me. Thy pattern take,  
Poor soul, from him who faces fiery death.  
But lo, my father calls me from the sky  
And opens wide the gates. O sire, I come!" 1725  
And as he spake his face was glorified.  
Then did I with my trembling hand apply  
The blazing torch. But see, the flames leap back,  
And will not touch his limbs. But Hercules  
Pursues the fleeing fires. You would suppose  
That Caucasus or Pindus was ablaze,  
Or lofty Athos. Still no sound was heard 1730  
Save only that the flames made loud lament.  
O stubborn heart! Had Typhon huge been placed  
Upon that pyre, or bold Enceladus,  
Who bore uprooted Ossa on his back,  
He would have crept along in scorn

he would have groaned aloud in agony. 1735  
But Hercules amidst the roaring flames  
Stood up, all charred and torn, with dauntless gaze,  
And said: "O mother, thus 'tis meet for thee  
Beside the pyre of Hercules to stand.  
Such mourning fits him well. Now dost thou seem  
In very truth Alcides' mother." There, 1740  
'Midst scorching heat and roaring flames he stood,  
Unmoved, unshaken, showing naught of pain,  
Encouraging, advising, active still.  
His own brave spirit animated all.  
You would have thought him burning with desire  
To burn. The crowd looked on in speechless awe,  
And scarce believed the flames to be true fire, 1745  
So calm and so majestic was his mien.  
Nor did he hasten to consume himself;  
But when he deemed that fortitude enough  
Was shown in death, from every hand he dragged  
The burning logs which with least ardor glowed,  
Piled them together in a mighty fire, 1750  
And to the very center of the blaze  
The dauntless hero went. Awhile he stood  
And feasted on the flames his eager eyes.  
Then from his heavy beard leaped gleaming fire.  
But even when the flames assailed his face,  
And licked his head with their hot, fiery tongues,  
He did not close his eyes. 1755  
But what is this?  
'Tis sad Alcmena. With what signs of woe  
She makes her way, while in her breast she bears  
The pitiful remains of Hercules.

[Enter Alcmena, carrying in her bosom a funeral urn.]

*Alcmena:* Ye powers of heaven, I bid you fear the fates.

[ *Holding up the urn.* ]

How small a space Alcides' ashes fill!  
To this small compass has that giant come!  
O shining sun, how great a man has gone  
To nothingness. Alas, this aged breast 1760  
Is large enough to be Alcides' tomb.  
Behold, his ashes scarce can fill the urn.  
How small his weight, upon whose shoulders once  
The dome of heaven lay, a burden light.  
Thou once didst go, my son, to Tartara,  
The farthest realms of death—and come again. 1765  
Oh, when wilt thou a second time return  
From that infernal stream? I ask thee not  
To come again with spoil, nor bring again  
Imprisoned Theseus to the light of day;  
But only that thou come again—alone.  
Will all the world, heaped on thee, hold thy shade,  
Or Cerberus avail to keep thee back? 1770  
When wilt thou batter down the gates of hell,  
Or to what portals shall thy mother go?  
Where is the highway that leads down to death?  
E'en now thou tak'st thy journey to the shades,  
Which thou wilt ne'er retrace. Why waste the hours  
In vain complaints? And why, O wretched life,  
Dost thou endure? Why dost thou cling to day? 1775  
What Hercules can I again bring forth  
To Jupiter? What son so great as he  
Will ever call Alcmena mother? Oh,  
Too happy thou, my Theban husband, thou  
Who didst to gloomy Tartara descend  
While still Alcides lived; at thine approach  
The infernal deities were filled with fear 1780  
Of thee, though only the reputed sire  
Of Hercules. What land will welcome me,  
Now old and hated by all cruel kings  
(If any cruel king remains alive)?



Oh, woe is me! Whatever orphaned son  
 Laments his sire will strive to seek revenge  
 From me, and I shall be the prey of all. 1785  
 If any young Busiris or the son  
 Of dread Antaeus terrifies the land,  
 His booty shall I be. If anyone  
 Would make reprisal for the Thracian steeds  
 Of bloody Diomede, I shall be given  
 To feed those cruel herds. Juno perchance 1790  
 Will be by passion pricked to seek revenge.  
 Now all her anger will be turned on me;  
 For, though her soul no longer is disturbed  
 Because of Hercules, I still am left,  
 Her hated rival. Ah, what punishment  
 Will she inflict, in fear lest I bring forth  
 Another son! The mighty Hercules 1795  
 Has made my womb a thing of terror still.  
 Where shall Alcmena take herself? What place,  
 What region of the universe will keep,  
 What hiding-place conceal thy mother now,  
 Since she is known through thee in every land?  
 Shall I return unto my native shores,  
 My wretched lares? There Eurystheus reigns.  
 Shall I seek out my husband's city, Thebes, 1800  
 Ismenus' stream, and my own bridal bed  
 Where once, beloved, I saw great Jupiter?  
 Oh, happy, far too happy had I been,  
 If I myself, like Semele, had felt  
 The blasting presence of the thundering Jove!  
 Oh, would that from my womb Alcides, too,  
 Untimely had been torn! But now 'tis given, 1805  
 'Tis given to see my son with mighty Jove  
 Vying in praise; would that this might be given,  
 To know from what fate he could rescue me.  
 What people now will live remembering thee,  
 O son? Ungrateful are they all alike.  
 Cleonae shall I seek? the Arcadians, 1810  
 And the lands ennobled by thy mighty deeds?

Here fell the serpent dire, here monstrous birds,  
Here fell the bloody king; and here, subdued  
By thy right hand, the lion, who in heaven  
Is given a place, whilst thou in earth remain'st. 1815  
If earth is grateful, then let every race  
Defend Alcmena for thy sake. Shall I  
To Thracian peoples go, to Hebrus' tribes?  
For this land, too, was by thy mighty works  
Defended. Low the bloody stables lie,  
And low the kingdom; peace was granted it, 1820  
What time the cruel king was overthrown.  
What land, indeed, has not gained peace through thee?  
Where shall I seek for thee a sepulcher,  
Unhappy, aged woman that I am?  
Let all the world contend for these remains  
Collected from the pyre of Hercules.  
What race, what temples, or what nations ask  
For them? Who asks to have Alcmena's load? 1825  
What sepulcher, O son, what tomb for thee  
Is great enough? Naught save the world itself;  
And lasting fame shall be thine epitaph.  
But why, O soul of mine, art thou in fear?  
Thou hast the ashes of thy Hercules.  
Embrace his bones, and they will give thee help,  
Will be thy sure defense. For e'en the shade 1830  
Of great Alcides will make kings afraid.

*Philoctetes:* O mother of illustrious Hercules,  
Restrain the tears thou deemest due thy son;  
For neither grieving tears nor mournful prayers  
Should follow him who by his noble worth  
Has forced his way to heaven in spite of fate.  
Alcides' deathless valor checks your tears.

*Alcmena:* Why should I bate my grief? For I have lost  
My savior, <sup>[44]</sup> yea, the savior of the land  
And sea, <sup>[45]</sup> and wheresoe'er the shining day  
From his resplendent car, in east or west,

1835

Looks down upon the earth. How many sons  
In him, O wretched mother, have I lost! 1840  
Without a kingdom, I could kingdoms give.  
I only, 'midst all mothers of the earth,  
Had never need of prayer; naught from the gods  
I asked, while Hercules remained alive;  
For what could his devotion not bestow?  
What god in heaven could e'er deny me aught? 1845  
In my own hands was answer of my prayer;  
For what great Jove denied, Alcides gave.  
What mortal mother e'er bore such a son?  
A mother once with grief was turned to stone,  
When, 'midst her brood of fourteen children slain,  
She stood, one mother, and bewailed them all. 1850  
To many families like hers my son  
Could be compared. Till now for mother's grief  
A measure vast enough could not be found;  
But now will I, Alcmena, furnish it.  
Then cease, ye mothers, though persistent grief  
Till now has bidden you weep; though heavy woe 1855  
Has turned your hearts to stone; and yield you all  
Unto my woes.

Then come, ye wretched hands,  
And beat this agéd breast. But can it be  
That thou alone canst for so great a loss  
Lament, so old and worn, which<sup>[46]</sup> all the world 1860  
Will presently attempt? Yet raise thy arms,  
However weary, to their mournful task.  
And to thy wailing summon all the earth,  
And so excite the envy of the gods.

*[Here follows Alcmena's formal song of mourning, accompanied by the  
usual Oriental gestures of grief.]*

Bewail Alcmena's son, the seed  
Of Jove, for whose conception, long,  
Day perished and the lingering dawn 1865  
Combined two nights in one. But now  
A greater than the day is dead.  
Ye nations, join in common grief

TO NATIONS, JOIN IN COMMON GRIEF,  
 Whose cruel lords he bade descend  
 To Stygian realms, and lay aside  
 Their red swords reeking with the blood 1870  
 Of subject peoples. With your tears  
 Repay his services; let earth,  
 The whole round earth, with woe resound.  
 Let sea-girt Crete bewail him, Crete,  
 The Thunderer's beloved land;  
 Beat, beat your breasts, ye hundred tribes; 1875  
 Ye Cretans, Corybantes, now  
 Clash Ida's cymbals; for 'tis meet  
 To mourn him thus. Now, now lament  
 His funeral; for low he lies,  
 A mate, O Crete, for Jove himself. 1880  
 Bewail the death of Hercules,  
 Ye sons of Arcady, whose race  
 Is older than Diana's birth.  
 Let your cries from high Parthenius  
 And Nemea's halls resound afar;  
 Let Maenala re-echo loud 1885  
 Your sounds of woe. The bristly boar  
 Within your borders overthrown  
 Demands lament for Hercules;  
 And the monster of Stymphalus' pool,  
 Whose spreading wings shut out the day,  
 By great Alcides' arrows slain. 1890  
 Weep thou, Cleonae, weep and wail  
 For him; for once the lion huge  
 Which held your walls in terror, he,  
 By his strong hand, o'ercame and slew.  
 Ye Thracian matrons, beat your breasts,  
 And let cold Hebrus resound to your beating. 1895  
 Lament for Alcides: no longer your children  
 Are born for the stables; no longer your vitals  
 Wild horses devour. O ye African lands,  
 From Antaeus delivered, ye regions of Spain  
 From Geryon saved, come, weep for your hero. 1900

Yea, all ye wretched nations, weep 1900  
 With me and smite your breasts in woe,  
 And let your blows be heard afar,  
 By eastern and by western shores.  
 Ye dwellers in the whirling sky,  
 Ye gods above, do ye, too, weep  
 The fate of Hercules; for he  
 Your heavens upon his shoulders bore, 1905  
 When Atlas, who was wont to bear  
 The spangled skies, was eased awhile  
 Of his vast load. Where now, O Jove,  
 Is the promised palace of the sky,  
 Those heavenly heights? Alcides dies 1910  
 And is entombed—the common lot.  
 How often has he spared for thee  
 The deadly thunderbolt of wrath!  
 How seldom wast thou forced to hurl  
 Thy fires! But hurl 'gainst me at least  
 One shaft, and think me Semele.  
 And now, O son, hast thou obtained 1915  
 The fields Elysian, the shore  
 To which the voice of nature calls  
 All nations? Or has gloomy Styx  
 Hemmed in thy way in vengeful wrath  
 Because of stolen Cerberus,  
 And in the outer court of Dis  
 Do jealous fates detain thee still? 1920  
 Oh what a rout among the shades  
 And frightened manes must there be!  
 Does Charon flee in his ghostly skiff?  
 With flying hoofs do the Centaurs rush  
 Through the wandering shades? Does the hydra seek 1925  
 In fear to plunge his snaky heads  
 'Neath the murky waves? Do all thy tasks  
 Hold thee in fear?  
     Ah me! Ah me!  
 What foolish, raving madness this!  
 I am mistaken quite. I know

The shades and manes fear thee not; 1930  
For neither does the tawny skin  
Stripped from the fierce Argolic beast  
Protect thy left with its streaming mane,  
Nor do its savage teeth surround  
Thy head. Thy quiver with its darts 1935  
Thou hast given away, and a weaker hand  
Will aim thy bow. Alas, my son,  
Unarmed through the shades thou tak'st thy way;  
And with the shades shalt thou dwell for aye.

*The Voice of Hercules* [*sounding from heaven*]: Why, since I hold the  
starry realms of sky,  
And have at last attained a heavenly seat, 1940  
Dost thou by wailing bid me feel again  
Mortality? Give o'er, since valor now  
Has made for me a passage to the gods.

*Alcmena* [*bewildered*]: Whence fall upon my startled ears  
These sounds? Whence come these thunder tones  
That bid me check my tears? Ah, now  
I know that chaos is o'ercome. 1945  
From Styx art thou once more returned,  
O son? And hast thou once again  
Vanquished the grizzly power of death?  
Hast thou escaped the grim abode  
Of death once more, the gloomy pools  
Where sailed the dark infernal skiff?  
Does Acheron's wan stream allow 1950  
To thee alone a backward way?  
And after death has greedy fate  
No hold upon thy dauntless soul?  
Perchance thy way to hell was barred  
By Pluto's self, who trembled sore  
For his own realm? Upon the pyre  
Of blazing woods I saw thee lie; 1955  
While to the stars the raging flames  
Shot up. Thou wast indeed consumed.



*Chorus:* Never is glorious manhood borne  
 To Stygian shades. The brave live on,  
 Nor over Lethe's silent stream  
 Shall they by cruel fate be drawn. 1985  
 But when life's days are all  
 consumed,  
 And comes the final hour, for them  
 A pathway to the gods is spread  
 By glory.  
     Be thou with us yet,  
 O mighty conqueror of beasts,  
 Subduer of the world. Oh, still 1990  
 Have thought unto this earth of ours.  
 And if some strange, new monster come  
 And fill the nations with his dread,  
 Do thou with forkéd lightnings crush  
 The beast; yea, hurl thy thunderbolts  
 More mightily than Jove himself. 1995

**FOOTNOTES:**

[43] Reading, *nemus*.

[44] Reading, *vindicem amisi*.

[45] Reading, *terrae atque pelagi*.

[46] Reading, *quod*.

**THYESTES**



## THYESTES

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### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- THYESTES      Brother of Atreus, in exile from his fatherland.
- The Ghost of Tantalus.*      Doomed for his sins to come back to earth and inspire his house to greater sin.
- The Fury*      Who drives the ghost on to do his allotted part.
- Atreus*      King of Argos, grandson of Tantalus, who has quarreled with his brother and driven him into exile.
- An Attendant of Atreus.*
- Three sons of Thyestes:*      Only one of whom, Tantalus, takes part in the dialogue.
- A Messenger.*
- Chorus*      Citizens of Mycenae.

THE SCENE is laid partly without the city of Argos, and partly within the royal palace.

*Pelops, the son of Tantalus, had banished his sons for the murder of their half-brother, Crysippus, with a curse upon them, that they and their posterity might perish by each others' hands. Upon the death of Pelops, Atreus returned and took possession of his father's throne. Thyestes, also, claimed the throne, and sought to gain it by the foulest means. For he seduced his brother's wife, Atreus's, and stole by her assistance the*

*seauceu nis broiner's wije, Aerope, ana stioe by ner assistance ine magical, gold-fleeced ram from Atreus' flocks, upon the possession of which the right to rule was said to rest. For this act he was banished by the king.*

*But Atreus has long been meditating a more complete revenge upon his brother; and now in pretended friendship has recalled him from banishment, offering him a place beside himself upon the throne, that thus he may have Thyestes entirely in his power.*

## ACT I

*The Ghost of Tantalus:* Who from th' accurséd regions of the dead,  
Hath haled me forth, where greedily I strive  
To snatch the food that ever doth escape  
My hungry lips? Who now to Tantalus  
Doth show those heavenly seats which once before  
I saw to my undoing? Can it be  
That some more fearful suffering than thirst  
In sight of water, worse than gaping want,  
Hath been devised? Must I the slippery stone 5  
Of Sisyphus upon my shoulders bear?  
Must I be stretched upon the whirling wheel,  
Or suffer Tityus' pangs, who, lying prone  
Within a huge recess, the grewsome birds  
Doth with his quivering, torn-out vitals feed? 10  
By night renewing what the day hath lost,  
He lies, an undiminished feast for all.  
For what new evil am I now reserved?  
O thou grim judge of shades, who'er thou art  
Who to the dead doth mete new punishments!  
If thou canst still some suffering devise  
Whereat grim Cerberus himself would quake, 15  
And gloomy Acheron be seized with fear,  
At whose dread sight e'en I would tremble sore:  
Seek such a punishment; for from my seed  
Is sprung a race which shall their house outvie  
In sin. shall make me innocent appear. 20

And dare to do what I have never dared.  
Whatever space within the impious realms  
Remains unoccupied, my house shall fill.  
While lives the race of Pelops on the earth,  
No rest shall Minos know.

*The Fury:*       Thou curséd shade,  
Be gone, and to the verge of madness drive  
Thine impious house. Be drawn the deadly sword       25  
To every crime upraised, by every hand;  
Of angry passions let there be no end,  
No shame of strife; let blinded fury's sting  
Prick on their souls; seared by the breath of rage  
May parents' hearts grow hard, and endless crime  
To childrens' children drag its impious trail.  
No time be given to hate their former crimes;  
But let the new in quick succession rise,       30  
Not one alone in each; and may their crimes,  
E'en while they suffer punishment, increase.  
Let the throne fall from the haughty brothers' grasp,  
And call them back from exiled wanderings.  
Let the tottering fortune of this bloody house,  
Amid its changing kings in ruins fall.  
Bring him of high estate to wretchedness,       35  
The wretched raise; and let the kingdom toss  
Upon the seething tide of circumstance.  
By crime driven out, when God shall bring them home,  
May they return but to still other crimes,  
And by all men as by themselves be loathed.  
Let nothing be which wrath deems unallowed:  
Let brother brother fear, and parent child;       40  
Let son fear father; let the children die  
An evil death—by doubly evil birth  
Be born. Let wives against their husbands lift  
Their murderous hands. Let wars pass over seas,  
And every land be drenched with streams of blood.  
Triumphant o'er the mighty kings of earth,  
Let Lust exult; and in thy sinful house,

Let vile, incestuous deeds seem trivial. 45  
Let justice, faith, fraternal amity  
Be trampled underfoot; and of our sins  
Let not the heavens themselves escape the taint.  
Why gleam the constellations in the sky,  
And flash their wonted glories to the world?  
Be pitchy black the night, and let the day 50  
Fall fainting from the heavens and be no more.  
Embroid thy household gods, rouse murderous hate,  
And all the palace fill with Tantalus.  
Adorn the lofty columns; let the doors,  
With verdant laural decked, proclaim their joy;  
Let torches gleam in celebration meet  
Of thy return—then let the Thracian crime 55  
Be done again, but triply hideous.  
Why stays the uncle's hand in idleness?  
Not yet Thyestes weeps his murdered sons.  
When will he act? The kettles o'er the fires  
Should even now be boiling, severed limbs 60  
Be broken up, the father's hearth be stained  
With children's blood, the festal tables spread.  
But at no untried carnival of crime  
Wilt thou sit down as guest. This day be free,  
And sate thy hunger at that festal board;  
Go eat thy fill, and drink the blood and wine  
Commingled in thy sight. A banquet this, 65  
Which thou thyself wouldst look in horror on.—  
But stay thee. Whither dost thou rush away?

*Tantalus:* Back to my pools and streams and ebbing waves,  
Back to that tree whose ever-mocking fruit  
Eludes my lips. Oh, let me seek again  
The gloomy couch of my old prison-house;  
And if too little wretched I appear, 70  
Bid me my river change. Within thy stream,  
O Phlegethon, hemmed round with waves of fire,  
Let me be left to suffer.

Ye, whoe'er

By fate's decrees are doomed to punishment,  
Whoe'er thou art who 'neath the hollowed cave  
Dost lie, in constant fear lest even now 75  
The cavern's mass shall fall upon thy head;  
Whoever fears the gaping, greedy jaws  
Of lions, and in helpless horror looks  
Upon the advancing furies' cruel lines;  
Whoe'er, half burned, their threat'ning torches shuns:  
Oh, listen to the voice of Tantalus  
Fast speeding to your realm; believe the words 80  
Of one who knows, and love your punishment.  
But now—Oh, when shall it be mine to flee  
This upper world?

*The Fury:* First must thou plunge thy house  
In dire disorders, stir up deadly feuds,  
Awake the kings to evil lust for blood,  
And rouse to wild amaze their maddened hearts.

*Tantalus:* 'Tis fit that I should suffer, not bestow,  
The punishment. But thou wouldst have me go, 85  
Like deadly vapor from the riven earth,  
Or like the plague amongst the people spread,  
And lead my grandsons into crime most foul.  
O mighty sire of gods, my sire as well,  
Although 'tis shame to thee to own me son,  
Though cruel tortures seize my tattling tongue, 90  
I will not hold my peace:

[*He cries aloud as to his family.*]

I warn ye all,  
Stain not your kindred hands with sacred blood,  
And with no madman's gifts pollute the shrines.  
Lo, here I stand, and shall avert the deed.

[*To the Fury.*] 95

Why dost thou fright me with thy brandished scourge,  
And shake thy writhing serpents in my face?  
Why in mine inmost marrow dost thou rouse  
These gnawing hunger pangs? My very heart  
Is narched with burninø thirst and leaninø flames

is parched with burning thirst, and reaping flames  
Dart scorching through my vitals—Oh, desist;  
I yield me to thy will.

100

*The Fury:* Then fix this thirst,  
This maddening thirst in all thy kindred here;  
So, e'en as thou, may they be driven on  
To quench their thirst each in the others' blood.  
But lo, thy house perceives thy near approach,  
And shrinks in horror from thy loathsome touch.  
But now enough. Do thou go back again  
To thine infernal caves and 'customed stream; 105  
For here the sad earth groans beneath thy feet.  
Dost thou not see how, driven far within,  
The waters flee their springs? how river banks  
Are empty, and the fiery wind drives on  
The scattered clouds? The trees grow sickly pale,  
Their branches hang denuded of their fruits; 110  
And where but late the Isthmus echoed back  
The loud resounding waters near at hand,  
Their neighboring waves by but a narrow span  
Dividing, now have all the waves withdrawn  
Far seaward, and their voice is faintly heard  
Upon the shore. Now Lerna backward shrinks, 115  
The streams of Inachus have hidden away,  
The sacred Alpheus sends his waters forth  
No longer, and Cithaeron lifts no more  
Its hoary head, for all its snows are gone;  
While they who dwell in noble Argos fear  
Their ancient thirst again. E'en Titan's self  
Stands doubtful whether he shall bid his steeds 120  
Run their accustomed course and bring the day,  
Foredoomed by thee to perish on the way.

[*They vanish.*]

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*Chorus:* If any god for Argos cares,  
And Pisa's realm for chariots famed.

AND HIS S TEARFUL CHARACTERS TALKED,  
If any loves the Isthmian state  
Of Corinth, with its double ports,  
And two opposing seas; 125  
If any joys in the far-seen snows  
Of Mount Taygetus, which lie  
Heaped on his loftiest peaks what time  
The wintry blasts of Boreas blow,  
But which the summer melts again  
When breathe the soft Etesian winds,  
Sail filling; if the Alpheus bright  
With its cool, clear stream moves any god, 130  
Far famed for its Olympic course—  
Let him his peaceful godhead turn  
To our affairs; let him avert  
This dread inheritance of crime;  
Forbid that in his grandsire's steps  
The grandson follow, worse than he;  
And let not worse monstrosities  
Please generations yet to be. 135  
Oh, may at last the impious race  
Of thirsty Tantalus give o'er  
In utter weariness its lust  
For savage deeds. Enough of sin!  
No longer does the right prevail,  
And wrong is general. Behold,  
As Myrtilus his lord betrayed,  
He, too, was treacherously slain;  
For by that selfsame broken faith  
Which he had shown, himself o'ercome, [\[47\]](#) 140  
He fell into the sea and changed  
Its name for his. Amidst the ships  
That sail the Ionian sea, no tale  
Is better known.  
See now, while runs the little son  
To meet his father's kiss, he falls  
By that accurséd sword transfixed, 145  
Untimely victim at thy hearth,

And carved, O Tantalus, by thee,  
That so thou mightest grace the board  
Of friendly gods. That impious feast  
Eternal hunger, endless thirst  
Rewarded; penalty more fit  
For such a crime could not be found. 150  
See where, with gaping throat, forespent,  
Stands Tantalus; above his head  
Hang many luscious fruits; but, swift  
As Phineus' birds, they flee his grasp;  
On every side the tree droops low,  
With heavy-laden boughs, o'erweighed  
By its own fruit, and mockingly 155  
Sways to his straining lips. Yet he,  
Though with impatient longing filled,  
As often mocked, so often fails  
To grasp the prize; he turns away  
His longing gaze, strains close his lips, 160  
And grimly bars his hunger fast  
Behind his teeth. But still again  
The whole grove lets its riches down,  
And flaunts them in his face, soft fruits  
On drooping boughs, and whets once more  
His hunger, bidding stretch again  
His hands—but all in vain. For now, 165  
When it has lured him on to hope,  
And mocked its fill, the boughs recede,  
And the whole ripe harvest of the wood  
Is snatched far out of reach.  
Then comes a raging thirst more fierce  
Than hunger, which inflames his blood, 170  
And with its parching fires burns up  
Its moisture. There the poor wretch stands,  
Striving to quaff the nearby waves;  
But the fleeing waters whirl away,  
And leave but the empty bed to him  
Who seeks to follow. Quick he quaffs  
At that swift stream but to drink—the dust



FOOTNOTES:

[47] Reading, *vectus*.

ACT II

*Atreus [in soliloquy]:* O soul, so sluggish, spiritless, and weak,  
 And (what in kings I deem the last reproach)  
 Still unavenged, after so many crimes,  
 Thy brother's treacheries, and every law  
 Of nature set at naught, canst vent thy wrath  
 In vain and meaningless complaints? By now  
 The whole wide world should be astir with arms,  
 Thy arms, and on both seas thy ships of war 180  
 Should swarm; the fields and town's should be  
 ablaze,  
 And gleaming swords should everywhere be seen.  
 Beneath our charging squadrons' thundering tread  
 Let Greece resound; let this my enemy  
 Within no forest's depths a hiding find.  
 No citadel upon the mountain heights 185  
 Shall shelter him. Let all the citizens,  
 Mycenae leaving, sound the trump of war.  
 Whoe'er grants refuge to that curséd head,  
 Shall die a dreadful death. This noble pile,  
 The home of our illustrious Pelops' line,  
 I would might fall on me, if only thus 190  
 It might destroy my hated brother too.  
 But come, my soul, do what no coming age  
 Shall e'er approve—or e'er forget; some deed  
 Must be attempted, impious, bloody, dire,  
 Such as my brother's self might claim as his.  
 No crime's avenged save by a greater crime.  
 But where the crime that can surpass his deeds? 195  
 Is he yet crushed in spirit? Does he show

IS HE YET CRASHED IN SPIRIT? DOES HE SHOW  
In prosperous circumstances self-control,  
Contentment in defeat? Full well I know  
His tameless spirit; it can ne'er be bent—  
But can be broken. Then, before his force  
He strengthens and opposing powers prepares,  
We must the attack begin, lest, while we wait,  
He strike us unprepared. For well I know  
That he must either slay me or be slain  
By me. There lies the crime between us two:  
Who leaps to grasp it first, the crime shall do.

200

*Attendant:* But does the evil fame of such a deed  
Deter you not?

*Atreus:* The greatest blessing this  
Of royal power, that men are forced to praise  
Their monarchs' deeds as well as bear them.

205

*Attendant:* Yea,  
But they whose praise is forced by fear become  
By that same fear in turn the bitterest foes.  
But he who seeks the people's heartfelt praise,  
Will wish their hearts and not their tongues to speak.

210

*Atreus:* True praise may often fall to humble men,  
But false alone to kings. Let subjects learn  
To want what they would not.

*Attendant:* Let monarchs learn  
To choose the right; then all will choose the same.

*Atreus:* When kings are forced to choose the right alone,  
Their rule is insecure.

*Attendant:* Where is no shame,  
No thought of righteousness, no piety,  
No faith, no purity, Oh, then indeed  
That rule is insecure.

215

*Atreus:* But purity,  
Faith, piety, are private virtues all;  
With kings their will is law

*Attendant:* Oh, count it wrong  
To harm thy brother, though he basest be.

*Atreus:* Whatever may not lawfully be done 220  
To brothers, may with perfect right be done  
To him. What is there left me now unstained  
By crime of his? Where has he failed to sin?  
My wife has he debauched, my kingdom stolen,  
The ancient emblem of our dynasty  
By fraud obtained, and all our royal house  
By that same fraud in dire confusion plunged.  
There is a flock within our royal stalls, 225  
Rich fleeced and nobly bred, and with the flock  
A ram, their leader, wondrous, magical;  
For from his body thickly hangs a fleece  
Of fine-spun gold, with which the new-crowned kings  
Of Pelops' line are wont t' adorn their scepters.  
Who owns the ram is king, for with his fate 230  
The fortunes of our noble house are linked.  
This sacred ram in safety feeds apart  
Within a mead whose fateful bounds are fenced  
By stony walls, and kept with gate of stone.  
Him, greatly daring, did my brother steal,  
Perfidious, with my wife in secret league 235  
Of crime. And this has been the fountain spring  
Of all my woes; throughout my kingdom's length  
Have I a trembling exile wandered long,  
And found no place of safety from his snares;  
My wife has he defiled, my subjects' faith  
And loyalty destroyed, my house o'erthrown,  
All ties of kinship broken, and nothing left  
Of which I may be sure save only this— 240  
My brother's enmity. Why do I stand  
In stupid inactivity? At length  
Bestir thyself, and gird thy courage up.  
Think thou on Pelops and on Tantalus;  
Such deeds as theirs must by my hands be done.

[To Attendant.]

Tell thou me then how vengeance may be won.

*Attendant:* Drive out his hostile spirit with the sword. 245

*Atreus:* Thou speakest of the end of punishment,  
But I the punishment itself desire.  
Let easy-going rulers slay their foes;  
In my domain death is a longed-for boon.

*Attendant:* Do pious motives stir thee not at all?

*Atreus:* Away, O Piety, if ever thou  
Didst dwell within my house, and in thy stead  
Let come dire furies' cohorts, fiends at war,  
Megaera holding high in either hand 250  
Her flaming torch; for with a mighty rage  
'Tis not enough my heart should be inflamed:  
I fain would be by greater horrors filled.

*Attendant:* What new design does thy mad soul conceive?

*Atreus:* No deed within the accustomed bounds of grief.  
I'll leave no crime undone; and yet no crime 255  
Is bad enough for me.

*Attendant:* Wilt use the sword?

*Atreus:* 'Tis not enough.

*Attendant:* The flames?

*Atreus:* Still not enough.

*Attendant:* What weapon then will thy mad passion use?

*Atreus:* Thyestes' self.

*Attendant:* Far worse than madness this.

*Atreus:* I do confess it. Deep within my heart,  
A fearful tumult rages unrestrained, 260  
And I am hurried on, I know not where;  
I only know that I am hurried on.  
From lowest depths a moaning sound is heard,  
And thunders rumble in the cloudless skies.

And thunders rumble in the cloudless skies,  
A crashing noise resounds throughout the house  
As though 'twere rent in twain; upon my hearth  
The frightened Lares turn their gaze from me.  
Yet this shall be, this awful thing shall be, 265  
Ye gods, which ye do fear to think upon.

*Attendant:* What then is this which thou dost meditate?

*Atreus:* Some greater evil lurks within my soul,  
And, monstrous, swells beyond all human bounds,  
My sluggish hands impelling to the deed.  
I know not what it is; but this I know,  
That 'tis some monstrous deed. So let it be. 270  
Haste thee and do this deed, O soul of mine!  
'Tis worthy of Thyestes—and of me.  
Let both perform it then. The Odrysian house  
Was wont to look on feasts unspeakable—  
monstrous thing, 'tis true, but long ago  
Performed. This grief of mine some greater sin 275  
Must find to feed upon. Do thou inspire  
My heart, O Daulian Procne, who didst know  
A mother's and a sister's feelings too.  
Our cause is similar. Assist thou then,  
And nerve my hand to act. Let once again  
A sire with joyous greed his children rend,  
And hungrily devour their flesh. 'Tis good,  
'Tis quite enough. This mode of punishment  
So far doth please me well. But where is he?  
Why do the hands of Atreus rest so long 280  
Inactive? Even now before mine eyes  
The perfect image of the slaughter comes;  
I seem to see the murdered children heaped  
Before their father's face. O timid soul,  
Why dost thou fear? Why droops thy courage now  
Before the deed is done? Then up, and dare.  
Of this mad crime the most revolting part 285  
Thyestes' self shall do.

*Attendant:* But by what wiles

Shall we unto our snares entice his feet?  
For he doth count us all his enemies.

*Atreus:* He never could be taken, were his will  
Not bent on taking too. E'en now he hopes  
To take my kingdom from me. In this hope,  
He'll rush against the bolts of threat'ning Jove;  
This hope will make him brave the whirlpools' 290  
wrath,  
And sail within the treacherous Libyan shoals;  
On this hope stayed, the greatest ill of all  
Will he have strength to bear—the sight of me.

*Attendant:* But who will give him confidence in peace?  
To whom will he such weighty credence give? 295

*Atreus:* His wicked hope is ready to believe.  
Yet shall my sons this message bear from me:  
Now let the wretched exile roam no more,  
But leave his homeless state for royal halls,  
And rule at Argos, sharer of my throne.  
But if Thyestes harshly spurn my prayer,  
His guileless children, overspent with woes  
And easily beguiled, will bend his will 300  
Unto their prayers. His ancient thirst for power,  
Together with his present poverty,  
And harsh demands of toil will move the man,  
However stubborn, by their weight of woes.

*Attendant:* But time by now has made his troubles light. 305

*Atreus:* Nay; sense of wrong increases day by day.  
'Tis easy to bear hardship for a time;  
But to endure it long, an irksome task.

*Attendant:* Choose other servants of thy grim design.

*Atreus:* Young men lend ready ear to base commands.

*Attendant:* Beware, lest what against their uncle now  
Thou teachest them, they turn against their sire 310  
In time to come. Full oft do crimes recoil

Upon the man who instigated them.

*Atreus:* Though none should teach them fraud and ways of crime,  
The throne itself would teach them. Dost thou fear  
Lest they grow evil? Evil were they born.  
What thou dost savage, cruel call in me,  
Dost deem impossible and impious,  
Perchance my brother even now doth plot  
Against myself. 315

*Attendant:* Shall then thy children know  
What crime they do?

*Atreus:* Not so, for youthful years  
Cannot keep silent faith. They might perchance  
Betray the trick. The art of secrecy  
Is mastered only by the ills of life.

*Attendant:* And wilt thou then deceive the very ones  
Through whom thou plann'st another to deceive? 320

*Atreus:* That so they may themselves be free from guilt.  
For what the need of implicating them  
In crimes of mine? Nay, through my acts alone  
My hate shall work its ends. But hold, my soul,  
Thou doest ill, thou shrinkest from the task.  
If thou dost spare thine own, thou sparest his  
As well. So then let Agamemnon be 325  
The conscious minister of my designs,  
And wittingly let Menelaüs help  
His father's plans. And by this test of crime,  
Let their uncertain birth be put to proof:  
If they refuse to wage this deadly war,  
And will not serve my hatred; if they plead  
He is their uncle—then is he their sire.  
So let them go. But no! a look of fear  
Has oft revealed the heart. And weighty plans, 330  
E'en 'gainst the stoutest will, betray themselves.  
They shall not know of how great consequence  
Their mission is.

[*To Attendant.*]

And do thou hide it too.

*Attendant:* No warning do I need, for in my breast  
It shall be hid by fear and loyalty.  
But more shall loyalty prevail with me.

335

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*Chorus:* At last our royal family,  
The race of ancient Inachus,  
Hath quelled the brothers' deadly strife  
What fatal madness drives you on  
To shed by turns each other's blood,  
And gain the throne through paths of crime? 340  
O ye who lust for regal state,  
Ye know not where true power is found;  
For riches cannot make a king,  
Nor Tyrian garments richly dyed,  
Nor royal crowns upon the brow, 345  
Nor portals glittering with gold.  
But he is king who knows no fear,  
Whose heart is free from mad desires;  
Whom vain ambition moveth not,  
Nor fickle favor of the mob. 350  
The hidden treasures of the west  
Move not his heart, nor sands of gold  
Which Tagus' waters sweep along  
Within their shining bed;  
Nor yet the garnered wealth of grain 355  
Trod out on Libyan threshing-floors.  
He fears no hurtling thunderbolt  
In zig-zag course athwart the sky;  
No Eurus ruffling up the sea,  
Nor the heaving Adriatic's waves, 360  
Windswept and mad before the blast;  
No hostile spear, nor keen, bare sword  
Can master him; but, set on high,  
In calm serenity he sees  
All things of earth beneath his feet. 365  
And so with joy he goes to meet  
His fate, and welcomes death.  
In vain 'gainst him would kings contend,  
Though from all lands they congregate—  
They who the scattered Dacians lead; 370

Who dwell upon the red sea's marge 370  
 Whose depths are set with gleaming  
 pearls;  
 Or who, secure on Caspian heights,  
 Leave all unclosed their mountain ways  
 Against the bold Sarmatians;  
 They who through Danube's swelling 375  
 waves  
 Dare make their way with fearless feet,  
 And, wheresoe'er they dwell, despoil  
 The famed and far-off Serians:  
 In vain all these, for 'tis the soul  
 That makes the king. He needs no arms, 380  
 No steeds, no ineffectual darts  
 Such as the Parthian hurls from far  
 In simulated flight; for him  
 No engines huge with far-hurled rocks  
 Lay waste the hostile city's walls. 385  
 But he is king who knows no fear,  
 And he is king who has no lust;  
 And on his throne secure he sits  
 Who is self-crowned by conscious worth.  
 Let him who will, in pride of power, 390  
 Upon the brink of empire stand:  
 For me, be sweet repose enough;  
 In humble station fixed, would I  
 My life in gentle leisure spend,  
 In silence, all unknown to fame. 395  
 So when my days have passed away  
 From noisy, restless tumult free,  
 May I, in meek obscurity  
 And full of years, decline in death. 400  
 But death lies heavily on him  
 Who, though to all the world well known,  
 Is stranger to himself alone.

### ACT III

[*Enter Thyestes returning from banishment, accompanied by his three sons.*]

*Thyestes:* At last do I behold the welcome roofs  
Of this my fatherland, the teeming wealth  
Of Argos, and, the greatest and the best  
Of sights to weary exiles, here I see  
My native soil and my ancestral gods 405  
(If gods indeed there be). And there, behold,  
The sacred towers by hands of Cyclops reared,  
In beauty far excelling human art;  
The race-course thronged with youth, where oftentimes  
Have I within my father's chariot  
Sped on to victory and fair renown.  
Now will all Argos come to welcome me; 410  
The thronging folk will come—and Atreus too!  
Oh, better far reseek thy wooded haunts,  
Thy glades remote, and, mingled with the brutes,  
Live e'en as they. Why should this splendid realm  
With its fair-seeming glitter blind my eyes?  
When thou dost look upon the goodly gift, 415  
Scan well the giver too. Of late I lived  
With bold and joyous spirit, though my lot  
All men considered hard to bear. But now  
My heart is filled with fears, my courage fails;  
And, bent on flight, my feet unwilling move. 420

*Tantalus* [*one of Thyestes' sons*]: Why, O my father, dost thou falter  
so  
With steps uncertain, turn away thy face,  
And hold thyself as on a doubtful course?

*Thyestes* [*in soliloquy*]: Why hesitate, my soul, or why so long  
Deliberate upon a point so clear?  
To such uncertain things dost thou intrust  
Thyself as throne and brother? And fearest thou  
Those ills already conquered and found mild?  
Dost flee those cares which thou hast well bestowed? 425

Oh, now my former wretchedness is joy.  
Turn back, while still thou mayst, and save thyself.

*Tantalus:* What cause, O father, forces thee to leave  
Thy native land at last regained? Why now,  
When richest gifts are falling in thy lap, 430  
Dost turn away? Thy brother's wrath is o'er;  
And he has turned himself once more to thee,  
Has given thee back thy share of sovereignty,  
Restored our shattered house to harmony,  
And made thee master of thyself again.

*Thyestes:* Thou askest why I fear—I cannot tell.  
No cause for fear I see, but still I fear.  
I long to go, and yet my trembling limbs 435  
Go on with faltering steps, and I am borne  
Where I most stoutly struggle not to go.  
So, when a ship by oar and sail is driven,  
The tide, resisting both, bears it away.

*Tantalus:* But thou must overcome whate'er it be  
That doth oppose and hold thy soul in check; 440  
And see how great rewards await thee here:  
Thou canst be king.

*Thyestes:* Since I have power to die.

*Tantalus:* But royal power is—

*Thyestes:* Naught, if only thou  
No power dost covet.

*Tantalus:* Leave it to thy sons.

*Thyestes:* No realm on earth can stand divided power.

*Tantalus:* Should he, who can be happy, still be sad? 445

*Thyestes:* Believe me, son, 'tis by their lying names  
That things seem great, while others harsh appear  
Which are not truly so. When high in power  
I stood, I never ceased to be in fear;  
Yea, even did I fear the very sword

Upon my thigh. Oh, what a boon it is  
To be at feud with none, to eat one's bread  
Without a trace of care, upon the ground! 450  
Crime enters not the poor man's humble cot;  
And all in safety may one take his food  
From slender boards; for 'tis in cups of gold  
That poison lurks—I speak what I do know.  
Ill fortune is to be preferred to good.  
For since my palace does not threatening stand  
In pride upon some lofty mountain top, 455  
The people fear me not; my towering roofs  
Gleam not with ivory, nor do I need  
A watchful guard to keep me while I sleep.  
I do not fish with fleets, nor drive the sea  
With massive dykes back from its natural shore;  
I do not gorge me at the world's expense; 460  
For me no fields remote are harvested  
Beyond the Getae and the Parthians;  
No incense burns for me, nor are my shrines  
Adorned in impious neglect of Jove;  
No forests wave upon my battlements,  
No vast pools steam for my delight; my days  
Are not to slumber given, nor do I spend 465  
The livelong night in drunken revelry.  
No one feels fear of me, and so my home,  
Though all unguarded, is from danger free;  
For poverty alone may be at peace.  
And this I hold: the mightiest king is he,  
Who from the lust of sovereignty is free. 470

*Tantalus:* But if some god a kingdom should bestow,  
It is not meet for mortal to refuse:  
Behold, thy brother bids thee to the throne.

*Thyestes:* He bids? 'Tis but a cloak for treachery.

*Tantalus:* But brotherly regard ofttimes returns  
Unto the heart from which it has been driven;  
And righteous love regains its former strength.

*Thyestes*: And dost thou speak of brother's love to me?  
Sooner shall ocean bathe the heavenly Bears, 475  
The raging waves of Sicily be still;  
And sooner shall the Ionian waters yield  
Ripe fields of grain; black night illumine the earth;  
And fire shall mate with water, life with death,  
And winds shall make a treaty with the sea: 480  
Than shall Thyestes know a brother's love.

*Tantalus*: What treachery dost thou fear?

*Thyestes*: All treachery.  
What proper limit shall I give my fear?  
My brother's power is boundless as his hate.

*Tantalus*: How can he harm thee?

*Thyestes*: For myself alone 485  
I have no fears; but 'tis for you, my sons,  
That Atreus must be held in fear by me.

*Tantalus*: But canst thou be o'ercome, if on thy guard?

*Thyestes*: Too late one guards when in the midst of ills.  
But let us on. In this one thing I show  
My fatherhood: I do not lead to ill,  
But follow you.

*Tantalus*: If well we heed our ways,  
God will protect us. Come with courage on. 490

*Atreus* [*coming upon the scene, sees Thyestes and his three sons, and  
gloats over the fact that his brother is at last in his power. He  
speaks aside*]: Now is the prey fast caught within my toils.  
I see the father and his hated brood,  
And here my vengeful hate is safe bestowed;  
For now at last he's come into my hands;  
He's come, Thyestes and his children—all!  
When I see him I scarce can curb my grief, 495  
And keep my soul from breaking madly forth.  
So when the Umbrian hound pursues the prey,  
Keen scented on the long leash held he goes

With lowered muzzle questing on the trail.  
While distant still the game and faint the scent,  
Obedient to the leash, with silent tongue  
He goes along; but when the prey is near, 500  
With straining neck he struggles to be free,  
Bays loud against the cautious hunter's check,  
And bursts from all restraint.

When, near at hand,  
Hot wrath perceives the blood for which it thirsts,  
It cannot be restrained. Yet must it be.  
See how his unkempt, matted hair conceals  
His woeful countenance; how foul his beard. 505

[*He now addresses Thyestes.*]

My promised faith, my brother, will I keep;  
'Tis a delight to see thee once again.  
Come to my arms in mutual embrace;  
For all the anger which I felt for thee  
Has melted clean away. From this time forth  
Let ties of blood be cherished, love and faith;  
And let that hatred which has cursed us both 510  
Forever vanish from our kindred souls.

*Thyestes:* I should attempt to palliate my sins,  
Hadst thou not shown me such fraternal love;  
But now I own, my brother, now I own  
That I have sinned against thee past belief.  
Thy faithful piety has made my case  
Seem blacker still. A double sinner he 515  
Who sins against a brother such as thou.  
Now let my tears my penitence approve.  
Thou, first of all mankind, beholdest me  
A suppliant; these hands, which never yet  
Have touched the feet of man, are laid on thine.  
Let all thy wrathful feelings be forgot,  
Be utterly erased from off thy soul;  
And take, O brother, as my pledge of faith 520  
These guiltless sons of mine.

*Atrous:* Lay not thy hands  
Upon my knees. Come, rather, to my arms.  
And you, dear youths, the comforters of age,  
Come cling about my neck. Those rags of woe,  
My brother, lay aside, and spare mine eyes;  
And clothe thyself more fittingly in these,  
The equal of my own. And, last of all, 525  
Accept thine equal share of this our realm.  
'Twill bring a greater meed of praise to me,  
To restore thee safely to thy father's throne.  
For chance may put the scepter in our hands;  
But only virtue seeks to give it up.

*Thyestes:* May heaven, my brother, worthily repay  
These deeds of thine. But this my wretched head 530  
Will not consent to wear a diadem,  
Nor my ill-omened hand to hold the staff  
Of power. Nay, rather, let me hide myself  
Among the throng.

*Atrous:* There's room upon the throne.

*Thyestes:* But I shall know that all of thine is mine. 535

*Atrous:* But who would throw away good fortune's gifts?

*Thyestes:* Whoe'er has found how easily they fail.

*Atrous:* And wouldst thou thwart thy brother's great renown?

*Thyestes:* Thy glory is attained; mine bides its time.  
My mind is resolute to shun the crown. 540

*Atrous:* Then I refuse my share of power as well.

*Thyestes:* Nay then, I yield. The name of king I'll wear,  
But laws and arms—and I, are thine to sway.

*Atrous* [*placing the crown on his brother's head*]: I'll place this crown  
upon thy reverend head,  
And pay the destined victims to the gods. 545

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*Chorus:* The sight is past belief. Behold,  
This Atreus, fierce and bold of soul,  
By every cruel passion swayed,  
When first he saw his brother's face  
Was held in dumb amaze.  
No force is greater than the power  
Of Nature's ties of love. 'Tis true  
That wars with foreign foes endure;  
But they whom true love once has bound 550  
Will ever feel its ties.  
When wrath, by some great cause aroused,  
Hath burst the bonds of amity,  
And raised the dreadful cry of war;  
When gleaming squadrons thunder down  
With champing steeds; when flashing swords,  
By carnage-maddened Mars upreared, 555  
Gleam with a deadly rain of blows:  
E'en then for sacred piety  
Those warring hands will sheathe the sword  
And join in the clasp of peace.  
What god has given this sudden lull  
In the midst of loud alarms? But now 560  
Throughout Mycenae's borders rang  
The noisy prelude of a strife  
'Twixt brothers' arms. Here mothers pale  
Embraced their sons, and the trembling wife  
Looked on her arméd lord in fear,  
While the sword to his hand reluctant came,  
Foul with the rust of peace. 565  
One strove to renew the tottering walls,  
And one to strengthen the shattered towers,  
And close the gates with iron bars;  
While on the battlements the guard  
His anxious nightly vigils kept. 570  
The daily fear of war is worse  
Than war itself.  
But fallen now are the sword's dire threats

...but hark! how the trumpets and clarions,  
The deep-voiced trumpet-blare is still,  
And the shrill, harsh notes of the clarion  
Are heard no more. While peace profound 575  
Broods once again o'er the happy state.  
So when, beneath the storm blast's lash,  
The heaving waves break on the shore  
Of Bruttium, and Scylla roars  
Responsive from her cavern's depths;  
Then, even within their sheltered port,  
The sailors fear the foaming sea 580  
Which greedy Charybdis vomits up;  
And Cyclops dreads his father's rage  
Where he sits on burning Aetna's crag,  
Lest the deathless flames on his roaring forge  
Be quenched by the overwhelming floods; 585  
When poor Laërtes feels the shock  
Of reeling Ithaca, and thinks  
That his island realm will be swallowed up:  
Then, if the fierce winds die away,  
The waves sink back in their quiet depths;  
And the sea, which of late the vessels feared,  
Now far and wide with swelling sails 590  
Is overspread, while tiny skiffs  
Skim safely o'er its harmless breast;  
And one may count the very fish  
Deep down within the peaceful caves,  
Where but now, beneath the raging blast,  
The battered islands feared the sea.  
No lot endureth long. For grief 595  
And pleasure, each in turn, depart;  
But pleasure has a briefer reign.  
From lowest to the highest state  
A fleeting hour may bring us. He,  
Who wears a crown upon his brow,  
To whom the trembling nations kneel,  
Before whose nod the barbarous Medes 600  
Lay down their arms, the Indians too,

Who dwell beneath the nearer sun,  
And Dacians, who the Parthian horse  
Are ever threat'ning: he, the king,  
With anxious mind the scepter bears,  
Foresees and fears the fickle chance  
And shifting time which soon or late  
Shall all his power overthrow. 605  
Ye, whom the ruler of the land  
And sea has given o'er subject men  
The fearful power of life and death,  
Abate your overweening pride.  
For whatsoever fear of you  
Your weaker subjects feel today, 610  
Tomorrow shall a stronger lord  
Inspire in you. For every power  
Is subject to a greater power.  
Him, whom the dawning day beholds  
In proud estate, the setting sun  
Sees lying in the dust.  
Let no one then trust overmuch  
To favoring fate; and when she frowns, 615  
Let no one utterly despair  
Of better fortune yet to come.  
For Clotho mingles good and ill;  
She whirls the wheel of fate around,  
Nor suffers it to stand.  
To no one are the gods so good  
That he may safely call his own  
Tomorrow's dawn; for on the whirling wheel 620  
Has God our fortunes placed for good or ill.

#### ACT IV

*[Enter Messenger breathlessly announcing the horror which has just been enacted behind the scenes.]*

*Messenger:* Oh, for some raging blast to carry me

With headlong speed through distant realms of air,  
And wrap me in the darkness of the clouds;  
That so I might this monstrous horror tear  
From my remembrance. Oh, thou house of shame  
To Pelops even and to Tantalus! 625

*Chorus:* What is the news thou bring'st?

*Messenger:* What realm is this?  
Argos and Sparta, once the noble home  
Of pious brothers? Corinth, on whose shores  
Two rival oceans beat? Or do I see  
The barbarous Danube on whose frozen stream  
The savage Alani make swift retreat?  
Hyrkania beneath eternal snows? 630  
Or those wide plains of wandering Scythians?  
What place is this that knows such hideous crime?

*Chorus:* But tell thy tidings, whatsoe'er they be.

*Messenger:* When I my scattered senses gather up,  
And horrid fear lets go its numbing hold  
Upon my limbs. Oh, but I see it still,  
The ghastly picture of that dreadful deed!  
Oh, come, ye whirlwinds wild, and bear me far, 635  
Far distant, where the vanished day is borne.

*Chorus:* Thou hold'st our minds in dire uncertainty.  
Speak out and tell us what this horror is,  
And who its author. Yet would I inquire  
Not who, but which he is. Speak quickly, then. 640

*Messenger:* There is upon the lofty citadel  
A part of Pelops' house that fronts the south,  
Whose farther side lifts up its massive walls  
To mountain heights; for so the reigning king  
May better sway the town, and hold in check  
The common rabble when it scorns the throne.  
Within this palace is a gleaming hall,  
So huge, it may a multitude contain; 645  
Whose golden architraves are high upborne

By stately columns of a varied hue.  
Behind this public hall where people throng,  
The palace stretches off in spacious rooms;  
And, deep withdrawn, the royal sanctum lies,  
Far from the vulgar gaze. This sacred spot 650  
An ancient grove within a dale confines,  
Wherein no tree its cheerful shade affords,  
Or by the knife is pruned; but cypress trees  
And yews, and woods of gloomy ilex wave  
Their melancholy boughs. Above them all  
A towering oak looks down and spreads abroad, 655  
O'ershadowing all the grove. Within this place  
The royal sons of Tantalus are wont  
To ask consent of heaven to their rule,  
And here to seek its aid when fortune frowns.  
Here hang their consecrated offerings:  
Sonerous trumpets, broken chariots,  
Those famous spoils of the Myrtoan sea;  
Still hang upon the treacherous axle-trees 660  
The conquered chariot-wheels—mementoes grim  
Of every crime this sinful race has done.  
Here also is the Phrygian turban hung  
Of Pelops' self; and here the spoil of foes,  
A rich embroidered robe, the prize of war.  
An oozy stream springs there beneath the shade,  
And sluggish creeps along within the swamp, 665  
Just like the ugly waters of the Styx  
Which bind the oaths of heaven. 'Tis said that here  
At dead of night the hellish gods make moan,  
And all the grove resounds with clanking chains,  
And mournful howl of ghosts. Here may be seen  
Whatever, but to hear of, causes fear. 670  
The spirits of the ancient dead come forth  
From old, decaying tombs, and walk abroad;  
While monsters, greater than the world has known,  
Go leaping round, grotesque and terrible.  
The whole wood gleams with an uncanny light,  
And without sion of fire the palace glows

And without sign of life the palace grows.  
Ofttimes the grove re-echoes with the sound  
Of threefold bayings of the dogs of hell, 675  
And oft do mighty shapes affright the house.  
Nor are these fears allayed by light of day;  
For night reigns ever here, and e'en at noon  
The horror of the underworld abides.  
From this dread spot are sure responses given  
To those who seek the oracle; the fates 680  
With mighty sound from out the grot are told,  
And all the cavern thunders with the god.  
'Twas to this spot that maddened Atreus came,  
His brother's children dragging in his train.  
The sacrificial altars are adorned—  
Oh, who can worthily describe the deed?  
Behind their backs the noble captives' hands  
Are bound, and purple fillets wreath their brows. 685  
All things are ready, incense, sacred wine,  
The sacrificial meal, and fatal knife.  
The last detail is properly observed,  
That this outrageous murder may be done  
In strict observance of the ritual!

*Chorus:* Who lays his hand unto the fatal steel? 690

*Messenger:* He is himself the priest; the baleful prayer  
He makes, and chants the sacrificial song  
With wild and boisterous words; before the shrine  
He takes his place; the victims doomed to death  
He sets in order, and prepares the sword.  
He gives the closest heed to all details  
And misses no least portion of the rite.  
The grove begins to tremble, earth to quake, 695  
And all the palace totters with the shock,  
And seems to hesitate in conscious doubt  
Where it shall throw its ponderous masses down.  
High on the left a star with darkling train  
Shoots swift athwart the sky; the sacred wine  
Poured at the altar fires, with horrid change,  
The 700

Turns bloody as it flows. The royal crown  
Fell twice and yet again from Atreus' head,  
And the ivory statues in the temple wept.  
These monstrous portents moved all others sore;  
But Atreus, only, held himself unmoved,  
And even set the threat'ning gods at naught.  
And now delay is at an end. He stands  
Before the shrine with lowering, sidelong gaze. 705  
As in the jungle by the Ganges stream  
A hungry tigress stands between two bulls,  
Eager for both, but yet in doubtful mood  
Which first shall feel her fangs (to this she turns  
With gaping jaws, then back to that again, 710  
And holds her raging hunger in suspense):  
So cruel Atreus eyes the victims doomed  
To sate his curséd wrath; and hesitates  
Who first shall feel the knife, and who shall die  
The next in order. 'Tis of no concern,  
But still he hesitates, and gloats awhile  
In planning how to do the horrid deed. 715

*Chorus:* Who then is first to die?

*Messenger:* First place he gives  
(Lest you should think him lacking in respect)  
Unto his grandsire's namesake, Tantalus.

*Chorus:* What spirit, what demeanor showed the youth?

*Messenger:* He stood quite unconcerned, nor strove to plead,  
Knowing such prayer were vain. But in his neck 720  
That savage butcher plunged his gleaming sword  
Clear to the hilt and drew it forth again.  
Still stood the corpse upright, and, wavering long,  
As 'twere in doubt or here or there to fall,  
At last prone on the uncle hurled itself. 725  
Then he, his rancor unabated still,  
Dragged youthful Plisthenes before the shrine,  
And quickly meted him his brother's fate.  
With one keen blow he smote him on the neck,

Whereat his bleeding body fell to earth;  
While with a murmur inarticulate,  
His head with look complaining rolled away.

*Chorus:* What did he then, this twofold murder done?  
The last one spare, or heap up crime on crime? 730

*Messenger:* As when some mané'd lion in the woods  
Victorious attacks the Armenian herds—  
(His jaws are smeared with blood, his hunger gone;  
And yet he does not lay aside his wrath;  
Now here, now there he charges on the bulls, 735  
And now the calves he worries, though his teeth  
Are weary with their work)—so Atreus raves;  
He swells with wrath; and, grasping in his hand  
The sword with double slaughter dripping yet,  
By fury blinded but with deadly stroke,  
He drives clean through the body of the boy. 740  
And so, from breast to back transfixed, he falls  
By double wound, and with his streaming blood  
Extinguishes the baleful altar fires.

*Chorus:* Oh, horrid deed!

*Messenger:* What! horrid call ye that?  
If only there the course of crime had stopped,  
'Twould pious seem. 745

*Chorus:* What more atrocious crime,  
What greater sin could human heart conceive?

*Messenger:* And do ye think his crime was ended here?  
'Twas just begun.

*Chorus:* What further could there be?  
Perchance he threw the corpses to be torn  
By raving beasts, and kept them from the fire?

*Messenger:* Would that he had! I do not pray for this,  
That friendly earth may give them burial,  
Or funeral fires consume; but only this, 750  
That as a ghastly meal they may be thrown



To birds and savage beasts. Such is my prayer,  
Which otherwise were direful punishment.  
Oh, that the father might their corpses see  
Denied to sepulture! Oh, crime of crimes,  
Incredible in any age; a crime  
Which coming generations will refuse  
To hear! Behold, from breasts yet warm with life,  
The exta, plucked away, lie quivering, 755  
The lungs still breathe, the timid heart still beats.  
But he the organs with a practiced hand  
Turns deftly over, and inquires the fates,  
Observing carefully the viscera.  
With this inspection satisfied at length,  
With mind at ease, he now is free to plan 760  
His brother's awful feast. With his own hand  
The bodies he dismembers, carving off  
The arms and shoulders, laying bare the bones,  
And all with savage joy. He only saves  
The heads and hands, those hands which he himself  
Had clasped in friendly faith. Some of the flesh  
Is placed on spits and by the roasting fires 765  
Hangs dripping; other parts into a pot  
Are thrown, where on the water's seething stream  
They leap about. The fire in horror shrinks  
From the polluting touch of such a feast,  
Recoils upon the shuddering altar-hearth  
Twice and again, until at last constrained,  
Though with repugnance strong, it fiercely burns.  
The liver sputters strangely on the spits; 770  
Nor could I say whether the flesh or flames  
Groan more. The fitful flames die out in smoke  
Of pitchy blackness; and the smoke itself,  
A heavy mournful cloud, mounts not aloft  
In upward-shooting columns, straight and high,  
But settles down like a disfiguring shroud  
Upon the very statues of the gods.  
O all-enduring sun, though thou didst flee 775  
In horror from the sight and the radiant noon

Didst into darkness plunge; 'twas all too late.  
The father tears his sons, and impiously feasts  
On his own flesh. See, there in state he sits,  
His hair anointed with the dripping nard, 780  
His senses dulled with wine. And oft the food,  
As if in horror held, sticks in his throat.  
In this thine evil hour one good remains,  
One only, O Thyestes: that to know  
Thy depth of suffering is spared to thee.  
But even this will perish. Though the sun  
Should turn his chariot backward on its course, 785  
And night, at noon arising from the earth,  
Should quite obscure this foul and ghastly crime  
With shades unknown, it could not be concealed;  
For every evil deed shall be revealed.

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[*Unnatural darkness has come over the world at midday.*]

*Chorus:* O father of the earth and sky,  
Before whose rising beams the night 790  
With all her glories flees away;  
Oh, whither dost thou turn thy course,  
And why, midway of heaven, does day  
To darkness turn? O Phoebus, why  
Dost turn away thy shining face?  
Not yet has evening's messenger  
Called forth the nightly stars; not yet 795  
The rounding of thy western goal  
Bids loose thy horses from their toil;  
Not yet, as day fades into night,  
Sounds forth the trumpets' evening call.  
The plowman stands in dumb amaze, 800  
With oxen still unspent with toil,  
To see the welcome supper hour  
So quickly come. But what, O sun,  
Has driven thee from thy heavenly course?

What cause from their accustomed way  
Has turned thy steeds? Is war essayed  
Once more by giants, bursting forth  
From out the riven gates of Dis? 805  
Does Tityos, though wounded sore,  
Renew his ancient, deadly wrath?  
Perchance Typhoeus has thrown off  
His mountain, and is free once more;  
Perchance once more a way to heaven 810  
Those giants, felled in Phlegra's vale,  
Are building, and on Pelion's top  
Are piling Thracian Ossa high.  
The accustomed changes of the heavens  
Are gone to come no more. No more  
The rising and the setting sun  
Shall we behold. Aurora bright, 815  
The herald of the dewy morn,  
Whose wont it is to speed the sun  
Upon his way, now stands amazed  
To see her kingdom overturned.  
She is not skilled to bathe his steeds,  
A-weary with their rapid course,  
Nor in the cooling sea to plunge 820  
Their reeking manes. The sun himself,  
In setting, sees the place of dawn,  
And bids the darkness fill the sky  
Without the aid of night. No stars  
Come out, nor do the heavens gleam  
With any fires; no moon dispels 825  
The darkness' black and heavy pall.  
Oh, that the night itself were here,  
Whatever this portends! Our hearts  
Are trembling, yea, are trembling sore,  
And smitten with a boding fear  
Lest all the world in ruins fall, 830  
And formless chaos as of yore  
O'erwhelm us, gods and men; lest land,  
And all-encircling sea and stars

AND AN-CHERING SEA, AND STARS  
That wander in the spangled heavens,  
Be buried in the general doom.  
No more with gleaming, deathless torch,  
Shall Phoebus, lord of all the stars, 835  
Lead the procession of the years  
And mark the seasons; nevermore  
Shall Luna, flashing back his rays,  
Dispel the fears of night; and pass  
In shorter course her brother's car. 840  
The throng of heavenly beings soon  
Shall in one vast abyss be heaped.  
That shining path of sacred stars,  
Which cuts obliquely 'thwart the zones,  
The standard-bearer of the years, 845  
Shall see the stars in ruin fall,  
Itself in ruin falling. He,  
The Ram, who, in the early spring,  
Restores the sails to the warming breeze,  
Shall headlong plunge into those waves  
Through which the trembling maid of Greece 850  
He bore of old. And Taurus, who  
Upon his horns like a garland wears  
The Hyades, shall drag with him  
The sacred Twins, and the stretched-out claws  
Of the curving Crab. With heat inflamed,  
Alcides' Lion once again  
Shall fall from heaven; the Virgin, too, 855  
Back to the earth she left shall fall;  
And the righteous Scales with their mighty weights,  
Shall drag in their fall the Scorpion.  
And he, old Chiron, skilled to hold  
Upon his bow of Thessaly 860  
The feathered dart, shall lose his shafts  
And break his bow. Cold Capricorn,  
Who ushers sluggish winter in,  
Shall fall from heaven, and break thy urn,  
Whoe'er thou art, O Waterman.

And with thee shall the Fish depart 800  
Remotest of the stars of heaven;  
And those monsters<sup>[48]</sup> huge which never yet  
Were in the ocean plunged, shall soon  
Within the all-engulfing sea  
Be swallowed up. And that huge Snake,  
Which like a winding river glides  
Between the Bears, shall fall from heaven;<sup>[49]</sup> 870  
United with that serpent huge,  
The Lesser Bear, congealed with cold,  
And that slow driver of the Wain  
No longer stable in its course,  
Shall all in common ruin fall.  
Have we, of all the race of men,  
Been worthy deemed to be o'erwhelmed 875  
And buried 'neath a riven earth?  
Is this our age the end of all?  
Alas, in evil hour of fate  
Were we begotten, wretched still,  
Whether the sun is lost to us  
Or banished by our impious sins! 880  
But away with vain complaints and fear:  
Eager for life is he who would not die,  
Though all the world in death around him lie.

FOOTNOTES:

[48] Reading, *monstra*.

[49] Reading, with a semicolon after *Anguis*.

ACT V

*Atrous* [*entering exultingly*]: The peer of stars I move, high over all, 885  
And with exalted head attain the heavens!  
Now are the reins of power within my hands,  
And I am master of my father's throne.  
I here renounce the gods, for I have gained  
The height of my desires. It is enough,  
And even I am satisfied. But why?  
Nay, rather, will I finish my revenge,  
And glut the father with his feast of death. 890  
The day has fled, lest shame should hold me back;  
Act then, while yet the darkness veils the sky.  
Oh, that I might restrain the fleeing gods,  
And force them to behold the avenging feast!  
But 'tis enough, if but the father sees. 895  
Though daylight aid me not, yet will I snatch  
The shrouding darkness from thy miseries.  
Too long with care-free, cheerful countenance  
Thou liest at the feast. Now food enough,  
And wine enough. For so great ills as these, 900  
Thyestes must his sober senses keep.

[*To the slaves.*]

Ye menial throng, spread wide the temple doors,  
The festal hall reveal. 'Tis sweet to note  
The father's frantic grief when first he sees  
His children's gory heads; to catch his words,  
To watch his color change; to see him sit,  
All breathless with the shock, in dumb amaze,  
In frozen horror at the gruesome sight.  
This is the sweet reward of all my toil— 905

THIS IS THE SWEET REWARD OF AN ILLY SON  
To see his misery, e'en as it grows  
Upon his soul.

[*The doors are thrown open, showing Thyestes at the banquet table.*]

Now gleams with many a torch  
The spacious banquet hall. See, there he lies  
Upon his golden couch all richly decked  
With tapestry, his wine-befuddled head  
Upstayed upon his hand. Oh, happy me!  
The mightiest of the heavenly gods am I, 910  
And king of kings! The fondest of my hopes  
Is more than realized. His meal is done;  
Now raises he his silver cup to drink.  
Spare not the wine; there still remains the blood  
Of thy three sons, and 'twill be well disguised  
With old red wine. Now be the revel done. 915  
Now let the father drink the mingled blood  
Of his own offspring; mine he would have drunk.  
But see, he starts to sing a festal song,  
With mind uncertain and with senses dim.

*Thyestes* [*sits alone at the banquet table, half overcome with wine; he tries to sing and be gay, but in spite of this, some vague premonition of evil weighs upon his spirit*]: O heart, long dulled with wretchedness,  
Put by at last thine anxious cares. 920  
Oh, now let grief and fear depart;  
Let haunting hunger flee away,  
The grim companion of the lot  
Of trembling exiles; and disgrace,  
A heavy load for mourning souls.  
More boots it from what height thou fall'st, 925  
Than to what depth. How noble is't,  
When fallen from the pinnacle,  
With dauntless step and firm, to tread  
The lowly plain; and noble too,  
Though by a mass of cares o'erwhelmed,  
To bolster up the shattered throne  
With neck unbending: and with soul 930

Heroic, undismayed by ills,  
To stand erect beneath the weight  
Of ruined fortunes.

But away,  
Ye gloomy clouds of fate; ye marks  
Of former misery, depart. 935  
Thy happy fortune greet with face  
Of joy, and utterly forget  
The old Thyestes. But alas!

This fault is linked with wretchedness,  
That never can the woeful soul  
Accept returned prosperity.  
Though kindly fortune smile again, 940  
He who has suffered finds it hard  
To give himself to joy. But why  
Dost thou restrain me? Why forbid  
To celebrate this festal day?

Why wouldst thou have me weep, O grief,  
For no cause rising? Why with flowers, 945  
Dost thou forbid to wreath my hair?

It does, it does forbid! For see,  
Upon my head the flowers of spring  
Have withered; and my festal locks,  
Though dripping with the precious nard,  
Stand up in sudden dread; my cheeks,  
That have no cause to weep, are wet 950  
With tears; and in the midst of speech

I groan aloud. No doubt 'tis true,  
That grief, well trained in weeping, loves  
To melt away in tears; and oft  
The wretched feel a strong desire  
To weep their fill. E'en so I long  
To cry aloud my wretchedness,  
To rend these gorgeous Tyrian robes, 955  
And shriek my misery to heaven.

My mind gives intimation dark  
Of coming grief, its own distress



Foreboding. So the sailor tears  
The raging tempest's near approach,  
When tranquil waters heave and swell, 960  
Without a breath of wind. Thou fool,  
What grief, what rising storm of fate  
Dost thou imagine nigh? Nay, nay,  
Believe thy brother; for thy fear—  
'Tis groundless, whatsoe'er it be,  
Or thou dost fear too late. Ah me,  
I would not be unhappy now; 965  
But in my soul dim terror stalks,  
Nor can my eyes withhold their tears;  
And all for naught. What can it be?  
Am I possessed by grief or fear?  
Or can this some great rapture be,  
That weeps for joy?

*Atreus* [*greeting his brother with effusive affection*]: With one consent, my  
brother, let us keep 970  
This festal day. For this the happy day  
Which shall the scepter 'stablish in thy hand,  
And link our family in the bonds of peace.

*Thyestes* [*pushing the remains of the feast from him*]: Enough of food and  
wine! One thing alone  
Can swell my generous sum of happiness—  
If with my children I may share my joy. 975

*Atreus*: Believe that in the father's bosom rest  
The sons; both now and ever shall they be  
With thee. No single part of these thy sons  
Shall e'er be taken from thee. Make request:  
What thou desirest will I freely give,  
And fill thee with thy loving family.  
Thou shalt be satisfied; be not afraid. 980  
E'en now thy children, mingled with my own,  
Enjoy alone their youthful festival.  
They shall be summoned hither. Now behold  
This ancient cup, an heirloom of our house.  
Take thou and drink the wine which it contains

TAKE THOU AND DRINK THE WINE WHICH IT CONTAINS.

[*He hands Thyestes the cup filled with mingled blood and wine.*]

*Thyestes:* I take my brother's proffered gift. But first  
Unto our father's gods we'll pour a share,  
And then will drink the cup.

But what is this? 985

My hands will not obey my will; the cup—  
How heavy it has grown, how it resists  
My grasp! And see how now the wine itself,  
Though lifted to my mouth, avoids the touch,  
And flees my disappointed lips. Behold,  
The table totters on the trembling floor;  
The lights burn dim; the very air is thick,  
And, by the natural fires deserted, stands 990  
All dull and lifeless 'twixt the day and night.  
What can it all portend? Now more and more  
The shattered heavens seem tottering to their fall;  
The darkness deepens, and the gloomy night  
In blacker night is plunged. And all the stars  
Have disappeared. Whatever this may mean,  
Oh, spare my children, brother, spare, I 995  
pray;  
And let this gathering storm of evil burst  
Upon my head. Oh, give me back my sons!

*Atreus:* Yes, I will give them back, and never more  
Shall they be taken from thy fond embrace.

[*Exit.*]

*Thyestes:* What is this tumult rising in my breast?  
Why do my vitals quake? I feel a load  
Unbearable, and from my inmost heart 1000  
Come groans of agony that are not mine.  
My children, come! your wretched father calls.  
Oh come! For when mine eyes behold you here,  
Perchance this care will pass away.—But whence

Those answering calls?

*Atreus* [returning, with a covered platter in his hands]:

Now spread thy loving arms.

See, here they are.

[*He uncovers the platter revealing the severed heads of Thyestes' sons.*]

Dost recognize thy sons?

1005

*Thyestes*: I recognize my brother! How, O Earth,

Canst thou endure such monstrous crime as this?

Why dost thou not to everlasting shade

And Styx infernal cleave a yawning gulf,

And sweep away to empty nothingness

This guilty king with all his realm? And why

Dost thou not raze, and utterly destroy

The city of Mycenae? Both of us

1010

Should stand with Tantalus in punishment.

If, far below the depths of Tartarus,

There is a deeper hell, O Mother Earth,

Thy strong foundations rend asunder wide,

And send us thither to that lowest pit.

There let us hide beneath all Acheron;

1015

Let damnéd shades above our guilty heads

Go wandering; let fiery Phlegethon

In raging torrent pour his burning sands

Above our place of exile.

But the earth

Insensate lies, and utterly unmoved.

The gods have fled.

1020

*Atreus*: Nay, come with thankful heart

Receive thy sons whom thou hast long desired.

Enjoy them, kiss them, share among the three

Thy fond embraces.

*Thyestes*: And is this thy bond?

Is this thy grace, thy fond fraternal faith?

So dost thou cease to hate? I do not ask

That I may have my sons again unharmed;

1025

But what in crime and hatred may be given,

This I, a brother, from a brother ask:  
That I may bury them. Restore my sons,  
And thou shalt see their corpses burned at once.  
The father begs for naught that he may keep,  
But utterly destroy.

1030

*Atreus:* Thou hast thy sons,  
Whate'er of them remains; thou also hast  
Whate'er does not remain.

*Thyestes:* What hast thou done?  
Hast fed them to the savage, greedy birds?  
Have beasts of prey devoured their tender flesh?

*Atreus:* *Thou hast thyself that impious banquet made.*

*Thyestes:* Oh, then, 'twas this that shamed the gods of heaven,  
And drove the day in horror back to dawn!

1035

Ah me, what cries shall voice, what plaints express  
My wretchedness? Where can I find the words  
That can describe my woe? The severed heads  
And hands and mangled feet are there; for these  
Their sire, for all his greed, could not devour.

But Oh, I feel within my vitals now

1040

That horrid thing which struggles to be free,  
But can no exit find. Give me the sword,  
Which even now is reeking with my blood,  
That it may set my children free from me.

Thou wilt not give it me? Then let my breast  
Resound with crushing blows—but hold thy hand,  
Unhappy one, and spare the imprisoned shades.

1045

Oh, who has ever seen such crime as this?  
What dweller on the rough and hostile crags  
Of Caucasus, or what Procrustes dire,  
The terror of the land of Attica?

Lo I, the father, overwhelm my sons,  
And by those very sons am overwhelmed.

1050

Is there no limit to this crime of thine?

*Atreus:* When one for its own sake commits a crime,

I here is a proper limit; but no end  
Is possible when vengeance through the crime  
Is sought. E'en as it is, this deed of mine  
Is all too mild. I should have poured their blood  
Straight from their gaping wounds into thy mouth,  
That thou mightst drink their very streams of life. 1055  
But there my wrath was cheated of its due  
By overhaste.

I smote them with the sword,  
I slaughtered them before the sacred shrine,  
And with their blood appeased our household gods;  
I hewed their lifeless bodies limb from limb;  
I carved them into bits, and part I seethed  
In brazen kettles, part before the fire 1060  
On spits I roasted. From their living limbs  
I carved the tender flesh, and saw it hiss  
And sputter on the slender spit, the while  
With my own hands I kept the fire a-blaze.  
But all these things the father should have done. 1065  
In this my vengeful grief has fallen short.  
With impious teeth he tore his slaughtered sons;  
But still in merciful unconsciousness  
The deed was done and suffered.

*Thyestes:* O ye seas,  
Hemmed round by curving shores, give ear to this!  
Hear too, ye gods, wherever ye have fled. 1070  
Ye lords of hades, hear; hear, O ye lands;  
And Night, all black and heavy with the pall  
Of Tartarus, attend unto my cry;  
For I am left to thee, and thou alone  
Doth look in pity on my wretchedness,  
Thou, too, forsaken of the friendly stars;  
For I will raise no wicked prayers to thee,  
Naught for myself implore—what could I ask?  
For you, ye heavenly gods, be all my prayers. 1075  
O thou, almighty ruler of the sky,  
Who sitt'st as lord upon the throne of heaven,  
Enveloped the universe in dismal clouds

enwrap the universe in dismal clouds,  
Incite the winds to war on every side,  
And let thy thunders crash from pole to pole;  
Not with such lesser bolts as thou dost use 1080  
Against the guiltless homes of common men,  
But those which overthrew the triple mass  
Of heaped-up mountains, and those giant forms,  
Themselves like mountains huge: such arms employ;  
Hurl down such fires. Avenge the banished day;  
With thy consuming flames supply the light 1085  
Which has been snatched from out the darkened heaven.  
Select us both as objects of thy wrath;  
Or if not both, then me; aim thou at me.  
With that three-forkéd bolt of thine transfix  
My guilty breast. If I would give my sons 1090  
To burning and to fitting burial,  
I must myself be burned. But if my prayers  
Do not with heaven prevail, and if no god  
Aims at the impious his fatal shaft;  
Then may eternal night brood o'er the earth,  
And hide these boundless crimes in endless shade.  
If thou, O sun, dost to thy purpose hold,  
And cease to shine, I supplicate no more. 1095

*Atreus:* Now do I praise my handiwork indeed;  
Now have I gained the palm of victory.  
My deed had failed entirely of its aim,  
Didst thou not suffer thus. Now may I trust  
That those I call my sons are truly so,  
And faith that once my marriage bed was pure  
Has come again.

*Thyestes:* What was my children's sin? 1100

*Atreus:* Because they were thy children.

*Thyestes:* But to think  
That children to the father—

*Atreus:* That indeed,  
I do confess it. gives me greatest joy:

That thou art well assured they were thy sons.

*Thyestes:* I call upon the gods of innocence—

*Atreus:* Why not upon the gods of marriage call?

*Thyestes:* Why dost thou seek to punish crime with crime?

*Atreus:* Well do I know the cause of thy complaint:

Because I have forestalled thee in the deed.

Thou grievest, not because thou hast consumed

This horrid feast, but that thou wast not first

1105

To set it forth. This was thy fell intent,

To arrange a feast like this unknown to me,

And with their mother's aid attack my sons,

And with a like destruction lay them low.

But this one thing opposed—thou thought'st them thine.

*Thyestes:* The gods will grant me vengeance. Unto them

Do I intrust thy fitting penalty.

1110

*Atreus:* And to thy sons do I deliver thee.

**TROADES**

**TROADES**

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## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- Agamemnon* King of the Greek forces in the war against Troy.
- Pyrrhus* Son of Achilles, one of the active leaders in the final events of the war.
- Ulysses* King of Ithaca, one of the most powerful and crafty of the Greek chiefs before Troy.
- Calchas* A priest and prophet among the Greeks.
- Talthybius* A Greek messenger.
- An Old Man* Faithful to Andromache.
- Astyanax* Little son of Hector and Andromache.
- Hecuba* Widow of Priam, one of the Trojan captives.
- Andromache* Widow of Hector, a Trojan captive.
- Helena* Wife of Menelaüs, king of Sparta, and afterward of Paris, a prince of Troy; the exciting cause of the Trojan war.
- Polyxena* Daughter of Hecuba and Priam (*persona muta*).
- Chorus* Of captive Trojan women.

THE SCENE is laid on the seashore, with the smouldering ruins of Troy in the background. The time is the day before the embarkation of the Greeks on their homeward journey.

*The long and toilsome siege of Troy is done. Her stately palaces and massive walls have been overthrown and lie darkening the sky with their still smouldering ruins. Her heroic defenders are either slain or scattered seeking other homes in distant lands. The victorious Greeks have gathered the rich spoils of Troy upon the shore, among these, the Trojan women who have suffered the usual fate of women when a city is sacked. They await the lot which shall assign them to their Grecian lords and scatter them among the cities of their foes. All things are ready for the start.*

*But now the ghost of Achilles has risen from the tomb, and demanded that*



*But now the ghost of Achilles has risen from the tomb, and demanded that Polyxena be sacrificed to him before the Greeks shall be allowed to sail away. And Calchas, also, bids that Astyanax be slain, for only thus can Greece be safe from any future Trojan war. And thus the Trojan captives who have so long endured the pains of war, must suffer still this double tragedy.*

## ACT I

*Hecuba:* Whoe'er in royal power has put his trust,  
And proudly lords it in his princely halls;  
Who fears no shifting of the winds of fate,  
But fondly gives his soul to present joys:  
Let him my lot and thine, O Troy, behold.  
For of a truth did fortune never show  
In plainer wise the frailty of the prop  
That doth support a king; since by her hand 5  
Brought low, behold, proud Asia's capitol,  
The work of heavenly hands, lies desolate.  
From many lands the warring princes came  
To aid her cause: from where the Tanaïs  
His frigid waves in seven-fold channel pours;  
And that far land which greets the newborn day, 10  
Where Tigris mingles with the ruddy sea  
His tepid waves; and where the Amazon,  
Within the view of wandering Scythia  
Arrays her virgin ranks by Pontus' shores.  
Yet here, o'erthrown, our ancient city lies,  
Herself upon herself in ruins laid;  
Her once proud walls in smouldering heaps recline, 15  
Mingling their ashes with our fallen homes.  
The palace flames on high, while far and near  
The stately city of Assaracus  
Is wrapped in gloomy smoke. Yet e'en the flames  
Keep not the victor's greedy hands from spoil;  
And Troy, though in the grasp of fiery death,  
Is pillaged still. The face of heaven is hid

By that dense, wreathing smoke; the shining day,  
As if o'erspread by some thick, lowering cloud,  
Grows black and foul beneath the ashy storm. 20  
The victor stands with still unsated wrath,  
Eyeing that stubborn town of Ilium,  
And scarce at last forgives those ten long years  
Of bloody strife. Anon, as he beholds  
That mighty city, though in ruins laid,  
He starts with fear; and though he plainly sees  
His foe o'ercome, he scarce can comprehend 25  
That she could be o'ercome. The Dardan spoil  
Is heaped on high, a booty vast, which Greece,  
In all her thousand ships, can scarce bestow.

Now witness, ye divinities whose face  
Was set against our state, my fatherland  
In ashes laid; and thou, proud king of Troy,  
Who in thy city's overthrow hast found  
A fitting tomb; thou shade of mighty Hector,  
In whose proud strength abiding, Ilium stood; 30  
Likewise ye thronging ghosts, my children all,  
But lesser shades: whatever ill has come;  
Whatever Phoebus' bride with frenzied speech,  
Though all discredited, hath prophesied;  
I, Hecuba, myself foresaw, what time, 35  
With unborn child o'erweighed, I dreamed a dream  
That I had borne a flaming brand. And though,  
Cassandra-like, I told my fears, my warnings,  
Like our Cassandra's words in after time,  
Were all in vain. 'Tis not the Ithacan,  
Nor yet his trusty comrade of the night,  
Nor that false traitor, Sinon, who has cast  
The flaming brands that wrought our overthrow:  
Mine is the fire—'tis by my brands ye burn. 40  
But why dost thou bewail the city's fall,  
With ancient gossip's prattle? Turn thy mind,  
Unhappy one, to nearer woes than these.  
Troy's fall, though sad, is ancient story now.  
I saw the horrid slaughter of the king.

Defiling the holy altar with its stain, 45  
When bold Aeacides, with savage hand  
Entwined in helpless Priam's hoary locks,  
Drew back his sacred head, and thrust the sword  
Hilt-buried in his unresisting side.  
And when he plucked the deep-driven weapon back,  
So weak and bloodless was our agéd king,  
The deadly blade came almost stainless forth. 50  
Whose thirst for blood had not been satisfied  
By that old man just slipping o'er the verge  
Of life? Whom would not heavenly witnesses  
Restrain from crime? Who would not stay his hand  
Before the sacred altar, last resort  
Of fallen thrones? Yet he, our noble Priam,  
The king, and father of so many kings,  
Lies like the merest peasant unentombed; 55  
And, though all Troy's aflame, there's not a brand  
To light his pyre and give him sepulture.  
And still the heavenly powers are not appeased.  
Behold the urn; and, subject to its lot,  
The maids and matrons of our princely line,  
Who wait their future lords. To whom shall I,  
An agéd and unprized allotment, fall?  
One Grecian lord has fixed his longing eyes  
On Hector's queen; another prays the lot  
To grant to him the bride of Helenus; 60  
Antenor's spouse is object of desire,  
And e'en thy hand, Cassandra, hath its suitor:  
My lot alone they deprecate and fear.  
And can ye cease your plaints? O captive throng,  
Come beat upon your breasts, and let the sound  
Of your loud lamentations rise anew,  
The while we celebrate in fitting wise  
Troy's funeral; let fatal Ida, seat 65  
Of that ill-omened judgment, straight resound  
With echoes of our pitiful refrain.

*Chorus:* Not an untrained band, to tears unknown,

Thou callest to grief, for our tears have rained  
In streams unending through the years,  
Since the time when the Phrygian guest arrived  
At the friendly court of Tyndarus, 70  
Sailing the sea in his vessel framed  
From the sacred pines of Cybele.  
Ten winters have whitened Ida's slopes,  
So often stripped for our funeral pyres;  
Ten years have ripened the waving grain  
Which the trembling reaper has garnered in  
From wide Sigeon harvest-fields: 75  
But never a day was without its grief,  
Never a night but renewed our woe.  
Then on with the wailing and on with the blows;  
And thou, poor fate-smitten queen, be our guide, 80  
Our mistress in mourning; we'll obey thy commands,  
Well trained in the wild liturgy of despair.

*Hecuba:* Then, trusty comrades of our fate,  
Unbind your tresses and let them flow  
Over your shoulders bent with grief,  
The while with Troy's slow-cooling dust 85  
Ye sprinkle them. Lay bare your arms,  
Strip from your breasts their covering;  
Why veil your beauty? Shame itself  
Is held in captive bonds. And now 90  
Let your hands wave free to the quickening blows  
That resound to your wailings. So, now are ye ready,  
And thus it is well. I behold once more  
My old-time Trojan band. Now stoop  
And fill your hands; 'tis right to take  
Her dust at least from fallen Troy.  
Now let the long-pent grief leap forth, 95  
And surpass your accustomed bounds of woe.  
*Oh, weep for Hector, wail and weep.*

*Chorus:* Our hair, in many a funeral torn, 100  
We loose; and o'er our streaming locks  
Troy's glowing ashes lie bestrewn

TROY'S GROWING ASHES HE BESTOWS.

From our shoulders the veiling garments fall,  
And our breasts invite the smiting hands. 105

Now, now, O grief, put forth thy strength.  
Let the distant shores resound with our mournings;  
And let Echo who dwells in the slopes of the mountains  
Repeat all our wailings, not, after her wont,  
With curt iteration returning the end. 110

Let earth hear and heed; let the sea and the sky  
Record all our grief. Then smite, O ye hands,  
With the strength of frenzy batter and bruise.  
With crying and blows and the pain of the smiting—  
*Oh, weep for Hector, wail and weep.* 115

*Hecuba:* Our hero, for thee the blows are descending,  
On arms and shoulders that stream with our blood;  
For thee our brows endure rough strokes,  
And our breasts are mangled with pitiless hands.  
Now flow the old wounds, reopened anew, 120  
That bled at thy death, the chief cause of our sorrow.  
O prop of our country, delayer of fate,  
Our Ilium's bulwark, our mighty defender,  
Our strong tower wast thou; secure on thy shoulders, 125  
Our city stood leaning through ten weary years.  
By thy power supported, with thee has she fallen,  
Our country and Hector united in doom.  
Now turn to another the tide of your mourning;  
Let Priam receive his due meed of your tears. 130

*Chorus:* Receive our lamentings, O Phrygia's ruler;  
We weep for thy death, who wast twice overcome.  
Naught once did Troy suffer while thou didst rule o'er her:  
Twice fell her proud walls from the blows of the Grecians,  
And twice was she pierced by great Hercules' darts. 135  
Now all of our Hecuba's offspring have perished,  
And the proud band of kings who came to our aid;  
Thy death is the last—our father, our ruler—  
Struck down as a victim to Jove the Almighty,  
All helpless and lone, a mute corpse on the ground. 140

*Hecuba:* Nay, give to another your tears and your mourning,  
 And weep not the death of Priam our king.  
 But call ye him blessed the rather; for free,  
 To the deep world of shadows he travels, and never  
 Upon his bowed neck the base yoke shall he bear. 145  
 No proud sons of Atreus shall call him their captive,  
 No crafty Ulysses his eyes shall behold;  
 As boast of their triumphs he shall not bear onward  
 In humble submission their prizes of war. 150  
 Those free, royal hands to the scepter accustomed,  
 Shall never be bound at his back like a slave,  
 As he follows the car of the triumphing chieftain,  
 A king led in fetters, the gaze of the town. 155

*Chorus:* Hail! Priam the blessed we all do proclaim him;  
 For himself and his kingdom he rules yet below;  
 Now through the still depths of Elysium's shadows  
 'Midst calm, happy spirits he seeks the great Hector.  
 Then hail, happy Priam! Hail all who in battle 160  
 Have lost life and country, but liberty gained.

## ACT II

*Talthybius:* Alas, 'tis thus the Greeks are ever doomed  
 To lie impatient of the winds' delay,  
 Whether on war or homeward journey bent. 165

*Chorus:* Tell thou the cause of this the Greeks' delay.  
 What god obstructs the homeward-leading paths?

*Talthybius:* My soul doth quake, and all my limbs with fear  
 Do tremble. Scarce is credence given to tales  
 That do transcend the truth. And yet I swear,  
 With my own eyes I saw what I relate.  
 Now with his level rays the morning sun  
 Just grazed the summits of the hills, and day 170  
 Had vanquished night; when suddenly the  
 earth,

'Mid rumblings hidden deep and terrible,  
To her profoundest depths convulsive rocked.  
The tree-tops trembled, and the lofty groves  
Gave forth a thunderous sound of crashing boughs;  
While down from Ida's rent and rugged slopes  
The loosened boulders rolled. And not alone 175  
The earth did quake: behold, the swelling sea  
Perceived its own Achilles drawing near,  
And spread its waves abroad. Then did the ground  
Asunder yawn, revealing mighty caves,  
And gave a path from Erebus to earth.  
And then the high-heaped sepulcher was rent,  
From which there sprang Achilles' mighty 180  
shade,  
In guise as when, in practice for thy fates,  
O Troy, he prostrate laid the Thracian arms,  
Or slew the son of Neptune, doomed to wear  
The swan's white plumes; or when, amidst the ranks  
In furious battle raging, he the streams  
Did choke with corpses of the slain, and 185  
Xanthus  
Crept sluggishly along with bloody waves;  
Or when he stood as victor in his car,  
Plying the reins and dragging in the dust  
Great Hector's body and the Trojan state.  
So there he stood and filled the spreading shore  
With wrathful words: "Go, get you gone, ye 190  
race  
Of weaklings, bear away the honors due  
My manes; loose your thankless ships, and sail  
Across my seas. By no slight offering  
Did ye aforetime stay Achilles' wrath;  
And now a greater shall ye pay. Behold,  
Polyxena, once pledged to me in life,  
Must by the hand of Pyrrhus to my shade 195  
Be led, and with her blood my tomb bedew."  
So spake Achilles and the realms of day  
He left for nigh profound, reaching Dia

He fell for night profound, reseeking DIS,  
And as he plunged within the depths of earth,  
The yawning chasm closed and left no trace.  
The sea lies tranquil, motionless; the wind  
Its boisterous threats abates, and where but now  
The storm-tossed waters raged in angry mood, 200  
The gentle waves lap harmless on the shore;  
While from afar the band of Tritons sounds  
The marriage chorus of their kindred lord.

[*Exit.*]

[*Enter Pyrrhus and Agamemnon.*]

*Pyrrhus:* Now that you homeward fare, and on the sea  
Your joyful sails would spread, my noble sire  
Is quite forgot, though by his single hand  
Was mighty Troy o'erthrown; for, though his death  
Some respite granted to the stricken town, 205  
She stood but as some sorely smitten tree,  
That sways uncertain, choosing where to fall.  
Though even now ye seek to make amends  
For your neglect, and haste to grant the thing  
He asks, 'tis but a tardy recompense.  
Long since, the other chieftains of the Greeks  
Have gained their just reward. What lesser prize  
Should his great valor claim? Or is it naught  
That, though his mother bade him shun the war, 210  
And spend his life in long, inglorious ease,  
Surpassing even Pylian Nestor's years,  
He cast his mother's shamming garments off,  
Confessing him the hero that he was?  
When Telephus, in pride of royal power,  
Forbade our progress through his kingdom's bounds, 215  
He stained with royal blood the untried hand  
That young Achilles raised. Yet once again  
He felt that selfsame hand in mercy laid  
Upon his wound to heal him of its smart.  
Then did Eëtion, smitten sore, behold



His city taken and his realm o'erthrown;  
 By equal fortune fell Lyrnessus' walls, 220  
 For safety perched upon a ridgy height,  
 Whence came that captive maid, Briseïs fair;  
 And Chrysa, too, lies low, the destined cause  
 Of royal strife; and Tenedos, and the land  
 Which on its spreading pastures feeds the flocks 225  
 Of Thracian shepherds, Scyros; Lesbos too,  
 Upon whose rocky shore the sea in twain  
 Is cleft; and Cilla, which Apollo loved.  
 All these my father took, and eke the towns  
 Whose walls Caÿcus with his vernal flood  
 Doth wash against. This widespread overthrow  
 Of tribes, this fearful and destructive scourge,  
 That swept through many towns with whirlwind power— 230  
 This had been glory and the height of fame  
 For other chiefs; 'twas but an incident  
 In great Achilles' journey to the war.  
 So came my father and such wars he waged  
 While but preparing war. And though I pass  
 In silence all his other merits, still  
 Would mighty Hector's death be praise enough. 235  
 My father conquered Troy; the lesser task  
 Of pillage and destruction is your own.  
 'Tis pleasant thus to laud my noble sire  
 And all his glorious deeds pass in review:  
 Before his father's eyes did Hector lie,  
 Of life despoiled; and Memnon, swarthy son  
 Of bright Aurora, goddess of the dawn,  
 For whose untimely death his mother's face  
 Was sicklied o'er with grief, while day was veiled 240  
 In darkness. When the heaven-born Memnon fell,  
 Achilles trembled at his victory;  
 For in that fall he learned the bitter truth  
 That even sons of goddesses may die.  
 Then, 'mongst our latest foes, the Amazons,  
 Fierce maidens, felt my father's deadly power.

So, if thou rightly estimate his deeds,  
Thou ow'st Achilles all that he can ask,  
E'en though he seek from Argos or Mycenae  
Some high-born maid. And dost thou hesitate 245  
And haggle now, inventing scruples new,  
And deem it barbarous to sacrifice  
This captive maid of Troy to Peleus' son?  
But yet for Helen's sake didst thou devote  
Thy daughter to the sacrificial knife.  
I make in this no new or strange request,  
But only urge a customary rite.

*Agamemnon:* 'Tis the common fault of youth to have no check  
On passion's force; while others feel alone 250  
The sweeping rush of this first fire of youth,  
His father's spirit urges Pyrrhus on.  
I once endured unmoved the blustering threats  
Of proud Achilles, swoll'n with power; and now,  
My patience is sufficient still to bear  
His son's abuse. Why do you seek to smirch  
With cruel murder the illustrious shade 255  
Of that famed chief? 'Tis fitting first to learn  
Within what bounds the victor may command,  
The vanquished suffer. Never has for long  
Unbridled power been able to endure,  
But lasting sway the self-controlled enjoy.  
The higher fortune raises human hopes,  
The more should fortune's favorite control 260  
His vaulting pride, and tremble as he views  
The changing fates of life, and fear the gods  
Who have uplifted him above his mates.  
By my own course of conquest have I learned  
That mighty kings can straightway come to naught.  
Should Troy o'erthrown exalt us overmuch?  
Behold, we stand today whence she has fallen.  
I own that in the past too haughtily 265  
Have I my sway o'er fallen chieftains borne;  
But thought of fortune's gift has checked my pride,  
Since she unto another might have given

SINCE SHE UNTO ANOTHER MIGHT HAVE GIVEN  
These selfsame gifts. O fallen king of Troy,  
Thou mak'st me proud of conquest over thee,  
Thou mak'st me fear that I may share thy fate.  
Why should I count the scepter anything 270  
But empty honor and a tinsel show?  
This scepter one short hour can take away,  
Without the aid, perchance, of countless ships  
And ten long years of war. The steps of fate  
Do not for all advance with pace so slow.  
For me, I will confess ('tis with thy grace, 275  
O land of Greece, I speak) I have desired  
To see the pride and power of Troy brought low;  
But that her walls and homes should be o'erthrown  
In utter ruin have I never wished.  
But a wrathful foe, by greedy passion driven,  
And heated by the glow of victory,  
Within the shrouding darkness of the night,  
Cannot be held in check. If any act 280  
Upon that fatal night unworthy seemed  
Or cruel, 'twas the deed of heedless wrath,  
And darkness which is ever fury's spur,  
And the victorious sword, whose lust for blood,  
When once in blood imbued, is limitless.  
Since Troy has lost her all, seek not to grasp  
The last poor fragments that remain. Enough, 285  
And more has she endured of punishment.  
But that a maid of royal birth should fall  
An offering upon Achilles' tomb,  
Bedewing his harsh ashes with her blood,  
While that foul murder gains the honored name  
Of wedlock, I shall not permit. On me  
The blame of all will come; for he who sin  
Forbids not when he can, commits the sin. 290

*Pyrrhus:* Shall no reward Achilles' shade obtain?

*Agamemnon:* Yea, truly; all the Greeks shall sing his praise,  
And unknown lands shall hear his mighty name.

But if his shade demand a sacrifice  
Of out-poured blood, go take our richest flocks, 295  
And shed their blood upon thy father's tomb;  
But let no mother's tears pollute the rite.  
What barbarous custom this, that living man  
Should to the dead be slain in sacrifice?  
Then spare thy father's name the hate and scorn  
Which by such cruel worship it must gain.

*Pyrrhus:* Thou, swoll'n with pride so long as happy fate  
Uplifts thy soul, but weak and spent with fear  
When fortune frowns; O hateful king of kings,  
Is now thy heart once more with sudden love  
Of this new maid inflamed? Shalt thou alone  
So often bear away my father's spoils?  
By this right hand he shall receive his own. 305  
And if thou dost refuse, and keep the maid,  
A greater victim will I slay, and one  
More worthy Pyrrhus' gift; for all too long  
From royal slaughter hath my hand been free,  
And Priam asks an equal sacrifice.

*Agamemnon:* Far be it from my wish to dim the praise  
That thou dost claim for this most glorious deed—  
Old Priam slain by thy barbaric sword,  
Thy father's suppliant. 310

*Pyrrhus:* I know full well  
My father's suppliants—and well I know  
His enemies. Yet royal Priam came,  
And made his plea before my father's face;  
But thou, o'ercome with fear, not brave enough 315  
Thyself to make request, within thy tent  
Didst trembling hide, and thy desires consign  
To braver men, that they might plead for thee.

*Agamemnon:* But, of a truth, no fear thy father felt;  
But while our Greece lay bleeding, and her ships  
With hostile fire were threatened, there he lay  
Supine and thoughtless of his warlike arms,

And idly strumming on his tuneful lyre. 320

*Pyrrhus:* Then mighty Hector, scornful of thy arms,  
Yet felt such wholesome fear of that same lyre,  
That our Thessalian ships were left in peace.

*Agamemnon:* An equal peace did Hector's father find  
When he betook him to Achilles' ships. 325

*Pyrrhus:* 'Tis regal thus to spare a kingly life.

*Agamemnon:* Why then didst thou a kingly life despoil?

*Pyrrhus:* But mercy oft doth offer death for life.

*Agamemnon:* Doth mercy now demand a maiden's blood? 330

*Pyrrhus:* Canst *thou* proclaim such sacrifice a sin?

*Agamemnon:* A king must love his country more than child.

*Pyrrhus:* No law the wretched captive's life doth spare.

*Agamemnon:* What law forbids not, this let shame forbid.

*Pyrrhus:* 'Tis victor's right to do whate'er he will. 335

*Agamemnon:* Then should he will the least who most can do.

*Pyrrhus:* Dost thou boast thus, from whose tyrannic reign  
Of ten long years but now the Greeks I freed?

*Agamemnon:* Such airs from Scyros!

*Pyrrhus:* Thence no brother's blood.

*Agamemnon:* Hemmed by the sea!

*Pyrrhus:* Yet that same sea is ours. 340  
But as for Pelops' house, I know it well.

*Agamemnon:* Thou base-born son of maiden's secret sin,  
And young Achilles, scarce of man's estate—

*Pyrrhus:* Yea, that Achilles who, by right of birth,  
Claims equal sovereignty of triple realms: 345  
His mother rules the sea, to Aeacus  
The shades submit, to mighty Jove the heavens.

*Agamemnon:* Yet that Achilles lies by Paris slain!

*Pyrrhus:* But by Apollo's aid, who aimed the dart;  
For no god dared to meet him face to face.

*Agamemnon:* I could have checked thy words, and curbed thy tongue,  
Too bold in evil speech; but this my sword  
Knows how to spare. But rather let them call 350  
The prophet Calchas, who the will of heaven  
Can tell. If fate demands the maid, I yield.

[*Enter Calchas.*]

Thou who from bonds didst loose the Grecian ships,  
And bring to end the slow delays of war;  
Who by thy mystic art canst open heaven,  
And read with vision clear the awful truths  
Which sacrificial viscera proclaim;  
To whom the thunder's roll, the long, bright trail 355  
Of stars that flash across the sky, reveal  
The hidden things of fate; whose every word  
Is uttered at a heavy cost to me:  
What is the will of heaven, O Calchas; speak,  
And rule us with the mastery of fate.

*Calchas:* The Greeks must pay th' accustomed price to death,  
Ere on the homeward seas they take their way. 360  
The maiden must be slaughtered on the tomb  
Of great Achilles. Thus the rite perform:  
As Grecian maidens are in marriage led  
By other hands unto the bridegroom's home,  
So Pyrrhus to his father's shade must lead  
His promised bride.

But not this cause alone 365  
Delays our ships: a nobler blood than thine,  
Polyxena, is due unto the fates;  
For from yon lofty tower must Hector's son,  
Astyanax, be hurled to certain death.  
Then shall our vessels hasten to the sea,  
And fill the waters with their thousand sails.

370

[*Exeunt.*]

*Chorus:* When in the tomb the dead is laid,  
When the last rites of love are paid;  
When eyes no more behold the light,  
Closed in the sleep of endless night;  
Survives there aught, can we believe?  
Or does an idle tale deceive? 375  
What boots it, then, to yield the breath  
A willing sacrifice to death,  
If still we gain no dreamless peace,  
And find from living no release?  
Say, do we, dying, end all pain?  
Does no least part of us remain?  
When from this perishable clay  
The flitting breath has sped away;  
Does then the soul that dissolution share  
And vanish into elemental air?  
Whate'er the morning sunbeam knows, 380  
Whate'er his setting rays disclose;  
Whate'er is bathed by Ocean wide,  
In ebbing or in flowing tide:  
Time all shall snatch with hungry greed,  
With mythic Pegasean speed.  
Swift is the course of stars in flight, 385  
Swiftly the moon repairs her light;  
Swiftly the changing seasons go,  
While time speeds on with endless flow:  
But than all these, with speed more swift,  
Toward fated nothingness we drift.  
For when within the tomb we're laid, 390  
No soul remains, no hov'ring shade.  
Like curling smoke, like clouds before the blast,  
This animating spirit soon has passed.  
Since naught remains, and death is 395  
naught  
But life's last goal, so swiftly sought;  
Let those who cling to life abate  
Their fond desires, and yield to fate;



And those who fear death's fabled gloom,  
Bury their cares within the tomb.  
Soon shall grim time and yawning night  
In their vast depths engulf us quite;  
Impartial death demands the whole— 400  
The body slays nor spares the soul.  
Dark Taenara and Pluto fell,  
And Cerberus, grim guard of hell—  
All these but empty rumors seem,  
The pictures of a troubled dream. 405  
Where then will the departed spirit dwell?  
Let those who never came to being tell.

### ACT III

[*Enter Andromache, leading the little Astyanax.*]

*Andromache:* What do ye here, sad throng of Phrygian dames?  
Why tear your hair and beat your wretched breasts?  
Why stream your cheeks with tears? Our ills are 410  
light  
If we endure a grief that tears can soothe.  
You mourn a Troy whose walls but now have fall'n;  
Troy fell for me long since, when that dread car  
Of Peleus' son, urged on at cruel speed,  
With doleful groanings 'neath his massive weight,  
Dragged round the walls my Hector's mangled corse. 415  
Since then, o'erwhelmed and utterly undone,  
With stony resignation do I bear  
Whatever ills may come. But for this child,  
Long since would I have saved me from the Greeks  
And followed my dear lord; but thought of him  
Doth check my purpose and forbid my death.  
For his dear sake there still remaineth cause 420  
To supplicate the gods, an added care.  
Through him the richest fruit of woe is lost—  
The fear of naught; and now all hope of rest

From further ills is gone, for cruel fate  
Hath still an entrance to my grieving heart.  
Most sad his fear, who fears in hopelessness.

425

*An Old Man:* What sudden cause of fear hath moved thee  
so?

*Andromache:* Some greater ill from mighty ills doth rise.  
The fate of fallen Troy is not yet stayed.

*Old Man:* What new disasters can the fates invent?

*Andromache:* The gates of deepest Styx, those darksome realms  
(Lest fear be wanting to our overthrow),  
Are opened wide, and forth from lowest Dis  
The spirit of our buried foeman comes.  
(May Greeks alone retrace their steps to earth?  
For death at least doth come to all alike.)  
That terror doth invade the hearts of all;  
But what I now relate is mine alone—  
A terrifying vision of the night.

430

435

*Old Man:* What was this vision? Speak and share thy fears.

*Andromache:* Now kindly night had passed her middle goal,  
And their bright zenith had the Bears o'ercome.  
Then came to my afflicted soul a calm  
Long since unknown, and o'er my weary eyes,  
For one brief hour did drowsy slumber steal  
If that be sleep—the stupor of a soul  
Forespent with ills: when suddenly I saw  
Before mine eyes the shade of Hector stand;  
Not in such guise as when, with blazing torch  
He strove in war against the Grecian ships,  
Nor when, all stained with blood, in battle fierce  
Against the Danai, he gained true spoil  
From that feigned Peleus' son; not such his face  
All flaming with the eager battle light;  
But weary, downcast, tear-stained, like my own,  
All covered o'er with tangled, bloody locks.  
Still did my joy leap up at sight of him;

440

445

450

And then he sadly shook his head and said:  
"Awake from sleep and save our son from death,  
O faithful wife. In hiding let him lie;  
Thus only can he life and safety find.  
Away with tears—why dost thou mourning make  
For fallen Troy? I would that all had fall'n. 455  
Then haste thee, and to safety bear our son,  
The stripling hope of this our vanquished home,  
Wherever safety lies."

So did he speak,  
And chilling terror roused me from my sleep.  
Now here, now there I turned my fearful eyes.  
Forgetful of my son, I sought the arms  
Of Hector, there to lay my grief. In vain:  
For that elusive shade, though closely pressed, 460  
Did ever mock my clinging, fond embrace.  
O son, true offspring of thy mighty sire,  
Sole hope of Troy, sole comfort of our house,  
Child of a stock of too illustrious blood,  
Too like thy father, thou: such countenance  
My Hector had, with such a tread he walked,  
With such a motion did he lift his hands,  
Thus stood he straight with shoulders proudly set,  
And thus he oft from that high, noble brow  
Would backward toss his flowing locks.—But thou,  
O son, who cam'st too late for Phrygia's help,  
Too soon for me, will that time ever come,  
That happy day, when thou, the sole defense, 470  
And sole avenger of our conquered Troy,  
Shalt raise again her fallen citadel,  
Recall her scattered citizens from flight,  
And give to fatherland and Phrygians  
Their name and fame again?—Alas, my son,  
Such hopes consort not with our present state.  
Let the humble captive's fitter prayer be mine—  
The prayer for life. 475

Ah me, what spot remote  
Can hold thee safe? In what dark lurking-place

Can I bestow thee safe? In what dark lurking-place  
Can I bestow thee and abate my fears?  
Our city, once in pride of wealth secure,  
And stayed on walls the gods themselves had built,  
Well known of all, the envy of the world,  
Now deep in ashes lies, by flames laid low; 480  
And from her vast extent of temples, walls  
And towers, no part, no lurking-place remains,  
Wherein a child might hide. Where shall I choose  
A covert safe? Behold the mighty tomb  
Wherein his father's sacred ashes lie,  
Whose massive pile the enemy has spared.  
This did old Priam rear in days of power, 485  
Whose grief no stinted sepulture bestowed.  
Then to his father let me trust the child.—  
But at the very thought a chilling sweat  
Invades my trembling limbs, for much I fear  
The gruesome omen of the place of death. 490

*Old Man:* In danger, haste to shelter where ye may;  
In safety, choose.

*Andromache:* What hiding-place is safe  
From traitor's eyes?

*Old Man:* All witnesses remove.

*Andromache:* What if the foe inquire?

*Old Man:* Then answer thus:  
"He perished in the city's overthrow."  
This cause alone ere now hath safety found  
For many from the stroke of death—belief  
That they have died.

*Andromache:* But scanty hope is left;  
Too huge a weight of race doth press him down.  
Besides, what can it profit him to hide 495  
Who must his shelter leave and face the foe?

*Old Man:* The victor's deadliest purposes are first.

*Andromache:* What trackless region, what obscure retreat

*Andromache.* What trackless region, what obscure retreat  
 Shall hold thee safe? Oh, who will bring us aid  
 In our distress and doubt? Who will defend?  
 O thou, who always didst protect thine own,  
 My Hector, guard us still. Accept the trust 500  
 Which I in pious confidence impose;  
 And in the faithful keeping of thy dust  
 May he in safety dwell, to live again.  
 Then son, betake thee hither to the tomb.  
 Why backward strain, and shun that safe retreat?  
 I read thy nature right: thou scornest fear.  
 But curb thy native pride, thy dauntless soul, 505  
 And bear thee as thine altered fates direct.  
 For see what feeble forces now are left:  
 A sepulcher, a boy, a captive band.  
 We cannot choose but yield us to our woes.  
 Then come, make bold to enter the abode,  
 The sacred dwelling of thy buried sire.  
 If fate assist us in our wretchedness,  
 'Twill be to thee a safe retreat; if life 510  
 The fates deny, thou hast a sepulcher.

*[The boy enters the tomb, and the gates are closed and barred behind him.]*

*Old Man:* Now do the bolted gates protect their charge.  
 But thou, lest any sign of fear proclaim  
 Where thou hast hid the boy, come far away.

*Andromache:* Who fears from near at hand, hath less of fear;  
 But, if thou wilt, take we our steps away. 515

*[Ulysses is seen approaching.]*

*Old Man:* Now check thy words awhile, thy mourning cease;  
 For hither bends the Ithacan his course.

*Andromache [with a final appealing look toward the tomb]:* Yawn deep, O  
 earth, and thou, my husband, rend  
 To even greater depths thy tomb's deep cave,  
 And hide the sacred trust I gave to thee 520

Within the very bosom of the pit.  
Now comes Ulysses, grave and slow of tread;  
Methinks he plotteth mischief in his heart.

[*Enter Ulysses.*]

*Ulysses:* As harsh fate's minister, I first implore  
That, though the words are uttered by my lips, 525  
Thou count them not my own. They are the voice  
Of all the Grecian chiefs, whom Hector's son  
Doth still prohibit from that homeward voyage  
So long delayed. And him the fates demand.  
A peace secure the Greeks can never feel,  
And ever will the backward-glancing fear 530  
Compel them on defensive arms to lean,  
While on thy living son, Andromache,  
The conquered Phrygians shall rest their hopes.  
So doth the augur, Calchas, prophesy.  
Yet, even if our Calchas spake no word,  
Thy Hector once declared it, and I fear  
Lest in his son a second Hector dwell; 535  
For ever doth a noble scion grow  
Into the stature of his noble sire.  
Behold the little comrade of the herd,  
His budding horns still hidden from the sight:  
Full soon with arching neck and lofty front,  
He doth command and lead his father's flock. 540  
The slender twig, just lopped from parent bough,  
Its mother's height and girth surpasses soon,  
And casts its shade abroad to earth and sky.  
So doth a spark within the ashes left,  
Leap into flame again before the wind.  
Thy grief, I know, must partial judgment give;  
Still, if thou weigh the matter, thou wilt grant 545  
That after ten long years of grievous war.  
A veteran soldier doeth well to fear  
Still other years of slaughter, and thy Troy  
Still unsubdued. This fear one cause alone

still unshook. This fear one cause alone  
Doth raise—another Hector. Free the Greeks 550  
From dread of war. For this and this alone  
Our idle ships still wait along the shore.  
And let me not seem cruel in thy sight,  
For that, compelled of fate, I seek thy son:  
I should have sought our chieftain's son as well.  
Then gently suffer what the victor bids.

*Andromache:* Oh, that thou wert within my power to give, 555  
My son, and that I knew what cruel fate  
Doth hold thee now, snatched from my eager arms—  
Where thou dost lie; then, though my breast were pierced  
With hostile spears, and though my hands with chains  
Were bound, and scorching flames begirt my sides, 560  
Thy mother's faith would ne'er betray her child.  
O son, what place, what lot doth hold thee now?  
Dost thou with wandering footsteps roam the fields?  
Wast thou consumed amid the raging flames?  
Hath some rude victor reveled in thy blood?  
Or, by some ravening beast hast thou been slain, 565  
And liest now a prey for savage birds?

*Ulysses:* Away with feignéd speech; no easy task  
For thee to catch Ulysses: 'tis my boast  
That mother's snares, and even goddesses'  
I have o'ercome. Have done with vain deceit. 570  
Where is thy son?

*Andromache:* And where is Hector too?  
Where agéd Priam and the Phrygians?  
*Thou* seekest one; *my* quest includes them all.

*Ulysses:* By stern necessity thou soon shalt speak  
What thy free will withholds.

*Andromache:* But safe is she,  
Who can face death, who ought and longs to die.

*Ulysses:* But death brought near would still thy haughty words.

*Andromache:* If 'tis thy will, Ulysses, to inspire  
---

Andromache with fear, then threaten life; 575  
For death has long been object of my prayer.

*Ulysses:* With stripes, with flames, with lingering pains of death  
Shalt thou be forced to speak, against thy will,  
What now thou dost conceal, and from thy heart  
Its inmost secrets bring. Necessity  
Doth often prove more strong than piety. 580

*Andromache:* Prepare thy flames, thy blows, and all the arts  
Devised for cruel punishment: dire thirst,  
Starvation, every form of suffering;  
Come, rend my vitals with the sword's deep thrust;  
In dungeon, foul and dark, immure; do all  
A victor, full of wrath and fear, can do 585  
Or dare; still will my mother heart, inspired  
With high and dauntless courage, scorn thy threats.

*Ulysses:* This very love of thine, which makes thee bold,  
Doth warn the Greeks to counsel for their sons.  
This strife, from home remote, these ten long years 590  
Of war, and all the ills which Calchas dreads,  
Would slight appear to me, if for myself  
I feared: but thou dost threat Telemachus.

*Andromache:* Unwillingly, Ulysses, do I give  
To thee, or any Grecian, cause of joy;  
Yet must I give it, and speak out the woe,  
The secret grief that doth oppress my soul.  
Rejoice, O sons of Atreus, and do thou, 595  
According to thy wont, glad tidings bear  
To thy companions: *Hector's son is dead.*

*Ulysses:* What proof have we that this thy word is true?

*Andromache:* May thy proud victor's strongest threat befall,  
And bring my death with quick and easy stroke;  
May I be buried in my native soil, 600  
May earth press lightly on my Hector's bones:  
According as my son, deprived of light,  
Amidst the dead doth lie, and, to the tomb



Consigned, hath known the funeral honors due  
To those who live no more.

605

*Ulysses* [*joyfully*]: Then are the fates  
Indeed fulfilled, since Hector's son is dead,  
And I with joy unto the Greeks will go,  
With grateful tale of peace at last secure.

[*Aside.*]

But stay, Ulysses, this rash joy of thine!  
The Greeks will readily believe *thy* word;  
But what dost thou believe?—his mother's oath.  
Would then a mother feign her offspring's death,  
And fear no baleful omens of that word?

They omens fear who have no greater dread.  
Her truth hath she upheld by straightest oath.

610

If that she perjured be, what greater fear  
Doth vex her soul? Now have I urgent need  
Of all my skill and cunning, all my arts,  
By which so oft Ulysses hath prevailed;  
For truth, though long concealed, can never die.  
Now watch the mother; note her grief, her tears,  
Her sighs; with restless step, now here, now there,  
She wanders, and she strains her anxious ears  
To catch some whispered word. 'Tis evident,  
She more by present fear than grief is swayed.  
So must I ply her with the subtlest art.

615

[*To Andromache.*]

When others mourn, 'tis fit in sympathy  
To speak with kindred grief; but thou, poor soul,  
I bid rejoice that thou hast lost thy son,  
Whom cruel fate awaited; for 'twas willed  
That from the lofty tower that doth remain  
Alone of Troy's proud walls, he should be dashed,  
And headlong fall to quick and certain death.

620

*Andromache* [*aside*]: My soul is faint within me, and my limbs  
Do quake; while chilling fear congeals my blood.

625

*Ulysses* [*aside*]: She trembles; here must I pursue my quest.

Her fear betrayeth her; wherefore this fear  
Will I redouble.—

[*To attendants.*]

Go in haste, my men,  
And find this foe of Greece, the last defense  
Of Troy, who by his mother's cunning hand  
Is safe bestowed, and set him in our midst.

[*Pretending that the boy is discovered.*]

'Tis well! He's found. Now bring him here with haste.

[*To Andromache.*] 630

Why dost thou start, and tremble? Of a truth  
Thy son is dead, for so hast thou declared.

*Andromache:* Oh, that I had just cause of dread. But now,  
My old habitual fear instinctive starts;  
The mind oft-times forgets a well-conned woe.

*Ulysses:* Now since thy boy hath shunned the sacrifice  
That to the walls was due, and hath escaped  
By grace of better fate, our priest declares 635  
That only can our homeward way be won  
If Hector's ashes, scattered o'er the waves,  
Appease the sea, and this his sepulcher  
Be leveled with the ground. Since Hector's son  
Has failed to pay the debt he owed to fate,  
Then Hector's sacred dust must be despoiled. 640

*Andromache [aside]:* Ah me, a double fear distracts my soul!  
Here calls my son, and here my husband's dust.  
Which shall prevail? Attest, ye heartless gods,  
And ye, my husband's shades, true deities: 645  
Naught else, O Hector, pleased me in my son,  
Save only thee; then may he still survive  
To bring thine image back to life and me.—  
Shall then my husband's ashes be defiled?  
Shall I permit his bones to be the sport  
Of waves, and lie unburied in the sea?  
Oh, rather, let my only son be slain!—  
And canst thou, mother, see thy helpless child 650  
To awful death given up? Canst thou behold

to a wful death given up? Canst thou behold  
 His body whirling from the battlements?  
 I can, I shall endure and suffer this,  
 Provided only, by his death appeased,  
 The victor's hand shall spare my Hector's bones.—  
 But he can suffer yet, while kindly fate  
 Hath placed his sire beyond the reach of harm. 655  
 Why dost thou hesitate? Thou must decide  
 Whom thou wilt designate for punishment.  
 What doubts harass thy troubled soul? No more  
 Is Hector here.—Oh, say not so; I feel  
 He is both here and there. But sure am I  
 That this my child is still in life, perchance  
 To be the avenger of his father's death.  
 But both I cannot spare. What then? O soul,  
 Save of the two, whom most the Greeks do fear. 660

*Ulysses* [*aside*]: Now must I force her answer.

[*To Andromache.*]

From its base  
 Will I this tomb destroy.

*Andromache:* The tomb of him  
 Whose body thou didst ransom for a price?

*Ulysses:* I will destroy it, and the sepulcher  
 From its high mound will utterly remove. 665

*Andromache:* The sacred faith of heaven do I invoke,  
 And just Achilles' plighted word: do thou,  
 O Pyrrhus, keep thy father's sacred oath.

*Ulysses:* This tomb shall soon lie level with the plain.

*Andromache:* Such sacrilege the Greeks, though impious,  
 Have never dared. 'Tis true the sacred fanes,  
 E'en of your favoring gods, ye have defiled;  
 But still your wildest rage hath spared our tombs. 670  
 I will resist, and match your warriors' arms  
 With my weak woman's hands. Despairing wrath  
 Will nerve my arm. Like that fierce Amazon,

Who wrought dire havoc in the Grecian ranks;  
Or some wild Maenad by the god o'ercome,  
Who, thyrus-armed, doth roam the trackless glades  
With frenzied step, and, clean of sense bereft,  
Strikes deadly blows but feels no counter-stroke: 675  
So will I rush against ye in defense  
Of Hector's tomb, and perish, if I must,  
An ally of his shade.

*Ulysses* [*to attendants*]: Do ye delay,  
And do a woman's tears and empty threats  
And outcry move you? Speed the task I bid. 680

*Andromache* [*struggling with attendants*]: Destroy me first! Oh, take  
my life instead!

[*The attendants roughly thrust her away.*]

Alas, they thrust me back! O Hector, come,  
Break through the bands of fate, upheave the earth,  
That thou mayst stay Ulysses' lawless hand.  
Thy spirit will suffice.—Behold he comes!  
His arms he brandishes, and firebrands hurls.  
Ye Greeks, do ye behold him, or do I,  
With solitary sight, alone behold?

685

*Ulysses*: This tomb and all it holds will I destroy.

*Andromache* [*aside, while the attendants begin to demolish the tomb*]: Ah  
me, can I permit the son and sire  
To be in common ruin overwhelmed?  
Perchance I may prevail upon the Greeks  
By prayer.—But even now those massive stones  
Will crush my hidden child.—Oh, let him die,  
In any other way, and anywhere,  
If only father crush not son, and son 690  
No desecration bring to father's dust.

[*Casts herself at the feet of Ulysses.*]

A humble suppliant at thy knees I fall,  
Ulysses; I, who never yet to man  
Have bent the knee in prayer, thy feet embrace.  
By all the gods, have pity on my woes,

And with a calm and patient heart receive  
My pious prayers. And as the heavenly powers  
Have high exalted thee in pride and might, 695  
The greater mercy show thy fallen foes.  
Whate'er is given to wretched suppliant  
Is loaned to fate. So mayst thou see again  
Thy faithful wife; so may Laërtes live  
To greet thee yet again; so may thy son  
Behold thy face, and, more than that thou canst pray,  
Excel his father's valor and the years 700  
Of old Laërtes. Pity my distress:  
The only comfort left me in my woe,  
Is this my son.

*Ulysses:* Produce the boy—and pray.

*Andromache [goes to the tomb and calls to Astyanax]:* Come forth, my  
son, from the place of thy hiding  
Where thy mother bestowed thee with weeping and fear. 705  
*[Astyanax appears from the tomb. Andromache presents him to*  
*Ulysses.]*

Here, here is the lad, Ulysses, behold him;  
The fear of thy armies, the dread of thy fleet!

*[To Astyanax.]*

My son, thy suppliant hands upraise,  
And at the feet of this proud lord,  
Bend low in prayer, nor think it base  
To suffer the lot which our fortune appoints. 710  
Put out of mind thy regal birth,  
Thy agéd grandsire's glorious rule  
Of wide domain; and think no more  
Of Hector, thy illustrious sire.  
Be captive alone—bend the suppliant knee;  
And if thine own fate move thee not, 715  
Then weep by thy mother's woe inspired.

*[To Ulysses.]*

That older Troy beheld the tears  
Of its youthful king, and those tears prevailed  
To stay the fierce threats of the victor's wrath.

The mighty Hercules. Yea he, 720  
To whose vast strength all monsters had yielded,  
Who burst the stubborn gates of hell,  
And o'er that murky way returned,  
Even he was o'ercome by the tears of a boy.  
"Take the reins of the state," to the prince he said; 725  
"Reign thou on thy father's lofty throne,  
But reign with the scepter of power—and truth."  
Thus did that hero subdue his foes.  
And thus do thou temper thy wrath with forbearance.  
And let not the power of great Hercules, only, 730  
Be model to thee. Behold at thy feet,  
As noble a prince as Priam of old  
Pleads only for life! The kingdom of Troy  
Let fortune bestow where she will.

*Ulysses [aside]*: This woe-struck mother's grief doth move me sore; 735  
But still the Grecian dames must more prevail,  
Unto whose grief this lad is growing up.

*Andromache [hearing him]*: What? These vast ruins of our fallen town,  
To very ashes brought, shall he uprear?  
Shall these poor boyish hands build Troy again? 740  
No hopes indeed hath Troy, if such her hopes.  
So low the Trojans lie, there's none so weak  
That he need fear our power. Doth lofty thought  
Of mighty Hector nerve his boyish heart?  
What valor can a fallen Hector stir?  
When this our Troy was lost, his father's self  
Would then have bowed his lofty spirit's pride;  
For woe can bend and break the proudest soul. 745  
If punishment be sought, some heavier fate  
Let him endure; upon his royal neck  
Let him support the yoke of servitude.  
Must princes sue in vain for this poor boon?

*Ulysses*: Not I, but Calchas doth refuse thy prayer.

*Andromache*: O man of lies, artificer of crime, 750  
By whom in open fight no foe is slain

By whom in open light no foe is slain,  
But by whose tricks and cunning, evil mind  
The very chiefs of Greece are overthrown,  
Dost thou now seek to hide thy dark intent  
Behind a priest and guiltless gods? Nay, nay:  
This deed within thy sinful heart was born.  
Thou midnight prowler, brave to work the death  
Of this poor boy, dost dare at length alone  
To do a deed, and that in open day?

*Ulysses:* Ulysses' valor do the Grecians know  
Full well, and all too well the Phrygians.  
But we are wasting time with empty words.  
The impatient ships are tugging at their chains.

*Andromache:* But grant a brief delay, while to my son  
I pay the rites of woe, and sate my grief  
With tears and last embrace.

*Ulysses:* I would 'twere mine  
To spare thy tears; but what alone I may,  
I'll give thee respite and a time for grief.  
Then weep thy fill, for tears do soften woe.

*Andromache [to Astyanax]:* O darling pledge of love, thou only stay  
Of our poor fallen house, last pang of Troy;  
O thou whom Grecians fear, O mother's hope,  
Alas too vain, for whom, with folly blind,  
I prayed the war-earned praises of his sire,  
His royal grandsire's prime of years and strength:  
But God hath scorned my prayers.

Thou shalt not live  
To wield the scepter in the royal courts  
Of ancient Troy, to make thy people's laws,  
And send beneath thy yoke the conquered tribes;  
Thou shalt not fiercely slay the fleeing Greeks,  
Nor from thy car in retribution drag  
Achilles' son; the dart from thy small hand  
Thou ne'er shalt hurl, nor boldly press the chase  
Of scattered beasts throughout the forest glades;

And when the sacred iustral day is come,  
Troy's yearly ritual of festal games,  
The charging squadrons of the noble youth  
Thou shalt not lead, thyself the noblest born;  
Nor yet among the blazing altar fires,  
With nimble feet the ancient sacred dance  
At some barbaric temple celebrate,  
While horns swell forth swift-moving melodies.  
Oh, mode of death, far worse than bloody war!  
More tearful sight than mighty Hector's end  
The walls of Troy must see.

780

785

*Ulysses:* Now stay thy tears,  
For mighty grief no bound or respite finds.

*Andromache:* Small space for tears, Ulysses, do I ask;  
Some scanty moments yet, I pray thee, grant,  
That I may close his eyes though living still,  
And do a mother's part.

[*To Astyanax.*]

Lo, thou must die,  
For, though a child, thou art too greatly feared.  
Thy Troy awaits thee: go, in freedom's pride,  
And see our Trojans, dead yet unenslaved.

790

*Astyanax:* O mother, mother, pity me and save!

*Andromache:* My son, why dost thou cling upon my robes,  
And seek the vain protection of my hand?  
As when the hungry lion's roar is heard,  
The frightened calf for safety presses close  
Its mother's side; but that remorseless beast,  
Thrusting away the mother's timid form,  
With ravenous jaws doth grasp the lesser prey,  
And, crushing, drag it hence: so shalt thou, too,  
Be snatched away from me by heartless foes.  
Then take my tears and kisses, O my son,  
Take these poor locks, and, full of mother love,  
Go speed thee to thy sire; and in his ear  
Speak these, thy grieving mother's parting words:

795

800



"If still thy manes feel their former cares,  
And on the pyre thy love was not consumed,  
Why dost thou suffer thy Andromache  
To serve a Grecian lord, O cruel Hector?  
Why dost thou lie in careless indolence?  
Achilles has returned."

805

Take once again  
These hairs, these flowing tears, which still remain  
From Hector's piteous death; this fond caress  
And rain of parting kisses take for him.  
But leave this cloak to comfort my distress,  
For it, within his tomb and near his shade,  
Hath lain enwrapping thee. If to its folds  
One tiny mote of his dear ashes clings,  
My eager lips shall seek it till they find.

810

*Ulysses:* Thy grief is limitless. Come, break away,  
And end our Grecian fleet's too long delay.

*[He leads the boy away with him.]*

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*Chorus:* Where lies the home of our captivity?  
On Thessaly's famed mountain heights?  
Where Tempe's dusky shade invites?  
Or Phthia, sturdy warriors' home, 815  
Or where rough Trachin's cattle roam?  
Iolchos, mistress of the main,  
Or Crete, whose cities crowd the plain?  
Where frequent flow Mothone's rills, 820  
Beneath the shade of Oete's hills,  
Whence came Alcides' fatal bow  
Twice destined for our overthrow?  
But whither shall our alien course be sped? 825  
Perchance to Pleuron's gates we go,  
Where Dian's self was counted foe;  
Perchance to Troezen's winding shore,  
The land which mighty Theseus bore;

Or Pelion, by whose rugged side  
 Their mad ascent the giants tried.  
 Here, stretched within his mountain cave,  
 Once Chiron to Achilles gave 830  
 The lyre, whose stirring strains attest  
 The warlike passions of his breast.  
 What foreign shore our homeless band 835  
 invites?  
 Must we our native country deem  
 Where bright Carystos' marbles gleam?  
 Where Chalcis breasts the heaving tide,  
 And swift Euripus' waters glide?  
 Perchance unhappy fortune calls 840  
 To bleak Gonoëssa's windswept walls;  
 Perchance our wondering eyes shall see  
 Eleusin's awful mystery;  
 Or Elis, where great heroes strove 845  
 To win the Olympic crown of Jove.  
 Then welcome, stranger lands beyond the 850  
 sea!  
 Let breezes waft our wretched band,  
 Where'er they list, to any land;  
 If only Sparta's curséd state  
 (To Greeks and Trojans common fate)  
 And Argos, never meet our view,  
 And bloody Pelops' city too;  
 May we ne'er see Ulysses' isle, 855  
 Whose borders share their master's guile.  
 But thee, O Hecuba, what fate,  
 What land, what Grecian lord await?  
 860

## ACT IV

[*Enter Helen.*]

*Helen* [*aside*]: Whatever wedlock, bred of evil fate,  
 Is full of fiercer wrongs, blood and tears

is full of joyless omens, blood and tears,  
Is worthy Helen's baleful auspices.  
And now must I still further harm inflict  
Upon the prostrate Trojans: 'tis my part  
To feign Polyxena, the royal maid,  
Is bid to be our Grecian Pyrrhus' wife, 865  
And deck her in the garb of Grecian brides.  
So by my artful words shall she be snared,  
And by my craft shall Paris' sister fall.  
But let her be deceived; 'tis better so;  
To die without the shrinking fear of death  
Is joy indeed. But why dost thou delay  
Thy bidden task? If aught of sin there be,  
'Tis his who doth command thee to the deed. 870

[*To Polyxena.*]

O maiden, born of Priam's noble stock,  
The gods begin to look upon thy house  
In kinder mood, and even now prepare  
To grant thee happy marriage; such a mate  
As neither Troy herself in all her power  
Nor royal Priam could have found for thee. 875  
For lo, the flower of the Pelasgian lords,  
Whose sway Thessalia's far-extending plains  
Acknowledge, seeks thy hand in lawful wedlock.  
Great Tethys waits to claim thee for her own,  
And Thetis, whose majestic deity  
Doth rule the swelling sea, and all the nymphs  
Who dwell within its depths. As Pyrrhus' bride  
Thou shalt be called the child of Peleus old, 880  
And Nereus the divine.

Then change the garb  
Of thy captivity for festal robes,  
And straight forget that thou wast e'er a slave.  
Thy wild, disheveled locks confine; permit  
That I, with skilful hands, adorn thy head. 885  
This chance, mayhap, shall place thee on a  
throne  
More lofty far than ever Priam saw.

The captive's lot full oft a blessing proves.

*Andromache:* This was the one thing lacking to our woes—  
That they should bid us smile when we would weep.  
See there! Our city lies in smouldering heaps;  
A fitting time to talk of marriages!  
But who would dare refuse? When Helen bids, 890  
Who would not hasten to the wedding rites?  
Thou common curse of Greeks and Trojans too,  
Thou fatal scourge, thou wasting pestilence,  
Dost thou behold where buried heroes lie?  
And dost thou see these poor unburied bones  
That everywhere lie whitening on the plain?  
This desolation hath thy marriage wrought. 895  
For thee the blood of Asia flowed; for thee  
Did Europe's heroes bleed, whilst thou, well  
pleased,  
Didst look abroad upon the warring kings,  
Who perished in thy cause, thou faithless jade!  
There! get thee gone! prepare thy marriages!  
What need of torches for the solemn rites?  
What need of fire? Troy's self shall furnish forth 900  
The ruddy flames to light her latest bride.  
Then come, my sisters, come and celebrate  
Lord Pyrrhus' nuptial day in fitting wise:  
With groans and wailing let the scene resound.

*Helen:* Though mighty grief is ne'er by reason swayed,  
And oft the very comrades of its woe,  
Unreasoning, hates; yet can I bear to stand 905  
And plead my cause before a hostile judge,  
For I have suffered heavier ills than these.  
Behold, Andromache doth Hector mourn,  
And Hecuba her Priam; each may claim  
The public sympathy; but Helena  
Alone must weep for Paris secretly.  
Is slavery's yoke so heavy and so hard  
To bear? This grievous yoke have I endured, 910  
Ten years a captive. Doth your Ilium lie

ten years a captive. Doth your name lie  
In dust, your gods o'erthrown? I know 'tis hard  
To lose one's native land, but harder still  
To fear the land that gave you birth. Your woes  
Are lightened by community of grief;  
But friend and foe are foes alike to me.  
Long since, the fated lot has hung in doubt  
That sorts you to your lords; but I alone, 915  
Without the hand of fate am claimed at once.  
Think you that I have been the cause of war,  
And Troy's great overthrow? Believe it true  
If in a Spartan vessel I approached  
Your land; but if, sped on by Phrygian oars,  
I came a helpless prey; if to the judge 920  
Of beauty's rival claims I fell the prize  
By conquering Venus' gift, then pity me,  
The plaything of the fates. An angry judge  
Full soon my cause shall have—my Grecian lord.  
Then leave to him the question of my guilt,  
And judge me not.

But now forget thy woes  
A little space, Andromache, and bid  
This royal maid—but as I think on her 925  
My tears unbidden flow.

[*She stops, overcome by emotion.*]

*Andromache* [*in scorn*]: Now great indeed  
Must be the evil when our Helen weeps!  
But dry thy tears, and tell what Ithacus  
Is plotting now, what latest deed of shame?  
Must this poor maid be hurled from Ida's heights,  
Or from the top of Ilium's citadel?  
Must she be flung into the cruel sea  
That roars beneath this lofty precipice, 930  
Which our Sigeum's rugged crag uprears?  
Come, tell what thou dost hide with mimic grief.  
In all our ills there's none so great as this,  
That any princess of our royal house  
Should wed with Pyrrhus. Speak thy dark intent;  
What further suffering remains to bear? 935  
To compensate our woes, this grace impart,  
That we may know the worst that can befall.  
Behold us ready for the stroke of fate.

*Helen*: Alas! I would 'twere mine to break the bonds  
Which bind me to this life I hate; to die  
By Pyrrhus' cruel hand upon the tomb  
Of great Achilles, and to share thy fate, 940  
O poor Polyxena. For even now,  
The ghost doth bid that thou be sacrificed,  
And that thy blood be spilt upon his tomb;  
That thus thy parting soul may mate with his,  
Within the borders of Elysium.

*Andromache* [*observing the joy with which Polyxena receives these tidings*]: Behold, her soul leaps up with mighty joy  
At thought of death; she seeks the festal robes 945  
Wherewith to deck her for the bridal rites,  
And yields her golden locks to Helen's hands.  
Who late accounted wedlock worse than death,  
Now hails her death with more than bridal joy.

[*Observing Hecuba.*]

But see, her mother stands amazed with woe,  
Her spirit staggers 'neath the stroke of fate.

[To Hecuba.] 950

Arise, O wretched queen, stand firm in soul,  
And gird thy fainting spirit up.

[Hecuba falls fainting.]

Behold,  
By what a slender thread her feeble life  
Is held to earth. How slight the barrier now  
That doth remove our Hecuba from joy.  
But no, she breathes, alas! she lives again,  
For from the wretched, death is first to flee.

*Hecuba* [reviving]: Still dost thou live, Achilles, for our bane? 955

Dost still prolong the bitter strife? O Paris,  
Thine arrow should have dealt a deadlier wound.

For see, the very ashes and the tomb  
Of that insatiate chieftain still do thirst  
For Trojan blood. But lately did a throng  
Of happy children press me round; and I,  
With fond endearment and the sweet caress  
That mother love would shower upon them all,  
Was oft forespent. But now this child alone

Is left, my comrade, comfort of my woes, 960  
For whom to pray, in whom to rest my soul.

Hers are the only lips still left to me  
To call me mother. Poor, unhappy soul,  
Why dost thou cling so stubbornly to life?  
Oh speed thee out, and grant me death at last,  
The only boon I seek. Behold, I weep;  
And from my cheeks, o'erwhelmed with sympathy,  
A sudden rain of grieving tears descends. 965

*Andromache*: We, Hecuba, Oh, we should most be mourned,  
Whom soon the fleet shall scatter o'er the sea; 970  
While *she* shall rest beneath the soil she loves.

*Helen*: Still more wouldst thou begrudge thy sister's lot,  
If thou didst know thine own.

*Andromache*: Remains there still  
Some punishment that I must undergo?

SOME punishment that I must undergo.

*Helen:* The whirling urn hath given you each her lord.

*Andromache:* To whom hath fate allotted me a slave?  
Proclaim the chief whom I must call my lord.

975

*Helen:* To Pyrrhus hast thou fallen by the lot.

*Andromache:* O happy maid, Cassandra, blest of heaven,  
For by thy madness art thou held exempt  
From fate that makes us chattels to the Greeks.

*Helen:* Not so, for even now the Grecian king  
Doth hold her as his prize.

*Hecuba [to Polyxena]:* Rejoice, my child.  
How gladly would thy sisters change their lot  
For thy death-dooming marriage.

[To Helen.]

Tell me now,  
Does any Greek lay claim to Hecuba?

*Helen:* The Ithacan, though much against his will,  
Hath gained by lot a short-lived prize in thee.

980

*Hecuba:* What cruel, ruthless providence hath given  
A royal slave to serve unkingly<sup>[50]</sup> men?  
What hostile god divides our captive band?  
What heartless arbiter of destiny  
So carelessly allots our future lords,  
That Hector's mother is assigned to him  
Who hath by favor gained th' accursed arms  
Which laid my Hector low? And must I then  
Obey the Ithacan? Now conquered quite,  
Alas, and doubly captive do I seem,  
And sore beset by all my woes at once.  
Now must I blush, not for my slavery,  
But for my master's sake. Yet Ithaca,  
That barren land by savage seas beset,  
Shall not receive my bones.

985

990

Then up, Ulysses,  
And lead thy captive home. I'll not refuse



And lead thy captive home. I'll not refuse  
To follow thee as lord; for well I know  
That my untoward fates shall follow me.  
No gentle winds shall fill thy homeward sails,  
But stormy blasts shall rage; destructive wars,  
And fires, and Priam's evil fates and mine,  
Shall haunt thee everywhere. But even now,  
While yet those ills delay, hast thou received  
Some punishment. For I usurped thy lot,  
And stole thy chance to win a fairer prize.

995

[*Enter Pyrrhus.*]

But see, with hurried step and lowering brow,  
Stern Pyrrhus comes.

[*To Pyrrhus.*] 1000

Why dost thou hesitate?  
Come pierce my vitals with thy impious sword,  
And join the parents of Achilles' bride.  
Make haste, thou murderer of aged men,  
My blood befits thee too.

[*Pointing to Polyxena.*]

Away with her;  
Defile the face of heaven with murder's stain,  
Defile the shades.—But why make prayer to you?  
I'll rather pray the sea whose savage rage  
Befits these bloody rites; the selfsame doom,  
Which for my ship I pray and prophesy,  
May that befall the thousand ships of Greece,  
And so may evil fate engulf them all.

1005

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*Chorus:* 'Tis sweet for one in grief to know  
That he but feels a common woe; 1010  
And lighter falls the stroke of care  
Which all with equal sorrow bear;  
For selfish and malign is human grief 1015  
Which in the tears of others finds relief.  
  
Remove all men to fortune born,  
And none will think himself forlorn;  
Remove rich acres spreading wide, 1020  
With grazing herds on every side:  
Straight will the poor man's drooping soul  
revive,  
For none are poor if all in common thrive. 1025  
  
The mariner his fate bewails,  
Who in a lonely vessel sails,  
And, losing all his scanty store,  
With life alone attains the shore;  
But with a stouter heart the gale he braves,  
That sinks a thousand ships beneath the waves. 1030  
  
When Phrixus fled in days of old  
Upon the ram with fleece of gold,  
His sister Helle with him fared  
And all his exiled wanderings shared;  
But when she fell and left him quite alone,  
Then nothing could for Helle's loss atone. 1035  
  
Not so they wept, that fabled pair,  
Deucalion and Pyrrha fair,  
When 'midst the boundless sea they stood  
The sole survivors of the flood;  
For though their lot was hard and desolate,  
They shared their sorrow—'twas a common fate. 1040  
  
Too soon our grieving company  
Shall scatter on the rolling sea,

Where swelling sails and bending oars  
Shall speed us on to distant shores. 1045  
Oh, then how hard shall be our wretched plight,  
When far away our country lies,  
And round us heaving billows rise,  
And lofty Ida's summit sinks from sight.

Then mother shall her child embrace,  
And point with straining eyes the place 1050  
Where Ilium's smouldering ruins lie,  
Far off beneath the eastern sky:  
"See there, my child, our Trojan ashes glow,  
Where wreathing smoke in murky clouds  
The distant, dim horizon shrouds;  
And by that sign alone our land we know."  
1055

#### FOOTNOTES:

[50] Reading, *haud regibus*.

#### ACT V

*Messenger* [*entering*]: Oh, cruel fate, Oh, piteous, horrible!  
What sight so fell and bloody have we seen  
In ten long years of war? Between thy woes,  
Andromache, and thine, O Hecuba,  
I halt, and know not which to weep the more.

*Hecuba*: Weep whosesoe'er thou wilt—thou weapest mine. 1060  
While others bow beneath their single cares,  
I feel the weight of all. All die to me;  
Whatever grief there is, is Hecuba's.

*Messenger*: The maid is slain, the boy dashed from the walls.  
But each has met his death with royal soul.

*Andromache*: Expound the deed in order, and display 1065  
The twofold crime. My mighty grief is fain

To hear the gruesome narrative entire.  
Begin thy tale, and tell it as it was.

*Messenger:* One lofty tower of fallen Troy is left,  
Well known to Priam, on whose battlements  
He used to sit and view his warring hosts. 1070  
Here in his arms his grandson he would hold  
With kind embrace, and bid the lad admire  
His father's warlike deeds upon the field,  
Where Hector, armed with fire and sword, pursued  
The frightened Greeks. Around this lofty tower 1075  
Which lately stood, the glory of the walls,  
But now a lonely crag, the people pour,  
A motley, curious throng of high and low.  
For some, a distant hill gives open view;  
While others seek a cliff, upon whose edge 1080  
The crowd in tiptoed expectation stand.  
The beech tree, laurel, pine, each has its load;  
The whole wood bends beneath its human fruit.  
One climbs a smouldering roof; unto another  
A crumbling wall precarious footing gives;  
While others (shameless!) stand on Hector's tomb. 1085  
Now through the thronging crowd with stately tread  
Ulysses makes his way, and by the hand  
He leads the little prince of Ilium.  
With equal pace the lad approached the wall;  
But when he reached the lofty battlement, 1090  
He stood and gazed around with dauntless soul.  
And as the savage lion's tender young,  
Its fangless jaws, all powerless to harm,  
Still snaps with helpless wrath and swelling heart;  
So he, though held in that strong foeman's grasp, 1095  
Stood firm, defiant. Then the crowd of men,  
And leaders, and Ulysses' self, were moved.  
But he alone wept not of all the throng  
Who wept for him. And now Ulysses spake  
In priestly wise the words of fate, and prayed,  
And summoned to the rite the savage gods; 1100

When suddenly, on self-destruction bent,  
The lad sprang o'er the turret's edge, and plunged  
Into the depths below.—

*Andromache:* What Colchian, what wandering Scythian,  
What lawless race that dwells by Caspia's sea  
Could do or dare a crime so hideous? 1105  
No blood of helpless children ever stained  
Busiris' altars, monster though he was;  
Nor did the horses of the Thracian king  
E'er feed on tender limbs. Where is my boy?  
Who now will take and lay him in the tomb? 1110

*Messenger:* Alas, my lady, how can aught remain  
From such a fall, but broken, scattered bones,  
Dismembered limbs, and all those noble signs  
In face and feature of his royal birth,  
Confused and crushed upon the ragged ground?  
Who was thy son lies now a shapeless corse. 1115

*Andromache:* Thus also is he like his noble sire.

*Messenger:* When headlong from the tower the lad had sprung,  
And all the Grecian throng bewailed the crime  
Which it had seen and done; that selfsame throng  
Returned to witness yet another crime 1120  
Upon Achilles' tomb. The seaward side  
Is beaten by Rhoeteum's lapping waves;  
While on the other sides a level space,  
And rounded, gently sloping hills beyond,  
Encompass it, and make a theater.  
Here rush the multitude and fill the place  
With eager throngs. A few rejoice that now 1125  
Their homeward journey's long delay will end,  
And that another prop of fallen Troy  
Is stricken down. But all the common herd  
Look on in silence at the crime they hate.  
The Trojans, too, attend the sacrifice,  
And wait with quaking hearts the final scene 1130  
Of Ilium's fall. When suddenly there shone

The gleaming torches of the wedding march;  
And, as the bride's attendant, Helen came  
With drooping head. Whereat the Trojans prayed:  
"Oh, may Hermione be wed like this,  
With bloody rites; like this may Helena  
Return unto her lord." Then numbing dread  
Seized Greeks and Trojans all, as they beheld  
The maid. She walked with downcast, modest eyes,  
But on her face a wondrous beauty glowed  
In flaming splendor, as the setting sun  
Lights up the sky with beams more beautiful,  
When day hangs doubtful on the edge of night.  
All gazed in wonder. Some her beauty moved,  
And some her tender age and hapless fate;  
But all, her dauntless courage in the face  
Of death. Behind the maid grim Pyrrhus came;  
And as they looked, the souls of all were filled  
With quaking terror, pity, and amaze.  
But when she reached the summit of the mound  
And stood upon the lofty sepulcher,  
Still with unfaltering step the maid advanced.  
And now she turned her to the stroke of death  
With eyes so fierce and fearless that she smote  
The hearts of all, and, wondrous prodigy,  
E'en Pyrrhus' bloody hand was slow to strike.  
But soon, his right hand lifted to the stroke,  
He drove the weapon deep within her breast;  
And straight from that deep wound the blood burst  
forth  
In sudden streams. But still the noble maid  
Did not give o'er her bold and haughty mien,  
Though in the act of death. For in her fall  
She smote the earth with angry violence,  
As if to make it heavy for the dead.  
Then flowed the tears of all. The Trojans groaned  
With secret woe, since fear restrained their tongues;  
But openly the victors voiced their grief.  
And now the savage rite was done. The blood

Stood not upon the ground, nor flowed away;  
But downward all its ruddy stream was sucked,  
As if the tomb were thirsty for the draught.

*Hecuba:* Now go, ye Greeks, and seek your homes in peace. 1165  
With spreading sails your fleet in safety now  
May cleave the welcome sea; the maid and boy  
Are slain, the war is done. Oh, whither now  
Shall I betake me in my wretchedness?  
Where spend this hateful remnant of my life?  
My daughter or my grandson shall I mourn, 1170  
My husband, country—or myself alone?  
O death, my sole desire, for boys and maids  
Thou com'st with hurried step and savage mien;  
But me alone of mortals dost thou fear  
And shun; through all that dreadful night of Troy,  
I sought thee 'midst the swords and blazing brands,  
But all in vain my search. No cruel foe, 1175  
Nor crumbling wall, nor blazing fire, could give  
The death I sought. And yet how near I stood  
To agéd Priam's side when he was slain!

*Messenger:* Ye captives, haste you to the winding shore;  
The sails are spread, our long delay is o'er.

# AGAMEMNON



# AGAMEMNON

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## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- Agamemnon* King of Argos, and leader of all the Greeks in their war against Troy.
- Ghost of Thyestes* Returned to earth to urge on his son to the vengeance which he was born to accomplish.
- Aegisthus* Son of Thyestes by an incestuous union with his daughter; paramour of Clytemnestra.
- Clytemnestra* Wife of Agamemnon, who has been plotting with Aegisthus against her husband, in his absence at Troy.
- Chorus* Of Argive women.
- Eurybates* Messenger of Agamemnon.
- Cassandra* Daughter of Priam, captive of Agamemnon.
- Electra* Daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.
- Strophius* King of Phocis.
- Orestes* Son of Agamemnon (*persona muta*).
- Pylades* Son of Strophius (*persona muta*).
- Band* Of captive Trojan women.

THE SCENE is laid partly within and partly without the palace of Agamemnon at Argos or Mycenae, on the day of the return of the king from his long absence at Troy, beginning in the period of darkness just preceding the dawn.

*The blood-feud between Atreus and Thyestes was not ended with the terrible vengeance which Atreus wreaked upon his brother. It was yet in fate that Thyestes should live to beget upon his own daughter a son, Aegisthus, who should slay Atreus and bring ruin and death upon the great Atrides, Agamemnon.*

*The Trojan war is done. And now the near approach of the victorious king, bringing his captives and treasure home to Argos, has been announced. But little does he dream to what a home he is returning. For Clytemnestra, enraged at Agamemnon because he had sacrificed her daughter Iphigenia at Aulis to appease the winds, and full of jealousy because he brings Cassandra as her rival home, estranged also by the long-continued absence of her lord, but most estranged by her own guilty union with Aegisthus, is now plotting to slay Agamemnon on his return, gaining thus at once revenge and safety from his wrath.*

## ACT I

*Ghost of Thyestes:* Escaped from gloomy Pluto's murky realm

And leaving Tartara's deep pit I come,  
All doubting which abode I hate the more;  
That world I flee, but this I put to flight.  
My soul shrinks back, my limbs do quake with fear.  
I see my father's house—my brother's too! 5  
Here is the ancient seat of Pelop's race;  
In this proud hall it is Pelasgians' wont  
To crown their kings; here sit those overlords  
Whose hands the kingdom's haughty scepter wield;  
Here is their council chamber—here they feast! 10  
Let me go hence. Were it not better far  
To sit beside the dark, sad pools of Styx,  
And see the hell-hound's black and tossing mane?  
Where one, bound fast upon a whirling wheel,  
Back to himself is borne; where fruitless toil 15  
Is mocked forever by the rolling stone;  
Where living vitals glut the vulture's greed,  
Consumed but e'er renewed; and one old man,  
Dying, and his lifeless body still in pain

By mocking waves surrounded, seeks in vain  
To sate his burning thirst, dire punishment 20  
For that he strove to trick th' immortal gods.  
But, ranked with mine, how slight that old man's sin!  
Take count of all whose impious deeds on earth  
Make them to tremble at the bar of hell:  
By my dread crimes will I outdo them all;—  
But not my brother's crimes. Three sons of mine 25  
Lie buried in me, yea, mine own dear flesh  
Have I consumed. Nor this the only blot  
With which dire fortune's hand hath stained my soul;  
But, daring greater sin, she bade me seek  
(Oh, foul impiety!) my daughter's arms.  
Bold for revenge, I dared and did the deed, 30  
And so fearful cycle was complete:  
As sons the sire, so sire the daughter filled.  
Then were the laws of nature backward turned:  
I mingled sire with grandsire, sons with grandsons;  
Yea, monstrous! husband and father did I join, 35  
And drove the day back to the shades of night.  
But fate at last, though doubtful, long deferred,  
Hath had regard unto my evil plight,  
And brought the day of vengeance near; for lo,  
This king of kings, this leader of the Greeks,  
This Agamemnon comes, whose royal flag 40  
A thousand Grecian vessels following  
Once filled the Trojan waters with their sails.  
Now ten bright suns have run their course, and Troy  
Has been o'erthrown, and he is close at hand—  
To place his neck in Clytemnestra's power.  
Now, now, this house shall flow again with blood,  
But this of Atreus' stock! Swords, axes, darts 45  
I see, and that proud head with murderous stroke  
Asunder cleft; now impious crimes are near,  
Now treachery, slaughter, blood; the feast is spread.  
The cause, Aegisthus, of thy shameful birth,  
Is come at last. But why hangs down thy head  
In shame? Why hesitates thy faltering hand

And sinks inactive? Why dost counsel take 50  
Within thy heart, and turn away, and ask  
Whether this deed become thee? Do but think  
Upon thy mother; then wilt thou confess  
It doth become thee well. But what drags out  
In long delay this summer night's brief span  
To winter's hours of darkness? And what cause  
Prevents the stars from sinking in the sky?  
The sun shrinks from my face. I must away, 55  
That so he may bring back the light of day.

[*Exit.*]

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*Chorus of Argive women:* On fortune's headlong brink they stand  
Who hold the scepter in their hand;  
No safe assurance can they know  
Who on too lofty pathways go: 60  
But care on care pursues them to the last,  
Their souls assailed and vexed by every blast.

As seas on Libya's sandy shore  
Their waves in ceaseless billows pour; 65  
As Euxine's swelling waters rise  
Beneath the lowering northern skies,  
Where bright Boötes wheels his team  
High o'er the ocean's darksome stream: 70  
With such assaults, by such wild tempests blown,  
Does fortune batter at a kingly throne!

Who would be feared, in fear must live.  
No kindly night can refuge give;  
Nor sleep, that comforts all the rest,  
Can bring care-freedom to his breast. 75  
What throne so safe, on such foundation stands,  
That may not be destroyed by impious hands?

For justice, shame, the virtues all,  
E'en wifely faith, soon flee the hall

Where courtiers dwell. Within, there stands 80  
 Bellona dire with bloody hands;  
 Erinys too, the dogging fate,  
 Of them who hold too high estate,  
 Which any hour from high to low may bring.  
 Though arms be lacking, wiles be none, 85  
 Still is the will of fortune done:  
 By force of his own greatness falls the king.  
 'Tis ever thus: the bellying sail  
 Fears the o'erstrong though favoring gale; 90  
 The tower feels rainy Auster's dread  
 If to the clouds it rear its head;  
 Huge oaks most feel the whirlwind's lash;  
 High mountains most with thunder crash; 95  
 And while the common herd in safety feeds,  
 Their mighty leader, marked for slaughter, bleeds. 100  
 Fate places us on high, that so  
 To surer ruin we may go.  
 The meanest things in longest fortune live.  
 Then happy he whose modest soul  
 In safety seeks a nearer goal;  
 Fearing to leave the friendly shore, 105  
 He rows with unambitious oar,  
 Content in low security to thrive.

## ACT II

*Clytemnestra:* Why, sluggish soul, dost thou safe counsel seek?  
 Why hesitate? Closed is the better way.  
 Once thou couldst chastely guard thy widowed couch,  
 And keep thy husband's realm with wifely faith; 110  
 But now, long since has faith thy palace fled,  
 The homely virtues, honor, piety,  
 And chastity, which goes, but ne'er returns.  
 Loose be thy reins, swift speed thy wanton course;  
 The safest way through crime is by the path

the safest way through crime is by the pain  
Of greater crime. Consider in thy heart 115  
All woman's wiles, what faithless wives have done,  
Bereft of reason, blind and passion-driven;  
What bloody deeds stepmother's hands have dared;  
Or what she dared, ablaze with impious love,  
Who left her father's realm for Thessaly:  
Dare sword, dare poison; else in stealthy flight 120  
Must thou go hence with him who shares thy guilt.  
But who would talk of stealth, of exile, flight?  
Such were thy sister's deeds: some greater crime,  
Some mightier deed of evil suits thy hand.

*Nurse:* O Grecian queen, illustrious Leda's child,  
What say'st thou there in whispered mutterings? 125  
Or what unbridled deeds within thy breast,  
By reckless passion tossed, dost meditate?  
Though thou be silent, yet thy face declares  
Thy hidden pain in speech more eloquent.  
Whate'er thy grief, take time and room for thought.  
Time often cures what reason cannot heal. 130

*Clytemnestra:* Too dire my grief to wait time's healing hand.  
My very soul is scorched with flaming pains:  
I feel the goads of fear and jealous rage,  
The throbbing pulse of hate, the pangs of love,  
Base love that presses hard his heavy yoke 135  
Upon my heart, and holds me vanquished quite.  
And always, 'mid those flames that vex my soul,  
Though faint indeed, and downcast, all undone,  
Shame struggles on. By shifting seas I'm tossed:  
As when here wind, there tide impels the deep,  
The waves stand halting 'twixt the warring powers. 140  
And so I'll strive no more to guide my bark.  
Where wrath, where grief, where hope shall bear me  
on,  
There will I speed my course; my helmless ship  
I've giv'n to be the sport of winds and floods.  
Where reason fails 'tis best to follow chance.

*Nurse:* Oh, rash and blind, who follows doubtful chance. 145

*Clytemnestra:* Who fears a doubtful chance, if 'tis his last?

*Nurse:* Thy fault may find safe hiding if thou wilt.

*Clytemnestra:* Nay, faults of royal homes proclaim themselves.

*Nurse:* Dost thou repent the old, yet plan the new?

*Clytemnestra:* To stop midway in sin is foolishness. 150

*Nurse:* His fears increase, who covers crime with crime.

*Clytemnestra:* But iron and fire oft aid the healer's art.

*Nurse:* Yet desperate measures no one first attempts.

*Clytemnestra:* The path of sin is headlong from the first.

*Nurse:* Still let thy wifely duty hold thee back. 155

*Clytemnestra:* What long-deserted wife regards her lord?

*Nurse:* Your common children—hast no thought of them?

*Clytemnestra:* I do think on my daughter's wedding rites,  
High-born Achilles, and my husband's lies.

*Nurse:* She freed our Grecian fleet from long delay,  
And waked from their dull calm the sluggish seas. 160

*Clytemnestra:* Oh, shameful thought! that I, the heaven-born child  
Of Tyndarus, should give my daughter up  
To save the Grecian fleet! I see once more  
In memory my daughter's wedding day,  
Which *he* made worthy of base Pelops' house, 165  
When, with his pious face, this father stood  
Before the altar fires—Oh, monstrous rites!  
E'en Calchas shuddered at his own dread words  
And backward-shrinking fires. O bloody house,  
That ever wades through crime to other crime!  
With blood we soothe the winds, with blood we war. 170

*Nurse:* Yet by that blood a thousand vessels sailed.

*Clytemnestra:* But not with favoring omens did they sail.

The port of Aulis fairly drave them forth.  
 So launched in war, he still no better fared.  
 Smit with a captive's love, unmoved by prayer,  
 He held as spoil the child of Phoebus' priest, 175  
 E'en then, as now, a sacred maiden's thrall.  
 Nor could the stern Achilles bend his will,  
 Nor he whose eye alone can read the fates  
 (A faithful seer to us, to captives mild),  
 Nor his pest-smitten camp and gleaming pyres. 180  
 When baffled Greece stood tottering to her fall,  
 This man with passion pined, had time for love,  
 Thought ever on amours; and, lest his couch  
 Should be of any Phrygian maid bereft,  
 He lusted for Achilles' beauteous bride, 185  
 Nor blushed to tear her from her lover's arms.  
 Fit foe for Paris! Now new wounds he feels,  
 And burns, inflamed by mad Cassandra's love.  
 And, now that Troy is conquered, home he comes,  
 A captive's husband, Priam's son-in-law! 190  
 Arise, my soul; no easy task essay;  
 Be swift to act. What dost thou, sluggish, wait  
 Till Phrygian rivals wrest thy power away?  
 Or do thy virgin daughters stay thy hand,  
 Or yet Orestes, image of his sire? 195  
 Nay, 'tis for these thy children thou must act,  
 Lest greater ills befall them; for, behold,  
 A mad stepmother soon shall call them hers.  
 Through thine own heart, if so thou must, prepare  
 To drive the sword, and so slay two in one.  
 Let thy blood flow with his; in slaying, die. 200  
 For death is sweet if with a foeman shared.

*Nurse:* My queen, restrain thyself, check thy wild wrath,  
 And think how great thy task. Atrides comes  
 Wild Asia's conqueror and Europe's lord;  
 He leads Troy captive, Phrygia subdued. 205  
 'Gainst him wouldst thou with sly assault prevail,  
 Whom great Achilles slew not with his sword.



Though he with angry hand the weapon drew;  
 Nor Telamonian Ajax, crazed with rage;  
 Nor Hector, Troy's sole prop and war's delay; 210  
 Nor Paris' deadly darts; nor Memnon black;  
 Nor Xanthus, choked with corpses and with arms;  
 Nor Simois' waves, empurpled with the slain;  
 Nor Cycnus, snowy offspring of the sea;  
 Nor warlike Rhesus with his Thracian band; 215  
 Nor that fierce maid who led the Amazons,  
 Armed with the deadly battle-axe and shield?  
 This hero, home returned, dost thou prepare  
 To slay, and stain thy hearth with impious blood?  
 Would Greece, all hot from conquest, suffer this?  
 Bethink thee of the countless steeds and arms, 220  
 The sea a-bristle with a thousand ships,  
 The plains of Ilium soaked with streams of blood,  
 Troy taken and in utter ruin laid:  
 Remember this, I say, and check thy wrath,  
 And bid thy thoughts in safer channels run. 225

[*Exit.*]

[*Enter Aegisthus.*]

*Aegisthus:* The fatal day which I was born to see,  
 Toward which I've ever looked with dread, is here.  
 Why dost thou fear, my soul, to face thy fate,  
 And turn away from action scarce begun?  
 Be sure that not thy hand is ordering  
 These dire events, but the relentless gods.  
 Then put thy shame-bought life in pawn to fate 230  
 And let thy heart drain suffering to the dregs.  
 To one of shameful birth death is a boon.

[*Enter Clytemnestra.*]

Thou comrade of my perils, Leda's child,  
 Be with me still in this; and thy false lord,  
 This valiant sire, shall pay thee blood for blood. 235  
 But why does pallor blanch thy trembling cheeks?

But why does pain so stain thy trembling cheeks:  
What bodes this softened face, this listless gaze?

*Clytemnestra:* My husband's love has met and conquered me.

Let us retrace our steps, while still there's room,  
To that estate whence we should ne'er have come; 240  
Let even now fair fame be sought again;  
For never is it over late to mend.  
Who grieves for sin is counted innocent.

*Aegisthus:* What madness this? Dost thou believe or hope

That Agamemnon will be true to thee?  
Though no grave fears, of conscious guilt begot, 245  
Annoyed thy soul with thoughts of punishment;  
Still would his swelling, o'er-inflated pride,  
Create in him a dour and headstrong mood.  
Harsh was he to his friends while Troy still stood;  
How, think'st thou, has the fall of Troy pricked on  
His soul, by nature harsh, to greater harshness? 250  
Mycenae's king he went; he will return  
Her tyrant. So doth fortune foster pride.  
With how great pomp this throng of rivals comes!  
But one of these, surpassing all the rest,  
Apollo's priestess, holds the king in thrall.  
And wilt thou meekly share thy lord with her? 255  
But she will not. A wife's last infamy—  
To see her rival ruling in her stead.  
No throne nor bed can brook a rival mate.

*Clytemnestra:* Aegisthus, why dost drive me headlong on,

And fan to flames again my dying wrath? 260  
For if the victor has his right employed,  
To work his will upon a captive maid,  
His wife should not complain or reck of this.  
The law that binds the man fits not the king.  
And why should I, myself in conscious guilt,  
Make bold to sit in judgment on my lord? 265  
Let her forgive who most forgiveness needs.

*Aegisthus:* In very truth there's room for mutual grace.

BUT thou knowst naught of royal privilege.  
Thee will the king judge harshly, to himself  
A milder law in gentler mood apply. 270  
And this they deem the highest pledge of power,  
If, what to common mortals is denied,  
Is given by general will to them alone.

*Clytemnestra:* He pardoned Helen; home is she returned,  
To Menelaüs joined, though East and West  
Have been engulfed for her in common woe.

*Aegisthus:* But Menelaüs nursed no secret love,  
Which closed his heart unto his lawful wife. 275  
Thy lord seeks charge against thee, cause of strife.  
Suppose thy heart and life were free from guilt:  
What boots an honest life, a stainless heart,  
When hate condemns the suppliant unheard?  
Wilt thou seek Sparta's shelter, and return 280  
Unto thy father's house? No shelter waits  
The scorned of kings; that hope were false indeed.

*Clytemnestra:* None knows my sin save one most faithful friend.

*Aegisthus:* In vain: no faith is found in royal courts. 285

*Clytemnestra:* But surely gifts will buy fidelity.

*Aegisthus:* Faith bought by gifts is sold for other gifts.

*Clytemnestra:* My strength and purity of soul revive.  
Why wouldst thou thwart me? Why, with cozening words,  
Wouldst thou persuade me to thy evil course?  
Dost think that I would leave a king of kings 290  
And stoop to wed an outcast wretch like thee?

*Aegisthus:* What? seem I less than Atreus' son to thee,  
Who am Thyestes' son?

*Clytemnestra:* Why, so thou art,  
And grandson too.

*Aegisthus:* My getting shames me not;  
For Phoebus' self is voucher for my birth.

*Clytemnestra*: Name Phoebus not with thine incestuous stock,  
Who checked his flying steeds and fled the sky, 295  
Withdrawn in sudden night, lest he behold  
Thy father's feast. Wouldst thou besmirch the gods,  
Thou, trained to revel in unlawful love?  
Then get thee gone in haste, and rid mine eyes  
Of that which doth disgrace this noble house; 300  
This home is waiting for its king and lord.

*Aegisthus*: Exile is naught to me, for I am used  
To woe. At thy command I'll farther flee  
Than from this house: I but await thy word  
To plunge my dagger in this woeful breast. 305

*Clytemnestra* [*aside*]: Shall I in cruel scorn desert him now?  
Who sin in company should suffer so.

[*To Aegisthus.*]

Nay, come with me; we will together wait  
The issue of our dark and dangerous fate.

[*Exeunt into the palace.*]

*Chorus*:<sup>[51]</sup> Sing Phoebus' praise, O race renowned; 310  
With festal laurel wreath your heads;  
And let your virgin locks flow free,  
Ye Argive maids.  
And ye who drink of the cold Erasinus,  
Who dwell by Eurotas,  
Who know the green banks of the silent 315  
Ismenus  
Come join in our singing;  
And do ye swell our chorus, ye far Theban daughters,  
Whom the child of Tiresias, Manto the seer,  
Once taught to bow down to the Delian gods.  
Now peace has come: 320  
Unbend thy victorious bow, O Apollo,  
Lay down from thy shoulder thy quiver of arrows,  
And let thy tuneful lyre resound  
To the touch of thy swift-flying fingers.

No lofty strain be thine today, 325  
 But such as on thy milder lyre  
 Thou art wont to sound when the learned muse  
     Surveys thy sports.  
 And yet, an' thou wilt, strike a heavier strain,  
 As when thou didst sing of the Titans o'ercome 330  
     By Jupiter's hurtling bolts;  
 When mountain on lofty mountain piled,  
 Pelion, Ossa, and pine-clad Olympus,  
 Built high to the sky for the impious monsters  
     Their ladder's rocky rounds. 335  
 Thou too be with us, Juno, queen,  
 Who sharest the throne of heaven's lord.  
 Mycenae's altars blaze for thee. 340  
     Thou alone dost protect us,  
     Anxious and suppliant;  
     Thou art the goddess of peace,  
     And the issues of war are thine;  
 And thine are the laurels of victory twined 345  
 On the brow of our king Agamemnon.  
 To thee the boxwood flute resounds  
     In solemn festival;  
 To thee the maidens strike the harp  
     In sweetest song; 350  
 To thee the votive torch is tossed;  
 The gleaming heifer, all unmarred  
     By the plow's rough touch  
     Falls at thy shrine.  
 And thou, child of the Thunderer, 355  
     Pallas illustrious, hear;  
 Before whose might the Dardanian walls  
     Have trembled and fallen to dust.  
 Thee maidens and matrons in chorus united  
 Exalt and adore; at thy approach 360  
 Thy temple doors swing open wide,  
 While the welcoming throng, with garlands bedecked,  
     Rejoice at thy coming;  
 And feeble, tottering elders come

And feeble, tottering elders come  
To pay their vows of thanks and praise,  
And pour their offerings of wine 365  
    With trembling hands.  
And to thee with mindful lips we pray,  
Bright Trivia, Lucina called.  
Thy native Delos didst thou bid  
Stand fast upon the sea, and float  
No more, the wandering mock of winds. 370  
And now, with firmly fixed root,  
It stands secure, defies the gale,  
And, wont of old to follow ships,  
    Now gives them anchorage.  
Proud Niobe thy vengeance felt  
Who thy divinity defied. 375  
Now, high on lonely Sipylus,  
She sits and weeps in stony grief;  
Though to insensate marble turned,  
Her tears flow fresh forevermore.  
And now both men and women join  
In praise to the twin divinities. 380  
But thee, above all gods, we praise;  
Our father and our ruler thou,  
Lord of the hurtling thunderbolt,  
At whose dread nod the farthest poles  
    Do quake and tremble.  
O Jove, thou founder of our race,  
Accept our gifts, and have regard 385  
    Unto thy faithful progeny.  
But lo, a warrior hither comes in haste,  
With wonted signs of victory displayed;  
For on his spear a laurel wreath he bears—  
Eurybates, our king's own messenger. 390

**FOOTNOTES:**

[51] The line arrangement of Schroeder has been followed in this Chorus.

**ACT III**

[*Enter Eurybates with laurel-wreathed spear.*]

*Eurybates:* Ye shrines and altars of the heavenly gods,  
Ye Lares of my fathers, after long  
And weary wanderings, scarce trusting yet  
My longing eyes, I give ye grateful thanks.  
Pay now your vows which you have vowed to heaven,  
Ye Argive people; for behold, your king,  
The pride and glory of this land of Greece, 395  
Back to his father's house as victor comes.

[*Enter Clytemnestra in time to hear the concluding words of the herald.*]

*Clytemnestra:* Oh, joyful tidings that I long to hear!  
But where delays my lord, whom I with grief  
For ten long years have waited? Doth the sea  
Still stay his course, or hath he gained the land?

*Eurybates:* Unharm'd, by glory crown'd, increased in praise,  
He hath set foot upon the long-sought shore. 400

*Clytemnestra:* Then hail this day with joy, and thank the gods  
Who, though their favoring aid was late bestowed,  
At last have smiled propitious on our cause.  
But tell me thou, does yet my brother live?  
Say, too, how fares my sister Helena? 405

*Eurybates:* If prayer and hope prevail, they yet survive;  
No surer tidings is it given to speak  
Of those who wander on the stormy sea.  
Scarce had the swollen highways of the deep  
Received our fleet, when ship from kindred ship  
Was driven, and lost amid the gathering gloom

was driven, and lost amid the gathering gloom.

E'en Agamemnon's self in doubt and fear  
Went wandering upon the trackless waste, 410  
And suffered more from Neptune's buffetings  
Than he had e'er endured in bloody war.  
And now, a humble victor, home he comes,  
With but a shattered remnant of his fleet.

*Clytemnestra:* But say what fate has swallowed up my ships,  
And scattered our great chieftains o'er the sea? 415

*Eurybates:* A sorry tale 'twould be: thou bid'st me mix  
The bitter message with the sweet. But I,  
Alas, am sick at heart, and cannot tell  
For very horror our most woeful tale.

*Clytemnestra:* But tell it even so; for he who shrinks  
From knowledge of his woe has greater fear.  
And ills half seen are worse than certainty. 420

*Eurybates:* When Troy lies smouldering 'neath our Grecian  
fires  
We quickly lot the spoil, and seek the sea  
In eager haste. And now our weary sides  
Are easéd of the falchion's wonted load;  
Our shields along the vessels' lofty sterns  
Unheeded hang, and once again our hands,  
Long used to swords, are fitted to the oar;  
And all impatiently we wait the word. 425

Then flashed from Agamemnon's ship the sign  
That bade us homeward speed, and clear and loud  
The trumpet pealed upon our joyful ears;  
The flagship's gilded prow gleamed on ahead,  
The course directing for a thousand ships. 430

A kindly breeze first stole into our sails  
And urged us softly on; the tranquil waves  
Scarce rippled with the Zephyr's gentle breath;  
The sea was all a-glitter with the fleet  
Which lit e'en while it hid the watery way.

'Tis sweet to see the empty shores of Troy,  
The 435



The broad plains left in lonely solitude. 135  
The eager sailors ply the bending oars,  
Hands aiding sails, and move their sturdy arms  
With rhythmic swing. The furrowed waters gleam,  
And sing along the sides, while rushing prows 440  
Besprinkle all the sea with hoary spray.  
When fresher breezes fill our swelling sails,  
We cease from toil, and, stretched along the thwarts,  
We watch the far-off shores of Ilium,  
Fast fleeing as our vessels seaward fare; 445  
Or tell old tales of war: brave Hector's threats,  
His corpse dishonored, and again restored  
To purchased honors of the funeral pyre;  
And Priam sprinkling with his royal blood  
The sacred altar of Hercean Jove.  
Then to and fro amid the briny sea  
The dolphins sport, and leap the heaving waves 450  
With arching backs; now race in circles wide,  
Now swim beside us in a friendly band,  
Now dash ahead or follow in our wake;  
Anon in wanton sport they smite our prows,  
And so our thousand rushing barks surround.  
Now sinks the shore from view, the spreading plains; 455  
And far-off Ida seems a misty cloud.  
And now, what but the sharpest eye can see,  
Troy's rising smoke blurs dim the distant sky.  
The sun was bringing weary mortals rest,  
And waning day was giving place to night; 460  
When clouds began to fill the western sky,  
And dim the luster of the sinking sun—  
The grim prognostic of a rising gale.  
Young night had spangled all the sky with stars,  
And empty sails hung languid on the masts; 465  
When low, foreboding sighings of the wind  
Spring from our landward side; the hidden shore  
Resounds afar with warning mutterings;  
The rising waves anticipate the storm;  
The moon is blotted out, the stars are hid, 470

The sea leaps skyward, and the sky is gone.  
Gloom broods o'er all, but not of night alone;  
For blinding mists add blackness to the night,  
And murky waves with murky sky contend.  
Then in concerted rush from every hand  
The winds fall roughly on the ravished sea,  
And heave its boiling billows from the depths;  
While east with west wind struggles, south with  
north. 475

Each wields his wonted arms to lash the sea:  
The fierce Strymonian blast with rattling hail  
Roars on, and Libyan Auster heaps the waves  
Upon the seething sands. Nor those alone  
Provoke the strife: for raving Notus first 480  
Grows big with bursting clouds and swells the waves;  
And boisterous Eurus shakes the Orient,  
The far Arabian realms and morning seas.  
What dire disaster did fierce Corus work,  
His dark face gleaming forth upon the deep?  
We thought the very heavens would be rent,  
The gods fall down from out the riven sky, 485  
And all revert to chaos as of old.

The waves opposed the winds, the winds in turn  
Hurl'd back the warring waves. Nor was the sea  
Within itself contained; but, lifted high,  
It mingled with the streaming floods of heaven. 490

Nor were we solaced in our dreadful plight  
By open view and knowledge of our ills;  
For darkness like the murky night of Styx  
Hedged in our view. Yet was this darkness rent,  
When flashing lightnings cleft the inky clouds  
With crashing bolts. Yet e'en this fearful gleam 495  
Was welcome to our eyes: so sweet it is  
To those in evil plight to see their ills.

The fleet assists its own destruction, too,  
Prow dashing hard on prow, and side on side;  
Now sinks it headlong in the yawning flood,  
And now belched forth, it sees the air again

And now, beached forth, it sees me all again. 500  
One plunges down, of its own weight compelled;  
Another, through its gaping side, invites  
Destruction from the raging floods; a third  
Is smothered by the tenth and mightiest wave.  
Here idly floats a mangled, shattered thing,  
Of all its boastful decoration shorn;  
And there a ship sans sails and oars and all.  
No lofty mast with hanging spars remains, 505  
But, helpless hulks, the shattered vessels drift  
Upon the boundless sea. Amid such ills,  
Of what avail the hardy sailor's art?  
Cold horror holds our limbs. The sailors stand  
In dumb amaze, and all their tasks forget;  
While all, in abject terror, drop their oars,  
And turn their wretched souls to heaven for aid. 510  
Now (marvel of the fates!) with common vows  
The Greeks and Trojans supplicate the skies.  
Now Pyrrhus envies great Achilles' fate;  
Ulysses, Ajax'; Menelaüs, Hector's;  
And Priam seems to Agamemnon blest:  
Yea all who perished on the plains of Troy,  
Whose lot it was to die by human hand,  
Are counted blest of heaven, secure in fame, 515  
For they rest safely in the land they won.  
"Shall winds and waves engulf in common fate  
The faint of heart who nothing noble dare,  
And those brave souls who quit themselves like men?  
Must we for naught resign ourselves to death?  
O thou of gods who art not even yet  
With these our evil fortunes satisfied, 520  
At last have pity on our woeful plight,  
Which Ilium itself would weep to see.  
If still thine anger holds, and 'tis decreed  
That we of Greece must perish utterly,  
Why doom these Trojans, for whose sake we die,  
To share our fate? Allay the raging sea:  
For this our fleet bears Greeks and Trojans too." 525

So prayed we, but in vain; our suppliant words  
Were swallowed by the raging storm. And lo,  
Another shape of death! For Pallas, armed  
With those swift bolts her angry father wields,  
Essays what ruin dire her threatening spear,  
Her aegis set with stony Gorgon's head, 530  
And these her father's thunderbolts, can work.  
Unconquered by his ills, with daring soul,  
Bold Ajax struggles on. Him, shortening sail  
With halyards strained, a falling thunderbolt  
Smote full; again the goddess poised her bolt 535  
With hand far backward drawn, like Jove himself,  
And hurled it true with shock impetuous.  
Straight fell the bolt, and, piercing man and ship,  
It strewed them both in ruin on the sea.  
Still undismayed, he overtops the waves,  
All charred and blasted like some rugged cliff, 540  
And bravely breasts the wildly raging sea.  
Still gleaming with the lightning's lurid glare,  
He shines amid the blackness like a torch  
Which sheds its beams afar upon the deep.  
At length a jutting rock he gains, and shouts  
In madness: "Now have I o'ercome the sea,  
The flames; 'tis sweet to conquer sky, and waves, 545  
The thunderbolts, and her who brandished them.  
I've braved the terrors of the god of war;  
With my sole arm I fronted Hector, huge,  
Nor did the darts of Phoebus frighten me.  
Those gods, together with their Phrygians, 550  
I set at naught; and shall I quake at thee?  
Thou hurl'st with weakling's hand another's bolts:  
But what if Jove himself—"  
When madly thus he dared blaspheme the gods,  
Great Neptune with his trident smote the rock,  
And whelmed its tottering bulk beneath the sea.  
So, falling with its fall, the madman lies 555  
By earth and fire and billows overcome.

But us poor shipwrecked hopeless mariners

But us, poor shipwrecked, hopeless mariners,  
A worse destruction waits. There is a reef,  
Low lying, treacherous with ragged shoals,  
Where false Caphereus hides his rocky foot  
Beneath the whirling waters of the sea.  
Above this reef the billows heave and dash, 560  
And madly seethe with each recurring wave.  
High o'er this spot a frowning crag projects,  
Which views on either side the spreading sea.  
There distant lie thine own Pelopian shores,  
And there the curving Isthmus, deep withdrawn,  
Shielding the broad Aegean from the west.  
There blood-stained Lemnos looms; here Chalcis<sup>[52]</sup> 565  
lies;  
And yonder wind-locked Aulis' peaceful port.  
This lofty cliff old Nauplius occupied,  
With hate inspired for Palamedes' sake.  
There his accurséd hand a beacon raised  
And lured us onward to the fatal spot.  
Now hang our barks by jagged rocks transfixed, 570  
Or founder, wrecked and wrecking in the shoals;  
And where but now our vessels sought to land,  
They flee the land and choose the angry waves.  
With dawn the sea's destructive rage was spent, 575  
And full atonement had been made to Troy.  
Then came the sun again; and brightening day  
Revealed the awful havoc of the night.

*Clytemnestra:* I know not which were better, grief or joy.

I do rejoice to see my lord again,  
And yet my kingdom's losses counsel tears. 580  
O father Jove, at whose august command  
The sounding heavens quake, regard our race,  
And bid the angry gods be merciful.  
Let every head be decked with festal wreath,  
The flute resound, and at the stately shrine  
Let snowy victims fall in sacrifice.  
But lo, a grieving throng, with locks unkempt, 585  
The Trojan women come: and at their head

THE TROJAN WOMEN COME, and at their head,  
With step majestic, queenly, heaven inspired,  
Apollo's bride, with his own laurel tired.

[*Enter band of Trojan women, led by Cassandra.*]

*Band of Trojan women:* Alas, how bitter, yet how sweet a thing,  
This love of life we mortals cherish so!  
What madness, when the door stands open wide 590  
That frees us from our ills, and death calls loud  
And welcomes us to everlasting rest!  
Who finds that refuge, fears no more  
These nameless terrors, these assaults,  
These insolent assaults of fate,  
And sidelong-glancing bolts of Jove. 595  
Deep peace of death!  
No frenzied burgher-throng to fear,  
No victor's threatening madness here;  
No wild seas ruffled by the blast;  
No hosts in serried battle massed,  
Where whirling clouds of dust disclose 600  
The savage riders to their foes;  
No nation falling with its city's fall,  
'Mid smouldering battlement and crumbling wall;  
No wasting fires,  
No burning pyres,  
And all the horrors impious war inspires.  
They from the servile bonds of fate 605  
This human life emancipate,  
Who fickle fortune dare to brave,  
And face the terrors of the grave;  
Who joyful view the joyless Styx,  
And dare their mortal span to fix.  
How like a king, how like a god on high  
Is he who faces death nor fears to die! 610  
In one dark night we saw our city doomed,  
When Doric fires the Dardan homes consumed;  
But not in battle, not by warlike arts,  
As once it fell beneath Alcides' dart.

AS ONCE IT LIEB BENEATH ACHILLES' QUARTERS.

No son of Thetis dealt the blow  
Which wrought our final overthrow, 615  
Nor his loved friend, Patroclus hight,  
When once, in borrowed armor dight,  
He put our Trojan chiefs to flight;  
Nor when Pelides' self gave o'er  
The fierce resentment that he bore, 620  
And sped him forth on vengeance bent—  
Not even in such evils pent,  
Did Troy to cruel fortune bend,  
But struggled bravely to the end.

Her bitter fate—for ten long years to stand,  
And fall at last by one vile trickster's hand. 625  
In memory still we see the monstrous bulk  
Of that pretended and most fatal gift,  
The Grecian horse, which we, too credulous,  
With our own hands into our city led.  
The noisy-footed monster stumbled oft  
Upon the threshold of the city gate, 630  
While in its roomy hold crouched kings and war.  
And we might well have turned their crafty arts  
To work their own destruction. But alas,  
We neither saw nor heeded. Oftentimes  
The sound of clashing shields smote on our ears,  
And low and angry mutterings within  
Where Pyrrhus 'gainst the shrewd Ulysses strove. 635

Now free from fear our Trojan youth  
Crowd round to touch the sacred cords  
With joyous hands. Astyanax  
Here leads his youthful playmates on,  
While 'midst the maidens gaily comes  
The maid Polyxena, foredoomed  
To bleed upon Achilles' tomb. 640  
Mothers in festal garments bring  
Their votive offerings to the gods,  
And sires press gaily round the shrines. 645  
Throughout the town all faces tell

One tale of joy; e'en Hecuba,  
Who, since her Hector's fatal pyre,  
Had never ceased her tears, was glad.  
But now, unhappy grief, what first,  
What last, dost thou prepare to weep?  
Our city walls in ruin laid, 650  
Though built by heavenly hands? our shrines  
Upon their very gods consumed?  
Nay, nay; long since our weary eyes  
Have dried their tears for these. But now  
We weep, O father, king, for thee.  
We saw, with our own eyes we saw, 655  
The old man slain by Pyrrhus' impious hand,  
Whose scanty blood scarce stained the gleaming brand.

*Cassandra:* Restrain your tears which lingering time awaits,  
Ye Trojan dames; weep not for me and mine.  
Let each bewail her several woes; but I 660  
For my own heavy grief have tears enough.

*Band:* Yet 'tis a balm of grief to know  
That our own tears with others' flow;  
More sharply gnaws the hidden care  
Which we with others may not share: 665  
And thou, though strong of soul, inured to grief,  
Canst not in thine own weeping find relief.  
Though Philomel for Itys sing  
Her sad, sweet notes in wakening spring; 670  
Though Procne, with insistent din,  
Bewail her husband's hidden sin;  
Not these, with all their passionate lament, 675  
Can voice the sorrows in thy bosom pent.  
Let Cynus raise his dying song,  
And its soft, plaintive strains prolong;  
Let Halcyon mourn her Ceyx brave,  
A-flutter o'er the tossing wave; 680  
Let priests of tower-crowned Cybele  
Their tears for Attis share with thee: 685  
Still would our tears in no such measure flow



~~Still would our tears in no such measure flow,~~  
For sufferings like these no limits know. 690

[*Cassandra lays aside her fillets.*]

But why dost lay aside the sacred wool?  
Most by the wretched should the gods be feared.

*Cassandra:* But ills like mine o'erleap the bounds of fear. 695

I'll supplicate the heavenly gods no more,  
For now am I beyond their power to harm,  
And I have drained to dregs the cup of fate.

No country have I left, no sister, sire;  
For tombs and altars have my blood consumed. 700  
Where is that happy throng of brothers now?

Departed all! And only weak old men  
Remain within the lonely palace walls  
To serve the wretched king; and these, alas,  
Throughout those stately chambered halls behold,  
Save Spartan Helen, none but widowed wives.

And Hecuba, proud mother of a race 705  
Of kings, herself the queen of Phrygia,  
Fecund for funeral pyres, became the mock  
Of fickle fate; and now in bestial form,  
Barks madly round the ruins of her home,  
Surviving Troy, son, husband, and herself.

*Band:* Why falls this sudden silence on her? See 710  
Her cheeks are pale, and fits of trembling fear

Possess her frame; her locks in horror rise,  
And we can hear, though pent within her breast,  
The loud pulsations of her fluttering heart.

Her glance uncertain wanders; and anon  
Her eyes seem backward turned into herself, 715  
Then fix again and harshly stare abroad.

Now higher than her wont she lifts her head  
And walks with stately step; and now she strives  
To open her reluctant lips. At last,  
Though struggling still against th' inspiring god,  
The maddened priestess speaks with muttered words.

*Cassandra:* Why prick me on with fury's goads anew,

Ye sacred slopes of high Parnassus? Why 720  
 Must I, insensate, prophesy afresh?  
 Away, thou prophet god! I am not thine.  
 Subdue the fires that smoulder in my breast.  
 Whose doom yet waits my frenzied prophecy?  
 Now Troy is fallen—must I still rave on,  
 And speak unheeded words? Oh, where am I? 725  
 The kindly light has fled, and deepest night  
 Enshrouds my face, and all the heavens lie wrapped  
 In deepest gloom. But see, with double sun,  
 The day shines forth again; and doubled homes  
 In doubled Argos seem to stand. Again  
 I see Mount Ida's groves. The shepherd sits  
 Amid those awful goddesses to judge 730  
 (Oh, fatal judgment!) twixt their rival charms.  
 Ye mighty kings, I warn ye, fear the fruit  
 Of stolen love; that rustic foundling soon  
 Shall overthrow your house.  
     Beware the queen!  
 Why does she madly in her woman's hand  
 Those naked weapons bear? Whom does she seek  
 With brandished battle-ax, though Spartan bred, 735  
 Like some fierce warrior of the Amazons?  
 What horrid vision next affronts mine eyes?  
 A mighty Afric lion, king of beasts,  
 Lies low, death-smitten by his cruel mate;  
 While at his mangled<sup>[53]</sup> neck a low-born beast  
 Gnaws greedily. 740  
     Why do ye summon me,  
 Saved only of my house, ye kindred shades?  
 I'll follow thee, my father, buried<sup>[54]</sup> deep  
 Beneath the stones of Troy; and thee, O prop  
 Of Phrygia, the terror of the Greeks,  
 I see, though not in brave and fair array,  
 As once thou cam'st, still flushing with the glow  
 Of burning ships; but with thy members torn 745  
 And foully mangled by the dragging thongs.

And thee, O Troïlus, I follow too,  
Alas, too quickly met with Peleus' son!  
I see thy face, my poor Deïphobus,  
Past recognition scarred. Is this the gift  
Of thy new wife?

Ah me, 'tis sweet to go 750  
Along the borders of the Stygian pool;  
To see the savage hound of Tartarus,  
The realms of greedy Dis, and Charon old,  
Whose dusky skiff shall bear two royal souls  
Across the murky Phlegethon today,  
The vanquished and the vanquisher. Ye shades,  
And thee, dread stream, by which the gods of heaven 755  
Do swear their straightest oaths, I pray ye both:  
Withdraw the curtain of your hidden realm,  
That so yon shadowy throng of Phrygians  
May look upon Mycenæ's woes. Behold,  
Poor souls; the wheel of fortune backward turns.

See, see! the squalid sisters come, 760  
Their bloody lashes brandishing,  
And smoking torches half consumed.

A sickly pallor overspreads  
Their bloated cheeks; and dusky robes  
Of death begird their hollow loins.

The gloomy night with fearsome cries 765  
Resounds, and to my startled eyes  
Dread sights appear: there lie the bones

Of that huge giant, far outstretched,  
Upon a slimy marsh's brink  
All white and rotting. Now I see

That old man, wan with suffering,  
Forget awhile the mocking waves, 770  
Forget his burning thirst, to grieve

For this disaster hovering  
About his house;  
But Dardanus exults to see

His foeman's baleful destiny.

*Bana:* NOW has her rage prophetic spent itself,  
And fall'n away; like some devoted bull, 775  
Which sinks with tottering knees before the shrine  
Beneath the sacrificial axe's stroke.  
Let us support her ere she faint and fall.  
But see, our Agamemnon comes at last  
To greet his gods, with bay of victory crowned;  
And, all in festal garb, with glad accord,  
His consort welcomes her returning lord. 780

#### FOOTNOTES:

[52] Reading, *hinc et Chalcida*.

[53] Reading, *vexatus*.

[54] Reading, *totâ Troiâ sepulte*.

#### ACT IV

[*Enter Agamemnon. He is met and greeted by his wife, who returns into the palace.*]

*Agamemnon:* At last in safety am I home returned.  
Oh, hail, beloved land! I bring thee spoil  
From many barbarous tribes; and Troy at length,  
So long the mistress of the haughty east,  
Submits herself as suppliant to thee. 785  
But see, Cassandra faints, and trembling falls  
With nerveless form. Ye slaves with speed uplift her;  
Revive her drooping spirits with the chill  
Of water on her face. Her languid eyes  
Again behold the light of day. Arise,  
Cassandra, and recall thy sluggish sense.  
That shelter from our woes, so long desired,  
Is here at last. This is a festal day. 790

*Cassandra:* Remember Ilium's festal day.

*Agamemnon:* But come.

We'll kneel before the shrine.

*Cassandra:* Before the shrine  
My father fell.

*Agamemnon:* We will together pray  
In thankfulness to Jove.

*Cassandra:* Hercean Jove?

*Agamemnon:* Thou think'st of Ilium?

*Cassandra:* And Priam too.

*Agamemnon:* This is not Troy.

795

*Cassandra:* Where a Helen is, is Troy.

*Agamemnon:* Fear not thy mistress, though in captive's bonds.

*Cassandra:* But freedom is at hand.

*Agamemnon:* Live on secure.

*Cassandra:* I think that death is my security.

*Agamemnon:* For thee there's naught to fear.

*Cassandra:* But much for thee.

*Agamemnon:* What can a victor fear?

*Cassandra:* What least he fears.

*Agamemnon:* Keep her, ye faithful slaves, in careful guard,

800

Till she shall throw this mood of madness off,

Lest in unbridled rage she harm herself.

To thee, O father, who the blinding bolt

Dost hurl, at whose command the clouds disperse,

Who rul'st the starry heavens and the lands,

To whom triumphant victors bring their spoils;

And thee, O sister of thy mighty lord,

Argolic Juno, here I offer now

805

All fitting gifts—and so fulfil my vow.

[*Exit into the palace.*]

*Chorus of Argive women:* O Argos, famed for thy worthy sons,  
And dear to the jealous Juno's heart,  
How mighty the children who feed at thy breast!  
Thou hast added a god to the ranks of immortals; 810  
For Alcides has won by his labors heroic  
The right to be named with the lords of the sky.  
Alcides the great! at his birth were the laws  
Of the universe broken; for Jove bade the night  
To double the dew-laden hours of the darkness.  
At his command did the god of the sun 815  
To a sluggish pace restrain his car;  
And slow of foot around their course,  
O pale, white moon, thy horses paced.  
He also checked his feet, the star,  
Which hails the dawn, but glows as oft  
In the evening sky; and he marveled that he 820  
Should be called Hesperus. 'Tis said that Aurora  
Roused to her wonted task, but again  
Sank back to her sleep on the breast of Tithonus:  
For long must the night be, and tardy the morning,  
That waits for the birth of a hero divine.  
The swift-whirling vault of the sky stood still 825  
To greet thee, O youth to the heavens appointed.  
Thy labors how many and mighty! Thy hand  
Has the terrible lion of Nemea felt,  
The fleet-footed hind, and the ravaging boar 830  
That Arcadia feared. Loud bellowed the bull  
    When torn from the fields of Crete;  
Thou didst conquer the Hydra, which fed on destruction,  
And severed the last of its multiplied heads. 835  
The dread giant, Geryon, three monsters in one,  
Fell slain with one blow of thy crashing club;  
But his oxen, the famous Hesperian herds,  
Were driven away as the spoils of the east.  
The terrible steeds of the Thracian king, 840  
Which their master fed not on the grass of the Strymon,  
Or the green banks of Hebrus (but, cruel and bloody,

With flesh of the hapless wayfarer he fed them),  
 These steeds did our Hercules take, and in vengeance, 845  
 As their last gory feast gave the flesh of their master.  
 The spoil of her girdle Hippolyte saw  
     A-gleam on her conqueror's breast.  
 The Stymphalian bird fell down from the clouds  
     By his arrows death-smitten, 850  
 And the tree which bears the fruit of gold  
 Feared his approach, but, despoiled of its treasures,  
 Lifted high in the air its burdenless branches.  
 Forth from the ravished grove he strode  
     With its golden fruit full laden; in vain 855  
 Did the deadly, sleepless dragon guard  
 Hear the sound of the musical metal.  
 By triple chains to the upper world  
 The hound of hell was meekly dragged;  
 His three great mouths in silence gaped, 860  
     Amazed by the light of day.  
 And, greatest of toils, beneath his might,  
 The lying house of Dardanus  
 Was overthrown, and felt the force  
 Of that dread bow which it was doomed  
 In far-off time to feel again.  
 Ten days sufficed for Troy's first overthrow;  
 As many years her second ruins know. 865

## ACT V

*Cassandra [alone upon the stage, standing where she can see the interior of the palace, describes what is going on there; or else she sees it by clairvoyant power]:* Great deeds are done within, the cruel match

For ten long years of suffering at Troy.  
 Alas, what do they there? Arise, my soul,  
 And take reward for thy mad prophecies.  
 The conquered Phrygians are victors now.  
 'Tis well! O Troy, thou risest from the dust

TIS WELL! O TROY, THOU RISEST FROM THE DUST,  
For thou hast now to equal ruin brought 870  
Mycenae too. Low lies thy conqueror.  
Oh, ne'er before has my prophetic soul  
So clearly seen the things of which it raved.  
I see, and no false image cheats my sight,  
I see it plainly, there, within the hall,  
A royal feast is spread, and thronged with guests, 875  
Like that last fatal feast of ours at Troy.  
The couches gleam with Trojan tapestries;  
Their wine they quaff from rare old cups of gold  
That once cheered great Assaracus; and see,  
The king himself, in 'broidered vestment clad,  
Sits high in triumph at the table's head, 880  
With Priam's noble spoils upon his breast.  
Now comes his queen and bids him put away  
The garment which his enemy has worn,  
And don instead the robe which she has made  
With loving thoughts of him.  
          Oh, horrid deed!  
I shudder at the sight. Shall that base man,  
That exile, smite a king? the paramour  
The husband slay? The fatal hour has come. 885  
The second course shall flow with royal blood,  
And gory streams shall mingle with the wine.  
And now the king has donned the deadly robe,  
Which gives him bound and helpless to his fate.  
His hands no outlet find; the clinging gown  
Enwraps his head in dark and smothering folds.  
With trembling hand the coward paramour 890  
Now smites the king, but not with deadly wound;  
For in mid stroke his nerveless hand is stayed.  
But, as some shaggy boar in forest wilds,  
Within the net's strong meshes caught, still strives  
And strains to burst his bonds, yet all in vain:  
So Agamemnon seeks to throw aside 895  
The floating, blinding folds. In vain; and yet,  
Though blind and bound, he seeks his enemy.



Now frenzied Clytemnestra snatches up  
A two-edged battle-ax; and, as the priest,  
Before he smites the sacrificial bull,  
Marks well the spot and meditates his aim:  
So she her impious weapon balances. 900  
He has the blow. 'Tis done. The severed head  
Hangs loosely down, and floods the trunk with gore.  
Nor do they even yet their weapons stay:  
The base-born wretch hacks at the lifeless corpse,  
While she, his mate, pursues her bloody task. 905  
So each responds to each in infamy.  
Thyestes' son in very truth is he,  
While she to Helen proves her sisterhood.  
The sun stands doubtful on the edge of day;  
Shall he go on or backward bend his way?

*[Remains beside the altar.]*

*[Enter Electra, leading her little brother, Orestes.]*

*Electra:* Flee, sole avenger of my father's death,  
Oh, flee, and shun these impious butchers' 910  
hands.  
Our royal house is utterly o'erthrown,  
Our kingdom gone.  
But see, a stranger comes,  
His horses driven to their utmost speed;  
Come, brother, hide thyself beneath my robe.  
But, O my foolish heart, whom dost thou fear?  
A stranger? Nay, thy foes are here at home. 915  
Put off thy fears, for close at hand I see  
The timely shelter of a faithful friend.

*[Enter Strophius in a chariot, accompanied by his son Pylades.]*

*Strophius:* I, Strophius, had left my Phocian realm,  
And now, illustrious with th' Olympic palm,  
I home return. My hither course is bent  
To 'gratulate my friend, by whose assault  
Has Ilium fallen after years of war. 920

[*Noticing Electra's distress.*]  
But why these flowing tears and looks of woe?  
And why these marks of fear? I recognize  
In thee the royal house. Electra! Why,  
When all is joyful here, dost thou lament?

*Electra:* My father lies within the palace, slain  
By Clytemnestra's hand. His son is doomed 925  
To share his father's death. Aegisthus holds  
The throne which he through guilty love has gained.

*Strophius:* Oh, happiness that never long endures!

*Electra:* By all thy kindly memories of my sire,  
By his proud scepter, known to all the earth,  
And by the fickle gods, I pray thee take 930  
My brother hence, and hide him from his  
foes.

*Strophius:* Although dead Agamemnon bids me fear,  
I'll brave the danger and thy brother save.  
Good fortune asks for faith; adversity  
Compels us to be true.

[*Takes Orestes into the chariot.*]

My lad, attend:  
Wear this wild-olive wreath upon thy brow,  
The noble prize I won on Pisa's plain; 935  
And hold above thy head this leafy branch,  
The palm of victory, that it may be  
A shield and omen of success to thee.

And do thou too, O Pylades, my son,  
Who dost as comrade guide thy father's car, 940  
From my example faith in friendship learn.  
Do you, swift steeds, before the eyes of Greece  
Speed on in flight, and take us to the city's head

speed on in night, and leave this faithless land.

[*Exeunt at great speed.*]

*Electra* [*looking after them*]: So is he gone. His car at reckless pace  
Fast vanishes from sight. And now my foes, 945  
With heart released from care, will I await,  
And willingly submit my head to death.  
Here comes the bloody conqueror of her lord,  
And bears upon her robes the stains of blood.  
Her hands still reek with gore, and in her face  
She bears the witness of her impious crime.  
I'll hie me to the shrine; and, kneeling here, 950  
I'll join Cassandra in our common fear.

[*Enter Clytemnestra, fresh from the murder of her husband.*]

*Clytemnestra* [*to Electra*]: Thou base, unfilial, and froward girl,  
Thy mother's foe, by what authority  
Dost thou, a virgin, seek the public gaze?

*Electra*: Because I am a virgin have I left  
The tainted home of vile adulterers. 955

*Clytemnestra*: Who would believe thee chaste?

*Electra*: I am thy child.

*Clytemnestra*: Thou shouldst thy mother speak with gentler tongue.

*Electra*: Shall I learn filial piety of thee?

*Clytemnestra*: Thou hast a mannish soul, too puffed with pride;  
But tamed by suffering thou soon shalt learn  
To play a woman's part.

*Electra*: A woman's part!  
Yea, truly, 'tis to wield the battle-ax. 960

*Clytemnestra*: Thou fool, dost think thyself a match for us?

*Electra*: "For us?" Hast thou another husband then?  
Speak thou as widow, for thy lord is dead.

*Clytemnestra:* As queen I soon shall curb thy saucy tongue,  
And break thy pride. But meanwhile quickly tell,  
Where is my son, where is thy brother hid? 965

*Electra:* Far from Mycenae fled.

*Clytemnestra:* Then bring him back.

*Electra:* Bring back my father too.

*Clytemnestra:* Where lurks the boy?

*Electra:* In safety, where he fears no rival's power.  
This will content a loving mother.

*Clytemnestra:* Yes,  
But not an angry one. Thou diest today. 970

*Electra:* Oh, let me perish by thy practiced hand!  
Behold, I leave the altar's sheltering side;  
Wilt plunge the knife into my tender throat?  
I yield me to thy will. Or dost prefer  
At one fell stroke to smite away my head?  
My neck awaits thy deadly aim. Let crime  
By other crime be purged. Thy hands are stained 975  
And reeking with thy murdered husband's blood:  
Come, cleanse them in the fresher stream of mine.

[*Enter Aegisthus.*]

*Clytemnestra:* Thou partner of my perils and my throne,  
Aegisthus, come; this most unnatural child  
Assails her mother and her brother hides.

980

*Aegisthus:* Thou mad and foolish girl, restrain thy  
tongue,  
For such wild words offend thy mother's ears.

*Electra:* Thou arch contriver of most impious crime,  
Wilt thou admonish me? Thou base-born wretch,  
Thou sister's son, and grandson of thy sire!

985

*Clytemnestra:* Aegisthus, how canst thou restrain  
thy hand  
From smiting off her head? But hear my word:  
Let her give up her brother or her life.

*Aegisthus:* Nay, rather, in some dark and stony cell  
Let her be straight confined; and there, perchance,  
By cruel tortures racked, will she give up  
Whom now she hides. Resourceless, starving 990  
there,  
In dank and loathsome solitude immured,  
Widowed, ere wedded, exiled, scorned of all—  
Then will she, though too late, to fortune yield.

*Electra:* Oh, grant me death.

*Aegisthus:* If thou shouldst plead for life,  
I'd grant thee death. A foolish ruler he,  
Who balances by death the score of sin. 995

*Electra:* Can any punishment be worse than death?

*Aegisthus:* Yes! Life for those who wish to die. Away,  
Ye slaves, seek out some dark and lonely cave,  
Far from Mycenae's bounds; and there in chains,  
Confine this bold, unmanageable maid,  
If haply prison walls may curb her will.

1000

[*Electra is led away.*]

*Clytemnestra* [*indicating Cassandra*]: But she shall die, that rival of my  
couch,  
That captive bride. Go, drag her hence at once,  
That she may follow him she stole from me.

*Cassandra*: Nay, drag me not; for I with joy will go,  
Outstripping your desire. How eagerly  
I hasten to my Phrygians, to tell  
The news: the ocean covered with the wrecks 1005  
Of Argive ships; Mycenae overthrown;  
The leader of a thousand leaders slain  
(And thus atoning for the woes of Troy)  
By woman's gift of wantonness and guile.  
Make haste! I falter not, but thank the gods,  
That I have lived to see my land avenged. 1010

*Clytemnestra*: O maddened wretch, thy death I wait to see.

*Cassandra*: A fateful madness waits as well for thee.

**OCTAVIA**

# **OCTAVIA**

## **A FABULA PRAETEXTA**

### **THE ONLY EXTANT ROMAN HISTORICAL DRAMA**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Roman historical drama had a place among the earliest products of Roman literature, and seems to have enjoyed a degree of popularity through all succeeding periods. That Roman literary genius did not find a much fuller expression through this channel was not due to a lack of national pride and patriotism, nor yet to a dearth of interesting and inspiring subjects in Roman history. The true reason is probably to be found in the fact that by the time national conditions were ripe for the development of any form of literature, the Greeks had already worked, and well worked, nearly all available fields, and had produced a mass of literature which dazzled the Roman mind when at last circumstances brought these two nations into closer contact.

The natural and immediate result was an attempt on the part of the Romans to imitate these great models. And hence we have in drama, both in tragedy and comedy, a wholesale imitation of the Greek dramas, oftentimes nothing more than a translation of these, with only here and there an attempt to produce something of a strictly native character, entirely independent of the Greek influence.

This imitative impulse was augmented by the fact that the Romans were following the line of least resistance, since it is always easier to imitate than to create. Furthermore, they had as yet developed no national pride of literature to hold them to their own lines of national development; they



had no forms of their own so well established that the mere force of literary momentum would carry them steadily on toward a fuller development, in spite of the disturbing influences of the influx of other and better models. They had, indeed, developed a native Saturnian verse which, had it been allowed a free field, might have reached a high pitch of literary excellence. But it speedily gave way at the approach of the more elegant imported forms.

The overwhelming influence of Greek tragedy upon the Roman dramatists can be seen at a glance as we review the dramatic product of the Roman tragedians. We have titles and fragments of nine tragedies by Livius Andronicus, seven by Naevius, twenty-two by Ennius, thirteen by Pacuvius, forty-six by Accius, and many unassignable fragments from each of these which indicate numerous other plays of the same character. To these should be added scattering additions from nearly a score more of Roman writers during the next two hundred years after Accius. All the above-mentioned plays are on Greek subjects; and most of those whose fragments are sufficiently extensive to allow us to form an opinion of their character are either translations or close imitations of the Greeks, or are so influenced by these as to be decidedly Greek rather than Roman in character.

And what of the genuine Roman dramatic product? Speaking for the *fabula praetexta*, or Roman historical drama, alone, the entire output, so far as our records go, is contained in the following list of authors and titles.

From Naevius (265-204 B.C.) we have the *Clastidium*, written in celebration of the victory of Marcellus over Vidumarus, king of the Transpadane Gauls, whom Marcellus slew and stripped of his armor, thus gaining the rare *spolia opima*; this at Clastidium in 222 B.C. The play was probably written for the especial occasion either of the triumph of Marcellus or of the celebration of his funeral.

We have also from Naevius a play variously entitled *Lupus* or *Romulus* or *Alimonium Remi et Romuli*, evidently one of those dramatic reproductions of scenes in the life of a god, enacted as a part of the ceremonies of his worship. These are comparable to similar dramatic representations among the Greeks in the worship of Dionysus.

The *Ambracia* and the *Sabinae* of Ennius (239-169 B.C.) are ordinarily classed as *fabulae praetextae*, although Lucian Müller classes the fragments of the *Ambracia* among the *Saturae* of Ennius; while Vahlen puts the *Ambracia* under the heading *Comoediarum et ceterorum carminum reliquiae*, and classifies the fragments of the *Sabinae* under *ex incertis saturarum libris*. The *Ambracia* is evidently called after the city of that name in Epirus, celebrated for the long and remarkable siege which it sustained against the Romans under M. Fulvius Nobilior. That general finally captured the city in 189 B.C. If the piece is to be considered as a play, it was, like the *Clastidium*, written in honor of a Roman general, and acted on the occasion either of his triumph or of his funeral.

We have four short fragments from the *Paulus* of Pacuvius (220-130 B.C.), written in celebration of the exploits of L. Aemilius Paulus who conquered Perseus, king of Macedonia, in the battle of Pydna, 168 B.C.

The fragments of the plays already mentioned are too brief to afford any adequate idea of the character or content of the plays. But in the *Brutus* of Accius (b. 170 B.C.), which centers around the expulsion of the Tarquins and the establishment of the Republic, we have a larger glimpse into the play through two most interesting fragments consisting of twelve iambic trimeters and ten trochaic tetrameters, respectively. In the first, King Tarquin relates to his seer an ill-ominous dream which he has had; the second is the seer's interpretation of this dream, pointing to Tarquin's dethronement by Brutus. Other short fragments give glimpses of the outrage of Lucretia by Sextus at Collatia, and the scene in the forum where Brutus takes his oath of office as first consul. This play, unlike its predecessors, was not written at the time of the events which it portrays, but may still be classed with them, so far as its object is concerned, since it is generally thought to have been written in honor of D. Junius Brutus who was consul in 138 B.C., and with whom the poet enjoyed an intimate friendship.

Another *praetexta* of Accius is preserved, the *Decius*, of which eleven short fragments remain. This play celebrates the victory of Quintus Fabius Maximus and P. Decius Mus over the Samnites and Gauls at Sentinum in 295 B.C. The climax of the play would be the self-immolation of Decius after the example of his father in the Latin war of 340 B.C.

In addition to these plays of the Roman dramatists of the Republic, we have knowledge of a few which date from later times. There was a historical drama entitled *Iter*, by L. Cornelius Balbus, who dramatized the incidents of a journey which he made to Pompey's camp at Dyrrachium at the opening of civil war in 49 B.C. Balbus was under commission from Caesar to treat with the consul, L. Cornelius Lentulus, and other optimates who had fled from Rome, concerning their return to the city. The journey was a complete fiasco, so far as results were concerned; but the vanity of Balbus was so flattered by his (to him) important mission that he must needs dramatize his experiences and present the play under his own direction in his native city of Gades.

We have mention also of an *Aeneas* by Pomponius Secundus, and of two *praetextae* by Curiatius Maternus, entitled *Domitius* and *Cato*.

These eleven historical plays are, as we have seen, for the most part, plays of occasion, and would be at best of but temporary interest, born of the special circumstances which inspired them. They are in no way comparable with such historical dramas on Roman subjects as Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* or *Coriolanus*, whose interest is for all times.

We have still a twelfth play of this class, which enjoys the unique distinction of being the only Roman historical drama which has come down to us—the *Octavia*. Its authorship is unknown, although tradition gives it a place among the tragedies of Seneca, the philosopher. The general opinion of modern critics, however, is against this tradition, chiefly because one passage in the play, in the form of a prophecy, too circumstantially describes the death of Nero, which occurred three years after the death of Seneca. It is generally agreed that the play must have been written soon after the death of Nero, and by some one, possibly Maternus, who had been an eye-witness of the events, and who had been inspired by his sympathies for the unfortunate Octavia to write this story of her sufferings.

## OCTAVIA

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### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

OCTAVIA	Stepsister and wife of Nero.
<i>Nurse</i>	of Octavia.
<i>Poppaea</i>	Mistress and afterward wife of Nero.
<i>Ghost of Agrippina</i>	Mother of Nero, slain by him.
<i>Nero</i>	Emperor of Rome.
<i>Seneca</i>	Former tutor of Nero, and later one of his chief counselors.
<i>Prefect of Roman Soldiers.</i>	
<i>Messenger.</i>	
<i>Chorus of Romans</i>	Sympathetic with Octavia.
<i>Chorus</i>	Attached to the interests of the court.

THE SCENE is laid throughout in different apartments of the palace of Nero, and is concerned with the events of the year 62 A.D.

## ACT I

*Octavia:* Now doth the flushing dawn from heaven drive  
 The wandering stars; the sun mounts into sight  
 With radiant beams, and brings the world once more  
 The light of day. Up, then, my heavy soul,  
 With grievous cares o'erburdened, and resume 5  
 Thy woe; out-wail the sea-bred Halcyons,  
 And those sad birds of old Pandion's house;  
 For this thy lot is heavier far than theirs.  
 O mother, constant source of tears to me,  
 Hear now thy woeful daughter's sad 10  
 complaints,  
 If aught of sense remains among the shades.  
 Oh, that the grizzly Clotho long ago,  
 With her own hand had clipt my thread of life!  
 Through blinding tears I saw thy bleeding 15  
 wounds,  
 Thy features sprinkled with defiling blood.  
 Oh, light of day, abhorrent to my eyes!  
 From that dread hour I hate the day's pure light  
 More than the night's dark gloom; for daily 20  
 now  
 Must I endure a cruel stepdame's rule,  
 Must daily bear her hateful looks and words.  
 She, she the baleful fury fiend it was  
 Who at my marriage rites bore torches lit  
 With hellish fires; 'twas she who wrought thy 25  
 death,  
 O wretched father, whom but yesterday  
 The whole world owned as lord on land and sea;  
 To whom the Britain bowed, though ne'er before  
 Had he a Roman master known or owned.  
 Alas, my father, by thy wife's fell plots 30  
 Thou liest low, and I and all thy house  
 Like captives groan beneath the tyrant's sway.

[*Exit to her chamber.*]

*Messala* [*Enter*]: Who stands in wonder, smitten by the glass

*nurse* [*entering*]: who stands in wonder, smitten by the gloss  
 And splendor of a princely court, amazed 35  
 At sight of easy-won prosperity,  
 Let him behold how, at the stroke of fate,  
 The house of Claudius is overthrown,  
 To whose control the world was subjugate,  
 Whose rule an ocean, long to sway unknown, 40  
 Obeyed, and bore our ships with subject will.  
 Lo, he, who first the savage Britains curbed,  
 And filled an unknown ocean with his fleet,  
 And passed in safety 'mid barbaric tribes—  
 By his own wife's impiety was slain.  
 And she is destined by her son to fall, 45  
 Whose hapless brother lies already slain  
 By poison's hand, whose sister-wife alone  
 Is left to mourn. Nor may she hide her grief,  
 By bitter wrath impelled to speak. She shuns  
 Her cruel lord's society, and, fired  
 With equal hate, with mutual<sup>[55]</sup> loathing burns. 50  
 Our pious faithfulness in vain consoles  
 Her grieving heart; her cruel woes reject  
 Our aid; the noble passion of her soul  
 Will not be ruled, but grows on ills renewed.  
 Alas, my fears forebode some desperate deed,  
 Which may the gods forbid! 55

*Octavia* [*heard speaking from within her chamber*]: O fate of mine, that  
 can no equal know!  
 Thy woes, Electra, were no match for these;  
 For thou couldst soothe with tears the grief thou hadst  
 For thy dear father's fall; thou couldst avenge 60  
 The murder by thy brother's ready hand,  
 Who by thy piety was saved from death,  
 And whom thy faith concealed. But me base fear  
 Forbids to weep my parents reft away  
 By cruel fate; forbids to weep the death 65  
 Of him, my brother, who my sole hope was,  
 My fleeting comfort of so many woes.  
 And now surviving but to suffer still!

AND NOW, SURVIVING OUT TO SUFFER STILL,  
I live, the shadow of a noble name.

70

*Nurse:* Behold, the voice of my sad foster-child  
Falls on my list'ning ears. Slow steps of age,  
Why haste ye not within her chamber there?

[*Starts to enter the chamber, but is met by Octavia coming forth.*]

*Octavia:* Within thy bosom let me weep, dear nurse,  
Thou ever trusty witness of my grief.

75

*Nurse:* What day shall free thee from thy woes, poor child?

*Octavia:* The day that sends me to the Stygian shades.

*Nurse:* May heaven keep such dark omens far away!

80

*Octavia:* 'Tis not thy prayers, but fate that shapes my life.

*Nurse:* But God will bring thy life to better days.  
Do thou but be appeased, and win thy lord  
With mild obedience.

85

*Octavia:* I'll sooner tame  
The savage lion's heart, the tiger's rage,  
Than curb that brutal tyrant's cruel soul.  
He hates all sons of noble blood, and gods  
And men he sets at naught; nor can he bear  
That high estate to which along the paths  
Of shameful crime his impious mother led;  
For though it shames him now, ungrateful one,  
To hold the scepter which his mother gave;  
And though by death he has requited her:  
Still will the glory of the empire won  
Belong to her for centuries to come.

90

95

*Nurse:* Restrain these words that voice thy raging heart,  
And check thy tongue's too rash and thoughtless speech.

*Octavia:* Though I should bear what may be borne, my woes,  
Save by a cruel death, could not be ended.  
For, since my mother was by murder slain,

100

And my father taken off by crime most foul,  
Robbed of my brother, overwhelmed with woe,  
Oppressed with sadness, by my husband scorned,  
Degraded to the level of my slave,  
I find this life no more endurable. 105

My heart doth tremble, not with fear of death,  
But slander base, employed to work my death.  
Far from my name and fate be that foul blot.  
For death itself—Oh, 'twould be sweet to die;  
For 'tis a punishment far worse than death,  
To live in contact with the man I loathe,  
To see the tyrant's face all passion puffed,  
And fierce with rage, to kiss my deadliest foe. 110

That I should fear his nod, obey his will,  
My grief, resentful, will not suffer me,  
Since by his hand my brother was destroyed,  
Whose kingdom he usurps, and boasts himself  
The author of that shameful deed. How oft  
Before my eyes does that sad image come, 115

My brother's ghost, when I have gone to rest,  
And sleep has closed my eyelids faint with tears!  
Now in his weakling hand he brandishes  
The smoking torch, and violently assails  
His brother to his face; now, trembling sore,  
He flees for refuge to my sheltering arms. 120

His foe pursues, and, as his victim clings  
Convulsively to me, he thrusts his sword  
With murderous intent through both our sides.  
Then, all a-tremble, do I start awake,  
And in my waking sense renew my fear.  
Add to these cares a rival, arrogant, 125

Who queens it in the spoils of this our house;  
At whose behest the mother was enticed  
To that fell ship which should have carried her  
To Orcus' depths; but when o'er ocean's waves  
She triumphed, he, than ocean's waves more harsh  
And pitiless, despatched her with the sword.  
Amid such deeds. what hopes of peace have I?



O'erblown with hate, triumphant, doth my rival 130  
Within my very chamber's hold defy me;  
With deadly malice doth she blaze against me,  
And as the price of her adulterous sweets,  
Doth she demand that he, my husband, give  
My life, his lawful wife's, in sacrifice.  
Oh, rise thou, father, from the gloomy shades,  
And help thy daughter who invokes thine aid;  
Or else cleave wide the earth to Stygian depths, 135  
And let me plunge at last to shelter there.

*Nurse:* In vain dost thou invoke thy father's soul,  
Poor child, in vain; for there among the shades  
He little thinks upon his offspring here;  
Who, when in life, unto his own true son  
Preferred the offspring of another's blood, 140  
And to himself in most incestuous bonds  
And rites unhallowed joined his brother's child.  
From this foul source has flowed a stream of crime:  
Of murder, treachery, the lust of power,  
The thirst for blood. Thy promised husband fell,  
A victim slain to grace that wedding feast,  
Lest, joined with thee, he should too mighty grow. 145  
Oh, monstrous deed! Silanus, charged with crime,  
Was slain to make a bridal offering,  
And stained the household gods with guiltless blood.  
And then this alien comes, Oh, woe is me,  
And by his mother's wiles usurps the house, 150  
Made son-in-law and son to the emperor,  
A youth of temper most unnatural,  
To impious crime inclined, whose passion's flame  
His mother fanned, and forced thee at the last  
In hated wedlock into his embrace.  
Emboldened by this notable success, 155  
She dared to dream of wider sovereignty.  
What tongue can tell the changing forms of crime,  
Her impious hopes, her cozening treacheries,  
Who seeks the throne along the ways of sin?

Then Piety with trembling haste withdrew, 160  
And Fury through the empty palace halls  
With baleful tread resounded, and defiled  
The sacred images with Stygian brands.  
All holy laws of nature and of heaven  
In mad abandon did she set at naught.  
She mingled deadly poison for her lord,  
And she herself by the impious mandate fell 165  
Of her own son. Thou too dost lifeless lie,  
Poor youth, forever to be mourned by us,  
Ill-starred Britannicus, so late, in life,  
The brightest star of this our firmament,  
The prop and stay of our imperial house;  
But now, Oh, woe is me, a heap of dust,  
Of unsubstantial dust, a flitting shade. 170  
Nay, even thy stepmother's cruel cheeks  
Were wet with tears, when on the funeral pyre  
She placed thy form and saw the flames consume  
Thy limbs and face fair as the wingéd god's.

*Octavia:* Me, too, he must destroy—or fall by me.

*Nurse:* But nature has not given thee strength to slay. 175

*Octavia:* Yet anguish, anger, pain, distress of soul,  
The ecstasy of grief will give me strength.

*Nurse:* Nay, by compliance, rather, win thy lord.

*Octavia:* That thus he may restore my brother slain?

*Nurse:* That thou thyself mayst go unscathed of death;  
That thou by thine own offspring mayst restore  
Thy father's falling house. 180

*Octavia:* This princely house  
Expects an heir, 'tis true; but not from me,  
For I am doomed to meet my brother's fate.

*Nurse:* Console thy heart with this, that thou art dear  
Unto the populace, who love thee well.

*Octavia:* That thought doth soothe, but cannot cure my grief

*Octavia.* That thought doth soothe, but cannot cure my grief.

*Nurse:* Their power availeth much.

185

*Octavia:* The prince's more.

*Nurse:* He will regard his wife.

*Octavia:* My foe forbids.

*Nurse:* But she is scorned by all.

*Octavia:* Yet loved by him.

*Nurse:* She is not yet his wife.

*Octavia:* But soon will be,  
And mother of his child, his kingdom's heir.

*Nurse:* The fire of youthful passion glows at first  
With heat impetuous; but soon abates,  
And vanishes like flickering tongues of flame.

190

Unhallowed love cannot for long endure;  
But pure and lasting is the love inspired  
By chaste and wifely faith. She who has dared  
To violate thy bed, and hold so long  
Thy husband's heart in thrall, herself a slave,  
Already trembles lest his fickle love  
Shall thrust her forth and set a rival there.

195

Subdued and humble, even now she shows  
How deep and real her fear; for her, indeed,  
Shall wingéd Cupid, false and fickle god,  
Abandon and betray. Though face and form  
Be passing fair, though beauty vaunt herself,  
And boast her power, still are her triumphs brief,  
Her joys a passing dream.

200

Nay, Juno's self,  
Though queen of heaven, endured such grief as thine,  
When he, her lord, and father of the gods,  
Stole from her side to seek in mortal forms  
The love of mortal maids. Now, in his need,  
He dons the snowy plumage of a swan;  
Now hornéd seems, like a Sidonian bull;

205

And now a glorious, golden shower he falls,  
And rests within the arms of Danaë.  
Nor yet is Juno's sum of woe complete:  
The sons of Leda glitter in the sky  
In starry splendor; Bacchus proudly stands  
Beside his father on Olympus' height;  
Divine Alcides hath to Hebe's charms  
Attained, and fears stern Juno's wrath no more. 210  
Her very son-in-law hath he become  
Whom once she hated most. Yet in her heart  
Deep down she pressed her grief, and wisely won,  
By mild compliance to his wayward will,  
Her husband's love again. And now the queen, 215  
Secure at last from rivalry, holds sway  
Alone, within the Thunderer's heart. No more,  
By mortal beauty smitten, does he leave  
His royal chambers in the vaulted sky.  
Thou, too, on earth, another Juno art, 220  
The wife and sister of our mighty lord.  
Then be thou wise as she, make show of love,  
And hide thy crushing sorrows with a smile.

*Octavia:* The savage seas shall sooner mate with stars,  
And fire with water, heav'n with gloomy hell,  
Glad light with shades, and day with dewy night,  
Than shall my soul in amity consort 225  
With his black heart, most foul and impious:  
Too mindful I of my poor brother's ghost.  
And Oh, that he who guides the heavenly worlds,  
Who shakes the realms of earth with deadly bolts,  
And with his dreadful thunders awes our minds,  
Would whelm in fiery death this murderous prince. 230  
Strange portents have we seen: the comet dire,  
Shining with baleful light, his glowing train  
Far gleaming in the distant northern sky,  
Where slow Boötes, numb with arctic frosts,  
Directs his ponderous wagon's endless rounds.  
The very air is tainted by the breath 235

Of this destructive prince; and for his sake 230  
The stars, resentful, threaten to destroy  
The nations which so dire a tyrant rules.  
Not such a pest was impious Typhon huge,  
Whom earth, in wrath and scorn of heaven, produced.  
This scourge is more destructive far than he.  
He is the bitter foe of gods and men, 240  
Who drives the heavenly beings from their shrines,  
And from their native land the citizens;  
Who from his brother took the breath of life,  
And drained his mother's blood.

And does he live,  
This guilty wretch, and draw his tainted breath?  
O Jove, thou high-exalted father, why  
Dost thou so oft with thine imperial hand 245  
Thy darts invincible at random hurl?  
Why from his guilty head dost thou withhold  
Thy hand of vengeance? Oh, that he might pay  
For all his crimes the fitting penalty,  
This son of deified Domitius,  
This Nero, heartless tyrant of the world,  
Which he beneath the yoke of bondage holds, 250  
This moral blot upon a noble name!

*Nurse:* Unworthy he to be thy mate, I know;  
But, dearest child, to fate and fortune yield,  
Lest thou excite thy savage husband's wrath.  
Perchance some god will come to right thy wrongs,  
And on thy life some happier day will dawn. 255

*Octavia:* That may not be. Long since, our ill-starred house  
Has groaned beneath the heavy wrath of heaven.  
That wrath at first my hapless mother felt,  
Whom Venus cursed with lust insatiate;  
For she, with heedless, impious passion fired,  
Unmindful of her absent lord, of us, 260  
Her guiltless children, and the law's restraints,  
In open day another husband wed.  
To that fell couch avenging Fury came

With streaming locks and serpents intertwined,  
And quenched those stolen wedding fires in blood.  
For with destructive rage, on murder bent,  
She fired the prince's heart; and at his word, 265  
Ah, woe is me, my ill-starred mother fell,  
And, dying, doomed me to perpetual grief.  
For after her in quick succession came  
Her husband and her son; and this our house,  
Already falling, was to ruin plunged.

*Nurse:* Forbear with pious tears to renew thy grief,  
And do not so disturb thy father's shade, 270  
Who for his rage has bitterly atoned.

---

*Chorus* [*sympathetic with Octavia*]: False prove the rumor that of late  
To our ears has come! May its vaunted threats  
Fall fruitless out and of no avail!  
May no new wife invade the bed 275  
Of our royal prince; may Octavia, born  
Of the Claudian race, maintain her right  
And bear us a son, the pledge of peace,  
In which the joyful world shall rest,  
And Rome preserve her glorious name. 280  
Most mighty Juno holds the lot  
By fate assigned—her brother's mate;  
But this our Juno, sister, wife  
Of our august prince, why is she driven  
From her father's court? Of what avail 285  
Her faith, her father deified,  
Her love and spotless chastity?  
We, too, of our former master's fame  
Have been unmindful, and his child  
At the hest of cringing<sup>[56]</sup> fear betrayed. 290  
Not so of old: then Rome could boast  
Of manly virtue, martial blood.  
There lived a race of heroes then

Who curbed the power of haughty kings  
And drove them forth from Rome; and thee,  
O maiden, slain by thy father's hand,  
Lest thou shouldst in slavery's bonds be held, 295  
And lest foul lust its victorious will  
Should work on thee, did well avenge.  
Thee, too, a bloody war avenged,  
O chaste Lucretia; for thou,  
By the lust of an impious tyrant stained, 300  
With wretched hand didst seek to cleanse  
Those stains by thy innocent blood.  
Then Tullia with her guilty lord,  
Base Tarquin, dared an impious deed,  
Whose penalty they paid; for she  
Over the limbs of her murdered sire, 305  
A heartless child, drove cruel wheels,  
And left his corpse unburied there.  
Such deeds of dire impiety  
Our age has known, our eyes have seen,  
When the prince on the mighty Tyrrhene deep  
In a fatal bark his mother sent, 310  
By guile ensnared.  
The sailors at his bidding haste  
To leave the peaceful harbor's arms;  
And soon the rougher waves resound  
Beneath their oars, and far away 315  
Upon the deep the vessel glides;  
When suddenly the reeling bark  
With loosened beams yawns open wide,  
And drinks the briny sea.  
A mighty shout to heaven goes,  
With women's lamentations filled, 320  
And death stalks dire before the eyes  
Of all. Each seeks to save himself.  
Some naked cling upon the planks  
Of the broken ship and fight the floods,  
While others swimming seek the shore. 325  
But most alas! a watery death

By fate awaits. Then did the queen  
In mad despair her garments rend;  
Her comely locks she tore, and tears  
Fell streaming down her grieving cheeks.  
At last, with hope of safety gone, 330  
With wrath inflamed, by woes o'ercome,  
"Dost thou, O son, make this return,"  
She cried, "for that great boon I gave?  
Such death I merit, I confess,  
Who bore such monstrous child as thou, 335  
Who gave to thee the light of day,  
And in my madness raised thee high  
To Caesar's name and Caesar's throne.  
Oh, rise from deepest Acheron,  
My murdered husband, feast thine eyes  
Upon my righteous punishment; 340  
For I brought death to thee, poor soul,  
And to thy son. See, see, I come,  
Deep down to meet thy grieving shade;  
And there, as I have merited,  
Shall I unburied lie, o'erwhelmed 345  
By the raging sea." E'en as she spoke,  
The lapping waves broke o'er her lips,  
And deep she plunged below. Anon  
She rises from the briny depths,  
And, stung by fear of death, she strives  
With frenzied hands to conquer fate;  
But, spent with fruitless toil at last,  
She yields and waits the end. But lo, 350  
In hearts which in trembling silence watch,  
Faith triumphs over deadly fear,  
And to their mistress, spent and wan  
With fruitless buffetings, they dare  
To lend their aid with cheering words  
And helping hands. 355

But what avails  
To escape the grasp of the savage sea?



By the sword of the son is she doomed to die,  
Whose monstrous deed posterity  
Will scarce believe. With rage and grief  
Inflamed, he raves that still she lives, 360  
His mother, snatched from the wild sea's jaws,  
And doubles crime on impious crime.  
Bent on his wretched mother's death,  
He brooks no tarrying of fate.  
His willing creatures work his will, 365  
And in the hapless woman's breast  
The fatal sword is plunged; but she  
To that fell minister of death  
Appeals with dying tongue: "Nay here,  
Here rather strike the murderous blow,  
Here sheathe thy sword, deep in the womb  
Which such a monster bore." 370  
So spake the dying queen, her words  
And groans commingling. So at last  
Through gaping wounds her spirit fled  
In grief and agony. 375

## FOOTNOTES:

[55] Reading, *mariti mutua*.

[56] Reading, *saevo*.

## ACT II

*Seneca* [*alone*]: Why hast thou, potent Fate, with flattering looks,  
Exalted me, contented with my lot,  
That so from this great height I might descend  
With heavier fall, and wider prospect see 380  
Of deadly fears? Ah, better was I, hid  
Far from the stinging lash of envy's tongue,  
Amid the lonely crags of Corsica.  
There was my spirit free to act at will,  
Was master of itself, had time to think  
And meditate at length each favorite theme.  
Oh, what delight, than which none greater is, 385  
Of all that mother nature hath produced,  
To watch the heavens, the bright sun's sacred rounds,  
The heavenly movements and the changing night,  
The moon's full orb with wandering stars begirt,  
The far-effulgent glory of the sky! 390  
And is it growing old, this structure vast,  
Doomed to return to groping nothingness?  
Then must that final doomsday be at hand,  
That shall by heaven's fall o'erwhelm a race  
So impious, that thus the world may see  
A newer race of men, a better stock, 395  
Which once the golden reign of Saturn knew.  
Then virgin Justice, holy child of heaven,  
In mercy ruled the world; the race of men  
Knew naught of war, the trumpet's savage blare,  
The clang of arms; not yet were cities hedged 400  
With ponderous walls; the way was free to all,  
And free to all the use of everything

And see to all the use of everything.

The earth, untilled, spread wide her fertile lap,  
The happy mother of a pious stock. 405

Then rose another race of sterner mold;  
Another yet to curious arts inclined,  
But pious still; a fourth of restless mood,  
Which lusted to pursue the savage beasts,

To draw the fishes from their sheltering waves 410  
With net or slender pole, to snare the birds,  
To force the headstrong bullocks to endure  
The bondage of the yoke, to plow the earth  
Which never yet had felt the share's deep wound,  
And which in pain and grief now hid her fruits  
Within her sacred bosom's safer hold.

Now deep within the bowels of the earth 415  
Did that debased, unfilial age intrude;  
And thence it dug the deadly iron and gold,  
And soon it armed its savage hands for war.

It fixed the bounds of realms, constructed towns,  
Fought for its own abodes, or threat'ning strove 420  
To plunder those of others as a prize.

Then did abandoned Justice, heavenly maid,  
In terror flee the earth, the bestial ways  
Of men, their hands with bloody slaughter stained,  
And, fixed in heaven, now shines among the stars.

Then lust of war increased, and greed for gold, 425  
Throughout the world; and luxury arose,  
That deadliest of evils, luring pest,  
To whose fell powers new strength and force were given  
By custom long observed, and precedent  
Of evil into worsen evil led.

This flood of vice, through many ages dammed,  
In ours has burst its bounds and overflowed. 430  
By this dire age we're fairly overwhelmed—  
An age when crime sits regnant on the throne,  
Impiety stalks raging, unrestrained;  
Foul lust, with all unbridled power, is queen,  
And luxury long since with greedy hands

Has snatched the boundless riches of the world,  
That she with equal greed may squander them. 435

[Enter Nero, followed by a Prefect.]

But see, with frenzied step and savage mien,  
The prince approaches. How I fear his will.

*Nero* [to Prefect]: Speed my commands: send forth a messenger  
Who straight shall bring me here the severed heads  
Of Plautus and of Sulla.

*Prefect*: Good, my lord;  
Without delay I'll speed me to the camp.

[Exit.]

*Seneca*: One should not rashly judge against his friends. 440

*Nero*: Let him be just whose heart is free from fear.

*Seneca*: But mercy is a sovereign cure for fear.

*Nero*: A ruler's part is to destroy his foes.

*Seneca*: A ruler's better part, to save his friends.

*Nero*: A mild old man's advice is fit for boys. 445

*Seneca*: Still more does hot young manhood need the  
rein—

*Nero*: I deem that at this age we're wise enough.

*Seneca*: That on thy deed the heavenly gods may smile.

*Nero*: Thou fool, shall I fear gods myself can make?

*Seneca*: Fear this the more, that so great power is thine. 450

*Nero*: My royal fortune grants all things to me.

*Seneca*: But trust her cautiously; she may deceive.

*Nero*: A fool is he who does not what he may.

*Seneca*: To do, not what he may, but ought, wins praise.

*Nero*: The crowd spurns sluggish men. 455

*Seneca:* The hated, slays.

*Nero:* Yet swords protect a prince.

*Seneca:* Still better, faith.

*Nero:* A Caesar should be feared.

*Seneca:* And more be loved.

*Nero:* But men must fear.

*Seneca:* Enforced commands are hard.

*Nero:* Let them obey our laws.

*Seneca:* Make better laws—

*Nero:* I'll be the judge.

460

*Seneca:* Which all men may approve.

*Nero:* The sword shall force respect.

*Seneca:* May heaven forbid!

*Nero:* Shall I then tamely let them seek my blood,

That suddenly despised and unavenged,

I may be taken off? Though exiled far,

The stubborn spirits are not broken yet

Of Plautus and of Sulla. Still their rage

Persistent spurs their friends to seek my death;

465

For still have they the people's love in Rome,

Which ever nourishes the exile's hopes.

Then let the sword remove my enemies;

My hateful wife shall die, and follow him,

470

That brother whom she loves. The high must fall.

*Seneca:* How fair a thing it is to be the first

Among great men, to think for fatherland,

To spare the weak, to hold the hand of power

From deeds of blood, to give wrath time to think,

Give rest to a weary world, peace to the age.

This is the noblest part; by this high path

475

Is heaven sought. So did Augustus first,

The father of his country, gain the stars

The father of his country, gain the stars,  
 And as a god is worshiped at the shrines.  
 Yet he was long by adverse fortune tossed  
 On land and sea, in battle's deadly chance,  
 Until his father's foes he recompensed. 480  
 But fortune hath to thee in peaceful guise  
 Bent her divinity; with unstained hand  
 Hath she the reins of government bestowed,  
 And given world-dominion to thy nod.  
 Sour hate is overcome, and in its stead  
 Is filial harmony; the senate, knights, 485  
 All orders yield obedience to thy will;  
 For in the fathers' judgment and the prayers  
 Of humbler folk, thou art the arbiter  
 Of peace, the god of human destinies,  
 Ordained to rule the world by right divine.  
 Thy country's father thou. This sacred name  
 Doth suppliant Rome beseech thee to preserve, 490  
 And doth commend her citizens to thee.

*Nero:* It is the gift of heaven that haughty Rome,  
 Her people, and her senate bow to me,  
 And that my terror doth extort those prayers  
 And servile words from their unwilling lips.  
 To save the citizens! seditious men,  
 Who ever 'gainst their land and prince conspire,  
 Puffed up with pride of race—sheer madness 495  
 that,  
 When all my enemies one word of mine  
 Can doom to death. Base Brutus raised his hand  
 To slay that prince from whom he had his all;  
 And he, who never 'mid the shock of arms  
 Had been overcome, the world's great conqueror,  
 Who trod, a very Jove, the lofty paths 500  
 Of honor, he was slain by impious hands—  
 Of *citizens!* What streams of blood hath Rome,  
 So often rent by civil strife, beheld!  
 That very saint of thine, Augustus' self,  
 Who, as thou said'st but now, did merit heaven 505

WHO, AS THOU SAID ST OUT NOW, DID MEET HEAVEN  
By piety—how many noble men  
Did he destroy, in lusty youth, in age,  
At home, abroad, when, spurred by mortal fear,  
They fled their household gods and that fell sword  
Of the Triumvirate, consigned to death  
Upon those mindful tablets' fatal lists.  
The grieving parents saw their severed heads  
Upon the rostra set, but dared not weep 510  
Their hapless sons; the forum reeked with blood,  
And gore down all those rotting faces dripped.  
Nor this the end of slaughter and of death:  
Long did the plains of grim Philippi feed 515  
The ravenous birds and prowling beasts of prey;  
While ships and men, in deadly conflict met,  
Beneath Sicilia's waters were engulfed.  
The whole world trembled with the shock of arms;  
And now, when all was lost, with fleeing ships, 520  
That mighty leader sought the distant Nile,  
Doomed soon himself to perish there. And thus,  
Once more incestuous Egypt drank the blood  
Of Rome's great captains. Now his flitting shade  
Is hovering there; and there is civil strife,  
So long and impious, at last interred.  
Now did the weary victor sheathe his sword,  
All blunted with the savage blows he gave, 525  
And held his empire with the rein of fear.  
He lived in safety 'neath the ample shield  
Of loyal guards; and when his end was come,  
The pious mandate of his son proclaimed  
Him god, and at the temples' sacred shrines  
Was he adored. So shall the stars expect  
My godhead too, if first I seize and slay 530  
With sword relentless all who bear me hate,  
And on a worthy offspring found my house.

*Seneca:* But she will fill thy house with noble sons,  
That heaven-born glory of the Claudian stock,  
Who by the will of fate was wed to thee

who by the will of fate was wed to thee,  
As Juno to her brother Jove was given.

535

*Nero:* A child of hers would stain my noble line,  
For she herself was of a harlot born;  
And more—her heart was never linked to me.

*Seneca:* In tender years is faith not manifest,  
When love, by shame o'ercome, conceals its fires.

*Nero:* This I myself long trusted, but in vain,  
Though she was clearly of unloving heart,  
And every look betrayed her hate of me.  
At length, in angry grief, I sought revenge;  
And I have now a worthy wife obtained,  
In race and beauty blessed, before whose charms  
Minerva, Venus, Juno—all would bow.

540

545

*Seneca:* But honor, wifely faith, and modesty—  
These should the husband seek, for these alone,  
The priceless treasures of the heart and soul,  
Remain perpetual; but beauty's flower  
Doth fade and languish with each passing day.

550

*Nero:* On her has heaven all its charms bestowed,  
And fate has given her from her birth to me.

*Seneca:* But love will fail; do not too rashly trust.

*Nero:* Shall he give way, that tyrant of the skies,  
Whom Jove, the Thunderer, cannot remove,  
Who lords it over savage seas, the realms  
Of gloomy Dis, and draws the gods to earth?

555

*Seneca:* 'Tis by our human error that we paint  
Love as a god, wingéd, implacable,  
And arm his sacred hands with darts and bow,  
Assign him blazing torches, count him son  
Of fostering Venus and of Vulcan. Nay,  
But love is of the heart's compelling power,  
A fond and cozening passion of the soul;  
Of hot youth is it born, and in the lap  
Of ease and luxury 'midst fortune's joys

560



Of ease and luxury, must fortune's joys,  
Is fostered. But it sickens straight and dies  
When you no longer feed and fondle it.

565

*Nero:* I deem the primal source of life is this,  
The joy of love; and it can never die,  
Since by sweet love, which soothes e'en savage breasts,  
The human race is evermore renewed.  
This god shall bear for me the wedding torch,  
And join me with Poppaea in his bonds.

570

*Seneca:* The people's grief could scarce endure to see  
That marriage, nor would piety permit.

*Nero:* Shall I alone avoid what all may do?

*Seneca:* The state from loftiest souls expects the best.

575

*Nero:* I fain would see if, broken by my power,  
This rashly cherished favor will not yield.

*Seneca:* 'Tis better calmly to obey the state.

*Nero:* Ill fares the state, when commons govern kings.

*Seneca:* They justly chafe who pray without avail.

580

*Nero:* When prayers do not avail, should force be  
sought?

*Seneca:* Rebuffs are hard.

*Nero:* 'Tis wrong to force a prince.

*Seneca:* He should give way.

*Nero:* Then rumor counts him forced.

*Seneca:* Rumor's an empty thing.

*Nero:* But harmful too.

*Seneca:* She fears the strong.

585

*Nero:* But none the less maligns.

*Seneca:* She soon can be o'ercome. But let the youth,  
The faith and chastity of this thy wife,  
The merits of her sainted sire prevail

THE MERITS OF HER SAINTED ONE prevail  
To turn thee from thy will.

*Nero:* Have done at last,  
For wearisome has thy insistence grown;  
One still may do what Seneca comdemns.  
And I myself have now too long delayed  
The people's prayers for offspring to the throne. 590  
Tomorrow's morn her wedding day shall prove,  
Who bears within her womb my pledge of love.

[*Exeunt.*]

### ACT III

*Ghost of Agrippina [bearing a flaming torch]:* Through cloven earth from  
Tartarus I come,  
To bring in bloody hands this torch of hell  
To light these curséd rites; with such dire flames  
Let this Poppaea wed my son, which soon 595  
His mother's grief and vengeful hand shall turn  
To funeral fires. And ever 'mid the shades  
My impious murder in my memory dwells,  
A heavy weight upon my grieving soul  
Still unavenged; for, Oh, ingratitude  
He gave me in return for all my gifts,  
E'en for the gift of empire did he give 600  
A murderous ship designed to work my death.  
I would have wept my comrades' plight, and more,  
My son's most cruel deed: no time for tears  
Was given, but even higher did he heap  
His sum of crime. Though I escaped the sea, 605  
I felt the keen sword's thrust, and, with my blood  
The very gods defiling, poured my soul  
In anguish forth. But even yet his hate  
Was not appeased. Against my very name  
The tyrant raged; my merits he obscured;  
My statues, my inscriptions, honors—all, 610

On pain of death he bade to be destroyed  
Throughout the world—that world my hapless love,  
To my own direful punishment, had given  
To be by him, an untried boy, controlled.  
And now my murdered husband's angry ghost  
Shakes vengeful torches in my guilty face,  
Insistent, threat'ning; blames his death on me, 615  
His murdered son, and loud demands that now  
The guilty cause be given up. Have done:  
He shall be given, and that right speedily.  
Avenging furies for his impious head  
Are planning even now a worthy fate:  
Base flight and blows, and fearful sufferings, 620  
By which the raging thirst of Tantalus  
He shall surpass; the cruel, endless toil  
Of Sisyphus; the pain that Tityus feels,  
And the dread, racking anguish of the wheel  
On which Ixion's whirling limbs are stretched.  
Let gold and marble deck his palace walls;  
Let arméd guards protect him; let the world  
Be beggared that its treasures vast may flow 625  
Into his lap; let suppliant Parthians bend  
To kiss his hands, and bring rich offerings:  
The day and hour will come when for his crimes  
His guilty soul shall full atonement make,  
When to his enemies he shall be given, 630  
Deserted and destroyed and stripped of all.  
Oh, to what end my labors and my prayers?  
Why did thy frenzied madness, O my son,  
And fate impel thee to such depths of crime  
That e'en thy mother's wrath, whom thou didst slay,  
Is all too small to match her sufferings? 635  
Oh, would that, ere I brought thee forth to light,  
And suckled thee, my vitals had been rent  
By savage beasts! Then senseless, innocent,  
And mine wouldst thou have perished; joined to me  
Wouldst thou forever see the quiet seats  
Of this abode of souls. thy mighty sire. 640

And grandsires too, those men of glorious name,  
Whom now perpetual shame and grief await  
Because of thee, thou monster, and of me.  
But why delay in hell to hide my face,  
Since I have proved a curse to all my race?

645

[*Vanishes.*]

*Octavia* [to the Chorus in deprecation of their grief because of her

*divorce*]: Restrain your tears; put on a face of joy,  
As on a festal day, lest this your love  
And care for me should stir the royal wrath,  
And I be cause of suffering to you.

650

This wound is not the first my heart has felt;  
Far worse have I endured; but all shall end,  
Perchance in death, before this day is done.

No more upon my brutal husband's face  
Shall I be forced to look; that hateful couch,  
Long since consigned to slavish uses, base,  
I shall behold no more.

655

For now Augustus' sister shall I be,  
And not his wife. But Oh, be far from me  
All cruel punishments and fear of death.

660

Poor, foolish girl! and canst thou hope for this?  
Bethink thee of his former sins—and hope.

Nay, he has spared thy wretched life till now,  
That thou mayst at his marriage altars fall.

But why so often turn thy streaming eyes  
Upon thy home? Now speed thy steps away,  
And leave this bloody prince's hall for aye.

665

*Chorus*: Now dawns at last the day we long have feared

And talked of. Lo, our Claudia, driven forth

670

By cruel Nero's threats, leaves that abode  
Which even now Poppaea calls her own;

While we must sit and grieve with sluggish woe,  
By heavy fear oppressed.

675

Where is that Roman people's manhood now

where is that Roman people's mamboos now,  
Which once the pride of mighty leaders crushed,  
Gave righteous laws to an unconquered land,  
Gave powers at will to worthy citizens,  
Made peace and war, fierce nations overcame, 680  
And held in dungeons dark their captive kings?  
Behold, on every side our eyes are grieved  
By this Poppaea's gleaming statues joined  
With Nero's images—a shameful sight.  
Come, overturn them with indignant hands, 685  
Too like in feature to her living face.  
And her we'll drag from off that royal couch;  
And then, with flaming brand and deadly sword,  
Attack the princely palace of her lord.

#### ACT IV

*Nurse [to Poppaea, who appears, distraught, coming out of her chamber]:*

Why dost thou from thy husband's chamber come,  
Dear child, with hurried step and troubled face? 690  
Why dost thou seek a lonely place to weep?  
For surely has the day we long have sought  
With prayers and promised victims come at last.  
Thou hast thy Caesar, firmly joined to thee  
By ties of marriage, whom thy beauty won,  
Whom Venus gave to thee in bonds of love, 695  
Though Seneca despised and flouted her.  
How beautiful, upon the banquet couch  
Reclining in the palace, didst thou seem!  
The senate viewed thy beauty in amaze  
When thou didst offer incense to the gods, 700  
And sprinkle wine upon the sacred shrines,  
Thy head the while with gauzy purple veiled.  
And close beside thee was thy lord himself;  
Amid the favoring plaudits of the crowd  
He walked majestic, in his look and mien  
Proclaiming all his pride and joy in thee.

So did the noble Peleus lead his bride 705  
Emerging from the ocean's snowy foam,  
Whose wedding feast the heavenly gods adorned,  
With equal joy the sea divinities.  
What sudden cause has clouded o'er thy face?  
Tell me, what mean thy pallor and thy tears! 710

*Poppaea:* Dear nurse, this night I had a dreadful dream;  
And even now, as I remember it,  
My mind is troubled and my senses fail.  
For when the joyful day had sunk to rest,  
And in the darkened sky the stars appeared, 715  
I lay asleep within my Nero's arms.  
But that sweet sleep I could not long enjoy;  
For suddenly a grieving crowd appeared  
To throng my chamber—Roman matrons they,  
With hair disheveled and loud cries of woe. 720  
Then 'midst the oft-repeated, strident blasts  
Of trumpets, there appeared my husband's mother,  
And shook before my face with threat'ning mien  
A bloody torch. Compelled by present fear,  
I followed her; when suddenly the earth 725  
Seemed rent asunder to its lowest depths.  
Headlong to these I plunged, and even there  
In wonder I beheld my wedding couch,  
Whereon I sank in utter weariness.  
Then with a throng of followers I saw  
My son and former husband drawing near.  
Straightway Crispinus hastened to my arms, 730  
And on my lips his eager kisses fell:  
When suddenly within that chamber burst  
My lord the king with frantic, hurrying steps,  
And plunged his sword into that other's throat.  
A mighty terror siezed me, and at last  
It roused me from my sleep. I started up  
With trembling limbs and wildly beating heart. 735  
Long was I speechless from that haunting fear,  
Until thy fond affection gave me tongue.

Why do the ghosts of hades threaten me?  
Or why did I behold my husband's blood?

*Nurse:* All things which occupy the waking<sup>[57]</sup> mind, 740  
Some subtle power, swift working, weaves again  
Into our web of dreams. Small wonder then,  
Thy sleeping thoughts were filled with marriage beds  
And husbands, when thy newly mated lord  
Held thee in his embrace. Does it seem strange  
That thou shouldst dream tonight of sounds of woe, 745  
Of breasts hard beaten and of streaming hair?  
Octavia's departure did they mourn  
Within her brother's and her father's house.  
The torch which thou didst follow, borne aloft  
By Agrippina's hand, is but a sign  
That hate shall win for thee a mighty name.  
Thy marriage couch, in realms infernal seen, 750  
Portends a lasting state of wedded joy.  
Since in Crispinus' neck the sword was sheathed,  
Believe that no more wars thy lord shall wage,  
But hide his sword within the breast of peace.  
Take heart again, recall thy joys, I pray,  
Throw off thy fears, and to thy couch return. 755

*Poppaea:* Nay, rather will I seek the sacred shrines,  
And there make sacrifice unto the gods,  
That they avert these threats of night and sleep,  
And turn my terrors all upon my foes.  
Do thou pray for me and the gods implore 760  
That in this happy state I may endure.

[*Exeunt Poppaea and Nurse.*]

*Chorus* [*of Roman women in sympathy with Poppaea*]: If babbling rumor's  
tales of Jove,  
His secret joys in mortal love,  
Are true, he once, in plumage dressed,  
Was to the lovely Leda pressed;  
And as a savage bull he bore 765

Europa from her native shore:  
But should he once thy form, Poppaea, see,  
He would leave his shining stars to dwell with thee.  
For thou than Leda many fold  
Art fairer, or that maid of old 770  
Whom Jove embraced in showers of gold.  
Let Sparta boast her lovely dame,  
Who, as his prize, to Paris came:  
Though Helen's beauty drove the world to arms,  
She still must yield to our Poppaea's charms. 775

[Enter Messenger.]

But who comes here with hurried step and wild?  
What tidings bears he in his heaving breast?

*Messenger:* Whoever guards our noble prince's house,  
Let him defend it from the people's rage. 780  
Behold, the prefects lead their men in haste,  
To save the city from the furious mob  
Whose reckless passion grows, unchecked by fear.

*Chorus:* What is the madness that inflames their hearts? 785

*Messenger:* The people for their loved Octavia  
Are wild with rage and grief; and now in throngs  
Are rushing forth in mood for any deed.

*Chorus:* What are they bent to do, or with what plan?

*Messenger:* To give Octavia back her father's house,  
Her brother's bed, and her due share of empire. 790

*Chorus:* But these Poppaea holds as Nero's wife.

*Messenger:* 'Tis even she 'gainst whom the people's rage  
Burns most persistent, and to reckless deeds  
Is driven headlong on. Whate'er they see,  
Of noble marble wrought, or gleaming bronze,  
The hated image of Poppaea's face,  
They cast it to the earth with wanton hands 795  
And crushing bars. The shattered parts they drag  
Along the streets, and with insulting heel



Deep in the filthy mud they trample them.  
These savage deeds are mingled with such words  
As I should fear to utter in your ears. 800  
Soon will they hedge the royal house with flames,  
Unless the prince his new-made wife give up  
To sate the people's wrath, and then restore  
To noble Claudia her father's house.  
That he himself may know these threatened deeds,  
I'll haste to tell him as the prefect bade. 805

[*Exit.*]

*Chorus:* Why vainly strive against the powers above?  
For Cupid's weapons are invincible.  
Your puny fires by those fierce flames he'll dim  
By which he oft has quenched the bolts of Jove,  
And brought the Thunderer captive from the sky. 810  
For this offense you shall dire forfeit pay,  
E'en with your blood; for hot of wrath is he,  
And may not be o'ercome. At his command  
Did fierce Achilles strike the peaceful lyre;  
He forced the Greeks and Agamemnon proud 815  
To do his will. Illustrious cities, too,  
And Priam's realm he utterly destroyed.  
And now my mind in fear awaits to see  
What Cupid's cruel penalties will be.

#### FOOTNOTES:

[57] Reading, *intentus*.

## ACT V

*Nero* [*seated in a room of his palace*]: Too slow my soldiers' hands, too  
 mild my wrath,  
 When citizens have dared such crimes as these. 820  
 Those torches that they kindled 'gainst their prince  
 Their blood shall quench; and Rome, who bore such men,  
 Shall be bespattered with her people's gore.  
 Yet death is far too light a punishment  
 For such atrocities; this impious mob 825  
 Shall suffer worse than death. But she, my wife  
 And sister, whom I hate with deadly fear,  
 For whose sole sake the people rage at me,  
 Shall give her life at last to sate my grief,  
 And quench my anger in her flowing blood.  
 Soon shall my flames enwrap the city's walls, 830  
 And in the ruins of her falling homes  
 The people shall be buried; squalid want,  
 Dire hunger, grief-all these shall they endure.  
 Too fat upon the blessings of our age  
 Has this vile mob become, and know not how  
 To bear our clemency and relish peace; 835  
 But, rash and reckless, are they ever borne  
 By shifting tides of passion to their hurt.  
 They must be held in check by suffering,  
 Be ever pressed beneath the heavy yoke,  
 Lest once again they dare assail the throne,  
 And to the august features of my wife 840  
 Dare lift again their vulgar eyes. O'erawed  
 By fear of punishment must they be taught  
 To yield obedience to their prince's nod.  
 But here I see the man whose loyalty  
 Has made him captain of my royal guards. 845

[*Enter Prefect.*]

*Prefect*: The people's rage by slaughter of a few,  
 Who most resistance made is overcome.

M... T... W...

*Nero:* Is that enough? Was that my word to thee?  
"Is overcome?" Where then is my revenge?

*Prefect:* The guilty leaders of the mob are dead.

850

*Nero:* Nay, but the mob itself, which dared to assail  
My house with flames, to dictate laws to me,  
To drag my noble wife from off my bed,  
And with unhallowed hands and angry threats  
To affront her majesty—are they unscathed?

855

*Prefect:* Shall angry grief decide their punishment?

*Nero:* It shall—whose fame no future age shall dim.

*Prefect:* Which neither wrath nor fear shall moderate?[\[58\]](#)

*Nero:* She first shall feel my wrath who merits it.

*Prefect:* Tell whom thou mean'st. My hand shall spare her not.

860

*Nero:* My wrath demands my guilty sister's death.

*Prefect:* Benumbing horror holds me in its grasp.

*Nero:* Wilt not obey my word?

*Prefect:* Why question that?

*Nero:* Because thou spar'st my foe.

*Prefect:* A woman, foe?

*Nero:* If she be criminal.

865

*Prefect:* But what her crime?

*Nero:* The people's rage.

*Prefect:* But who can check their rage?

*Nero:* The one who fanned its flame.

*Prefect:* But who that one?

*Nero:* A woman she, to whom an evil heart  
Hath nature given, a soul to fraud inclined.

*Prefect:* But not the power to act.

870

*Nero:* That she may be  
Without the power to act, that present fear  
May break her strength, let punishment at once,  
Too long delayed, crush out her guilty life.  
Have done at once with arguments and prayers,  
And do my royal bidding: let her sail  
To some far distant shore and there be slain,  
That thus at last my fears may be at rest. 875

[*Exeunt.*]

*Chorus [attached to Octavia]:* Oh, dire and deadly has the people's love  
To many proved, which fills their swelling sails  
With favoring breeze, and bears them out to sea;  
But soon its vigor languishes and dies,  
And leaves them to the mercy of the deep. 880  
The wretched mother of the Gracchi wept  
Her murdered sons, who, though of noble blood,  
Far famed for eloquence and piety,  
Stout-hearted, learned in defense of law, 885  
Were brought to ruin by the people's love  
And popular renown. And Livius, thee  
To equal fate did fickle fortune give,  
Who found no safety in thy lictors' rods,  
No refuge in thy home. But grief forbids  
To tell more instances. This hapless girl,  
To whom but now the citizens decreed 890  
The restoration of her fatherland,  
Her home, her brother's couch, is dragged away  
In tears and misery to punishment,  
With citizens consenting to her death!  
Oh, blessed poverty, content to hide 895  
Beneath the refuge of a lowly roof!  
For lofty homes, to fame and fortune known,  
By storms are blasted and by fate o'erthrown!

[*Enter Octavia in the custody of the palace guards, who are dragging her roughly out into the street.*]

*Octavia:* Oh, whither do ye hurry me? What fate  
Has that vile tyrant or his queen ordained? 900  
Does she, subdued and softened by my woes,  
Grant me to live in exile? Or, if not,  
If she intends to crown my sufferings  
With death, why does her savage heart begrudge  
That I should die at home? But now, alas, 905  
I can no longer hope for life; behold,  
My brother's bark, within whose treacherous hold  
His mother once was borne; and now for me,  
Poor wretch, his slighted sister-wife, it waits.  
No more has right a place upon the earth, 910  
Nor heavenly gods. Grim Fury reigns supreme.  
Oh, who can fitly weep my evil plight?  
What nightingale has tongue to sing my woes?  
Would that the fates would grant her wings to me! 915  
Then would I speed away on pinions swift,  
And leave my grievous troubles far behind,  
Leave these unholy haunts of savage men.  
There, all alone, within some forest wide, 920  
Among the swaying branches would I sit,  
And let my grieving spirit weep its fill.

*Chorus:* The race of men is by the fates controlled,  
And none may hope to make his own secure; 925  
And o'er the ever-shifting ways of life  
The day which most we fear shall come to us.  
But comfort now thy heart with thought of those  
Of thine own house who suffered ill, and ask:  
In what has fortune been more harsh to thee? 930  
Thee first I name, Agrippa's noble child,  
The famous mother of so many sons,  
Great Caesar's wife, whose name throughout the world  
In flaming glory shone, whose teeming womb 935  
Brought forth so many hostages of peace:  
E'en thee did exile wait, and cruel chains,  
Blows, bitter anguish, and at last a death  
Of lingering agony. And Livia, thou 940

Though fortunate in husband and in sons,  
Didst walk the way of sin—and punishment.  
And Julia, too, endured her mother's fate;  
For, though no evil deed was charged to her,  
She fell a victim to the sword at last. 945  
What could not once thy mighty mother do  
Who ruled supreme the house of Claudius,  
By him beloved, and in her son secure?  
Yet she at last was subject to a slave,  
And fell beneath a brutal soldier's sword. 950  
For what exalted heights of royalty  
Might not our Nero's mother once have hoped?  
Mishandled first by vulgar sailors' hands,  
Then slain and mangled by the bungling sword, 955  
She lay the victim of her cruel son.

*Octavia:* Me, too, the tyrant to the world of shades  
Is sending. Why delay? Then speed my death,  
For fate hath made me subject to your power. 960  
I pray the heavenly gods—what wouldst thou, fool?  
Pray not to gods who show their scorn of thee.  
But, O ye gods of hell, ye furies dire,  
Who work your vengeance on the crimes of men, 965  
And thou, my father's restless spirit, come  
And bring this tyrant fitting punishment.

[*To her guards.*]

The death you threaten has no terrors now  
For me. Go, set your ship in readiness,  
Unfurl your sails, and let your pilot seek 970  
The barren shores of Pandataria.

[*Exit Octavia with guards.*]

*Chorus:* Ye gentle breezes and ye zephyrs mild,  
Which once from savage Dian's altar bore  
Atrides' daughter in a cloud concealed, 975  
This child of ours, Octavia too, we pray,  
Bear far away from these too cruel woes,  
And set her in the fane of Trivia.

For Aulis is more merciful than Rome,  
The savage Taurian land more mild than this:  
There hapless strangers to their gods they feed,  
But Rome delights to see her children bleed.

980

**FOOTNOTES:**

[58] Reading, *quam temperet non ira*, etc.

# **COMPARATIVE ANALYSES**



## COMPARATIVE ANALYSES OF SENECA'S TRAGEDIES AND THE CORRESPONDING GREEK DRAMAS

The *Phoenissae*, if, indeed, these fragments are to be considered as belonging to one play, has no direct correspondent in Greek drama; although, in the general situations and in some details, it is similar to parts of three plays: *The Seven Against Thebes* of Aeschylus, the *Oedipus at Colonus* of Sophocles, and the *Phoenician Damsels* of Euripides. The *Thyestes* is without a parallel in extant Greek drama; and the *Octavia*, of course, stands alone.

The other seven tragedies attributed by tradition to Seneca, together with their Greek correspondents, are here presented in comparative analyses in order that the reader may be enabled easily to compare, at least so far as subject-matter and dramatic structure are concerned, the Roman tragedies and their Greek originals.

Although the traditional division into acts is followed in the English version of the several plays, it seems wise in these comparisons to give the more minute division into prologue, episodes, and choral interludes.

### **THE *OEDIPUS* OF SOPHOCLES, AND THE *OEDIPUS* OF SENECA**

*Prologue.*—Dialogue between Oedipus and the priest of Zeus, who discloses the present plague-smitten condition of the people, and prays the king for aid since he is so wise. The fatherly regard of Oedipus for his people, in that he has already sent a messenger to ask the aid of the oracle, is portrayed.

The answer of the oracle: first reference to an unexpiated sin. Short question and answer between Oedipus and Creon, the messenger, bringing out the facts of Laius' death.

The irony of fate: Oedipus proposes, partly in his own interest, to seek out the murderer. As yet there is no foreshadowing of evil in the king's mind. At the end of the prologue Oedipus remains alone upon the stage.

*Prologue.*—In the early morning Oedipus is seen lamenting the plague-smitten condition of his people. He narrates how he had fled from Corinth to avoid the fulfilment of a dreadful oracle, that he should kill his father and wed his mother. Even here he cannot feel safe, but still fears some dreadful fate that seems threatening. He describes with minute detail the terrors of the pestilence which has smitten man and beast and even the vegetable world. He prays for death that he may not survive his stricken people. Jocasta remonstrates with him for his despair and reminds him that it is a king's duty to bear reverses with cheerfulness.

*Parode, or chorus entry.*—The chorus enlarges upon the distresses of the city, and appeals to the gods for aid.

*Parode, or chorus entry.*—The chorus appeals to Bacchus, relating how the descendants of his old Theban comrades are perishing. It enlarges upon the distresses of the city, and deplores the violence of the plague. The sufferings of the people are described in minute detail.

*First episode.*—The curse of Oedipus upon the unknown murderer is pronounced, and the charge is made by Tiresias (who long refuses to speak but is forced to do so by Oedipus), "Thou art the man." Oedipus' explanation of Tiresias' charge; it is a plot between the latter and Creon. The facts of Oedipus' birth are hinted at. Tiresias prophesies the after-life of the king, with the name but thinly veiled.

*First episode.*—Creon, returned from the consultation of the oracle at Delphi, announces that the plague is caused by the

*unatoned murder of Laius, former king of Thebes. Oedipus anxiously inquires who the murderer is, but is told that this is still a mystery. Creon describes the scene at Delphi in the giving of the oracle. Oedipus declares himself eager to hunt out the murderer and inquires why the matter has been left so long uninvestigated. He is told that the terrors of the Sphinx had driven all other thoughts out of the people's mind.*

*The irony of fate: Oedipus pronounces a dreadful curse upon the murderer of Laius and vows not to rest until he finds him. He inquires where the murder took place and how. At this moment the blind old Tiresias enters, led by his daughter, Manto. Tiresias tries by the arts of divination (which are described with the greatest elaboration) to ascertain the name of the murderer, but without avail; and says that recourse must be had to necromancy, or the raising of the dead.*

*First choral interlude.*—The chorus reflects upon the oracle and the certain discovery of the guilty one. Ideal picture of the flight of the murderer. While troubled by the charge of Tiresias, the chorus still refuses to give it credence. After all, the seer is only a man and liable to be mistaken. Oedipus has shown himself a wiser man by solving the riddle of the Sphinx.

*First choral interlude.*—*The chorus sings a dithyrambic strain in praise of the wonderful works of Bacchus. No reference is made to the tragedy which is in progress.*

*Second episode.*—Quarrel of Oedipus and Creon based upon the charges of the former. Oedipus' argument: The deed was done long ago, and Tiresias, though then also a seer, made no charge. Now, when forced by the recent oracle, the seer comes forward with Creon. This looks like a conspiracy. Creon pleads for a fair and complete investigation. Jocasta tries to reconcile the two, but in vain, and Creon is driven out. Jocasta relates the circumstances of Laius' death, which tally in all details but one with the death of one slain by Oedipus. A terrible conclusion begins to dawn upon

the king. He tells his queen the story of his life and the dreadful oracle, the fear of the fulfilment of which drove him from Corinth. At the end of this episode the death of Laius at the hands of Oedipus is all but proved, but the relation between the two is not yet hinted at.

*Second episode.*—Creon returns from the rites of necromancy in which he had accompanied Tiresias, and strives to avoid telling the result of the investigation to the king. Being at last forced to reveal all that he knows, he describes with great vividness of detail how Tiresias has summoned up the spirits of the dead, and among them Laius. The latter declares that Oedipus himself is the murderer, having slain his father and married his mother. Oedipus, strong in the belief that Polybus and Merope of Corinth are his parents, denies the charge, and after a hot dispute orders Creon to be cast into prison, on suspicion of a conspiracy with Tiresias to deprive Oedipus of the scepter.

*Second choral interlude.*—Prayer for a life in accordance with the will of heaven. Under the shadow of impending ill, the chorus seeks the aid of God, meditates upon the doom of the unrighteous, and considers the seeming fallibility of the oracle.

*Second choral interlude.*—The chorus refuses to believe the charge against Oedipus, but lays the blame of all these ills upon the evil fate of Thebes which has pursued the Thebans from the first.

*Third episode.*—A messenger from Corinth brings the news of Polybus' death, the supposed father of Oedipus. The irony of fate: the king is lifted up with joy that now the oracle cannot be fulfilled that he should kill his own father. Step by step the details of the king's infancy come out, which reveal the awful truth to Jocasta. To Oedipus the only result of the present revelation is that he is probably base-born. Jocasta tries to deter Oedipus from further investigation.

*Third episode.*—Oedipus, remembering that he had slain a man on his way to Thebes, questions Jocasta more closely as to the circumstances of Laius' death, and finding these circumstances to tally with his own experience, is convinced that he was indeed the slayer of Laius.

*At this point a messenger from Corinth, an old man, announces to Oedipus the death of Polybus, the king of Corinth, and the supposed father of Oedipus. The latter is summoned to the empty throne of Corinth. A quick succession of questions and answers brings to light the fact that Oedipus is not the child of Polybus and Merope, but that the messenger himself had given him when an infant to the Corinthian pair. This announcement removes the chief support of Oedipus against the charges of Tiresias, and now he rushes blindly on to know the rest of the fatal truth. The shepherd is summoned who had given the baby to the old Corinthian. He strives to avoid answering, but, driven on by the threats of Oedipus, he at last states that he had received the child from the royal household of Thebes, and that it was in fact the son of Jocasta. At this last and awful disclosure, Oedipus goes off the stage in a fit of raving madness.*

*Strophe and antistrophe.*—A partial interlude, while they wait for the shepherd who is to furnish the last link in the chain of evidence. The chorus conjectures as to the wonderful birth of Oedipus; possibly his father is Pan, or Apollo, or Mercury, or Bacchus.

The shepherd, arriving, also seeks to keep the dreadful truth from the king, but a second time the passion of Oedipus forces the truth from an unwilling witness. At last the whole story comes out, and Oedipus realizes that he has slain his father and wed his mother.

*Third choral interlude.*—The utter nothingness of human life, judged by the fate of Oedipus, who above all men was successful, wise, and good. It

is inscrutable; why should such a fate come to him? The chorus laments the doom of the king as its own.

*Third choral interlude.—The chorus reflects upon the dangerous position of the man who is unduly exalted, and illustrates this principle by the case of Icarus.*

*Exode.*—The catastrophe in its final manifestations. A messenger describes the lamentations and suicide of Jocasta, the despair of Oedipus, and the wild mood in which he inflicts blindness upon himself. He comes upon the stage piteously wailing and groping his way. He prays for death or banishment at the hands of Creon, who is now king. He takes a tender farewell of his daughters and consigns them to Creon's care.

The play ends with the solemn warning of the chorus "to reckon no man happy till ye witness the closing day; until he pass the border which severs life from death, unscathed by sorrow."

*Exode.*—Although there is a short chorus interjected here (lines 980-97) on the inevitableness of fate, all the remainder of the play is really the exode, showing the catastrophe in its final manifestation. A messenger describes with horrible minuteness how Oedipus in his ravings has dug out his eyes. At this point Oedipus himself comes upon the stage, rejoicing in his blindness, since now he can never look upon his shame. And now Jocasta appears, having heard strange rumors. On learning the whole truth, she slays herself on the stage with Oedipus' sword. The play ends as the blind old king goes groping his way out into darkness and exile.

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## THE *MEDEA* OF EURIPIDES, AND THE *MEDEA* OF SENECA

*Prologue.*—The old nurse of Medea, alone upon the stage, laments that the Argo was ever framed and that Medea had ever fled from Colchis. Then had she never been here in Corinth an exile and now deserted even by her husband, Jason. In describing Medea's distracted condition, the nurse first voices the fear of that violence which forms the catastrophe of the play. Enter an old attendant with the two sons of Medea, who announces a new woe—that Creon, the king, has decreed the banishment of Medea and her children. The nurse repeats her warning note, and urges the attendant to keep the children out of the sight of their mother, who even now can be heard raving within, and vowing the destruction of her children and her husband. The attendant retires with the children.

*Prologue.*—*Medea, finding herself deserted by Jason, calls upon gods and furies to grant her vengeance. She prays for destruction to light upon her rival, and imprecates curses upon Jason. She thinks it monstrous that the sun can still hold on his way, and prays for power to subvert the whole course of nature. She finally realizes that she is impotent save as she has recourse to her old sorceries which she has long since laid aside, and resolves upon them as a means of revenge.*

*Parode, or chorus entry.*—The chorus of Corinthian women comes to the front of the palace to inquire the cause of Medea's cries, which they have heard, and to profess their attachment to her. From time to time Medea's voice can be heard from within as she prays for death and imprecates curses upon Jason. The nurse at the suggestion of the chorus undertakes to induce her mistress to come forth, that converse with her friends may soothe her grief. The nurse goes within, leaving the chorus alone upon the stage.

*Parode, or chorus entry.*—*A chorus of Corinthians chants an epithalamium for the nuptials of Jason and Creüsa. First, in Asclepiadean strains, they invoke the gods to be present and bless the nuptials. The strain then changes to quick, joyful Glyconics in praise of the surpassing beauty of the married pair. Changing back to Asclepiads, the chorus continues in extravagant praise of Jason and his bride, congratulates him*

*on his exchange from Medea to Creüsa, and finally, in six lines of hexameter, exults in the license of the hour.*

*First episode.*—Medea comes forth from the palace to explain to the chorus her position and unhappy condition. She deplores the lot of women in general, and especially in relation to marriage, and enlists the sympathy of the chorus in her attempt to secure some revenge for her wrongs. They confess the justice of her cause and promise to keep her secret.

Creon announces to Medea that she must leave his realm at once, for much he fears that she will take her revenge upon him and upon his house. She pleads for grace, and bewails her reputation for magic power; she assures the king that he has nothing to fear from her, and affects compliance with all that has taken place. Creon, while still protesting that she cannot be trusted, yields in so far that he grants her a single day's delay.

Medea tells the chorus that her recent compliance was only feigned, and openly announces her intention before the day is done of slaying Creon, his daughter, and Jason. She debates the various methods by which this may be accomplished, and decides, for her own greater safety, upon the help of magic.

*First episode.*—Hearing the epithalamium, Medea goes into a passion of rage. She recounts all that she has done for Jason, and exclaims against his ingratitude. Again, with shifting feelings she pleads Jason's cause to herself and strives to excuse him, blaming all upon Creon. Upon him she vows the direst vengeance. Meanwhile the nurse in vain urges prudence.

Creon now enters, manifesting in his words a fear of Medea, and bent upon her immediate banishment. Medea pleads her innocence, and begs to know the reason for her exile. She reviews at length her former regal estate and contrasts with this her present forlorn condition. She claims the credit for the preservation of all the Argonautic heroes. Upon this ground she claims that Jason is hers. She begs of Creon some small corner in his kingdom for her dwelling, but the king remains obdurate. She then prays for a single day's delay in which to



*say farewell to her children, who are to remain, the wards of the king. This prayer Creon reluctantly grants.*

*First choral interlude.*—The course of nature is subverted. No longer let woman alone have the reputation for falsehood; man's insincerity equals hers. In poetry the fickleness of both should be sung, just as in history it is seen. Though Medea, for her love of Jason, left her native land and braved all the terrors of the deep, she is now left all forsaken and alone. Verily truth and honor have departed from the earth.

*First choral interlude.*—*Apropos of Medea's reference to the Argonautic heroes the chorus sings of the dangers which those first voyagers upon the sea endured; how the natural bounds which the gods set to separate the lands have now been removed—and all this for gold and this barbarian woman. (The chorus is nowhere friendly to Medea, as in Euripides.) The ode ends with a prophecy of the time when all the earth shall be revealed, and there shall be no "Ultima Thule."*

*Second episode.*—Jason reproaches Medea for her intemperate speech against the king, which has resulted in her banishment, and shows her that he is still concerned for her interests. She retorts with reproaches because of his ingratitude, and proceeds to recount all that she had done for him and given up in his behalf. Jason replies that it was not through her help but that of Venus that he had escaped all the perils of the past, and reminds her of the advantages which she herself had gained by leaving her barbarous land for Greece. He even holds that his marriage into the royal family of Corinth is in her interest and that of her children, since by this means their common fortunes will be mended. He offers her from his new resources assistance for her exile, which she indignantly refuses, and Jason retires from her bitter taunts.

*Second episode.*—*Medea is rushing out to seek vengeance, while the nurse tries in vain to restrain her. The nurse soliloquizes, describing the wild frenzy of her mistress, and expressing grave fears for the result. Medea, not noticing the*

*nurse's presence, reflects upon the day that has been granted her by Creon, and vows that her terrible vengeance shall be commensurate with her sufferings. She rushes off the stage, while the nurse calls after her a last warning.*

*Jason now enters, lamenting the difficult position in which he finds himself. He asserts that it is for his children's sake that he has done all, and hopes to be able to persuade Medea herself to take this view. Medea comes back, and at sight of Jason her fury is still further inflamed. She announces her intended flight. But whither shall she flee? For his sake she has closed all lands against herself. In bitter sarcasm she accepts all these sufferings as her just punishment. Then in a flash of fury she recalls all her services to him and contrasts his ingratitude. She shifts suddenly to passionate entreaty, and prays him to pity her, to give back all that she gave up for him, if she must needs flee; she begs him to brave the wrath of Creon and flee with her, and promises him her protection as of old. In a long series of quick, short passages they shift from phase to phase of feeling, and finally Medea prays that in her flight she may have her children as her comrades. Jason's refusal shows how deeply he loves his sons, and here is suggested to Medea for the first time the method of her direst revenge. Jason now yields to her assumed penitence and grants her the custody of the children for this day alone. When Jason has withdrawn, she bids the nurse prepare the fatal robe which she proposes to send to her rival by the hands of her children.*

*Second choral interlude.*—The chorus prays to be delivered from the pangs of immoderate love and jealousy, from exile, and the ingratitude of friends.

*Second choral interlude.*—The chorus opens on the text, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned," and continues with a prayer for Jason's safety. It then recounts the subsequent history of the individual Argonauts, showing how almost all came to some untimely end. They might indeed be said to

*deserve this fate, for they volunteered to assist in that first impious voyage in quest of the golden fleece; but Jason should be spared the general doom, for the task had been imposed upon him by his usurping uncle, Pelias.*

*Third, episode.*—Aegeus, in Corinth by accident, recognizes Medea, and learns from her her present grievous condition and imminent exile. She begs that he receive her into his kingdom as a friend under his protection. This he promises with a mighty oath to do.

Medea, left alone with the chorus, explains to it still more in detail her plans. She will send her sons with gifts to the new bride, which, by their magic power, will destroy her and all who touch her. She adds that she will also slay her two sons, the more to injure Jason. The chorus, while protesting against this last proposal, offers no resistance.

*Third episode.*—*The nurse in a long monologue recites Medea's magic wonders of the past, and all her present preparations. Then Medea's voice is heard, and presently she comes upon the stage chanting her incantations. She summons up the gods of Tartara to aid her task; recounts all the wonders which her charms can work; describes her store of magic fires and other potent objects. Then breaking into quicker measure, as if filled with a fuller frenzy, she continues her incantations accompanied by wild cries and gestures. She finally dispatches her sons to Jason's bride with the robe she has anointed with her magic drugs and charged with her curses. She hastens out in the opposite direction.*

*Third choral interlude.*—The chorus, dwelling upon Medea's proposed place of refuge, sings the praises of Athens, sacred to the Muses. It contrasts with this holy city the dreadful deed which Medea intends, and again vainly strives to dissuade her.

*Third choral interlude.*—*The chorus notes and describes Medea's wild bearing, and prays for her speedy departure from their city.*

*Fourth episode.*—Medea, sending for Jason, with feigned humility reproaches herself for her former intemperate words to him, and begs only that he use his influence for the reprieve of their children from exile. To assist him in this, she proposes to send the children themselves, bearing a gorgeous robe of golden tissue (which she has anointed with magic poison) as a wedding present to the bride. Upon this errand Jason retires attended by his little sons.

*Fourth choral interlude.*—The chorus, with full knowledge of the fatal robe, pictures the delight of the bride at its reception, and laments her fearful doom.

*Fifth episode.*—This episode is in four parts.

The attendant returns with the children and announces to Medea that her gifts have prevailed for their reprieve. (The attendant retires.)

Medea contrasts the assured career of her children with her own hapless condition; then remembers her resolve and with softening heart laments their dreadful fate. She hastily sends them within the palace. Left alone, she again struggles between her mother-love and her resolve not to leave her children subject to the scorn of her foes. (She here leaves the stage to wait for tidings from the royal house.)

Then follows a monologue by the chorus leader discussing the advantages of childlessness. No reference is made to the passing events.

Medea returns just in time to meet a messenger who breathlessly announces the death of Creon and his daughter. At the request of Medea he gives a detailed account of the reception of the magic robe and crown, the bride's delight, and her sudden and awful death, in which her father also was involved. He urges Medea to fly at once. She announces her intention to do so as soon as she has slain her children; and then rushes into the house.

*Fifth choral interlude.*—This consists of a single strophe and antistrophe in which the chorus calls upon the gods to restrain Medea's mad act. Then are heard within the house the shrieks first of the two children, then of one, then silence, the chorus meanwhile wildly shouting to Medea to desist from her deadly work.

*The exode.*—Jason appears in search of Medea that he may avenge on her the death of the royal pair; but most he fears for his children. The chorus informs him that they are already slain within the palace by their mother's hand. He prepares to force an entrance into the house.

But now Medea appears in a chariot drawn by dragons. She defies Jason's power to harm her. Jason replies by reproaching her with all the murderous deeds of her life, which have culminated in this crowning deed of blood. She in turn reproaches him and his ingratitude as the cause of all. A storm of mutual imprecations follows, and Medea disappears with the bodies of her two sons, denying to Jason even the comfort of weeping over their remains.

*The exode.*—A messenger comes running in from the direction of the palace, and announces that the king and his daughter are dead. The eager questions of the chorus bring out the strange circumstances attending this catastrophe. Medea enters in time to hear that her magic has been successful, and ignoring the nurse's entreaties to flee at once, she becomes absorbed in her own reflections. And now in her words may be seen the inward struggle between maternal love and jealous hate as she nerves herself for the final act of vengeance. The purpose to kill her children grows upon her, resist it as she may, until in an ecstasy of madness, urged on by a vision of her murdered brother, she slays her first son; and then, bearing the corpse of one and leading the other by the hand, she mounts to the turret of her house. Here with a refinement of cruelty she slays the second son in Jason's sight, disregarding his abject prayers for the boy's life. Now a chariot drawn by dragons appears in the air. This Medea mounts and is borne away, while Jason shouts his impotent curses after her.

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**THE *HERCULES FURENS* OF EURIPIDES, AND THE  
*HERCULES FURENS* OF SENECA**

*Prologue.*—The old Amphitryon, before the altar of Jupiter, at the entrance of the house of Hercules in Thebes, relates how Hercules has gone to the lower world to bring thence to the realms of day the triple-headed Cerberus. Meanwhile, Lycus, taking advantage of the hero's absence, has slain king Creon and usurped his throne. The father, wife, and children of Hercules he has reduced to poverty, and holds them in durance here in Thebes, threatening to slay the sons,

Lest, when the boys attain maturer age,  
They should avenge their grandsire, Creon's, death.

Amphitryon condoles with Megara, and counsels with her how they may escape the dangers of their present lot.

*Prologue.*—*Juno complains that she is fairly driven out of heaven by her numerous rivals, mortal women who have been deified and set in the sky, either they or their offspring, by Jupiter. Especially is her wrath hot against Hercules, against whom she has waged fruitless war from his infancy until now. But he thrives on hardship, and scorns her opposition. She passes in review the hard tasks which she has set him, and all of which he has triumphantly performed. Already is he claiming a place in heaven. He can be conquered only by his own hand. Yes, this shall be turned against him, for a fury shall be summoned up from hell who shall fill his heart with madness; and in this madness shall he do deeds which shall make him long for death.*

*Parode, or chorus entry.*—The chorus of Theban elders, feeble, tottering old men, enters and bemoans the wretched fate that has befallen their city and the household of their prince.

*Parode, or chorus entry.*—*A vivid picture of the dawning day, when the stars and waning moon fade out before the rising sun; when Toil wakes up and resumes its daily cares; when through the fields the animals and birds are all astir with glad, new life.*

*But in the cities men awaken to repeat the sordid round of toil, the greedy quest for gold and power. But, whether happily or unhappily, all are speeding down to the world of shades. Even before his time has Hercules gone down to Pluto's realm, and has not yet returned.*

*First episode.*—Now enters Lycus, the usurper. He insolently taunts his victims on their helplessness, tells them that Hercules will never return, belittles and scorns the hero's mighty deeds, and announces his intention of killing the sons.

Amphitryon answers the slanders of Lycus against Hercules, and protests against the proposed barbarous treatment of the children, who are innocent of any harm. He reproaches Thebes and all the land of Greece, because they have so ill repaid the services of their deliverer in not coming to the rescue of his wife and children. Lycus gives orders to burn the hated race of Hercules, even where they kneel for refuge at the altar-side; and threatens the elders who would thwart his will, bidding them remember that they are but as slaves in his sight. Yet the old men valiantly defy him, and warn him that they will withstand his attacks upon the children.

But Megara shows them how foolish it is to contend against the king's unbounded power. Let them rather entreat his mercy. Could not exile be substituted for death? But no, for this is worse than death. Rather, let them all die together. Perhaps Lycus will allow her to go into the palace and deck her children in funeral garments? This prayer is granted, though Lycus warns them that they are to die at once. Left alone, Amphitryon chides Jupiter because he does not care for the children of his son:

Thou know'st not how  
To save thy friends. Thou surely art a god,  
Either devoid of wisdom, or unjust.

*First episode.*—Megara enters and bewails the fresh woes that are ever ready to meet her husband's home-coming. She recounts the incidents of his long and difficult career, his heroic suffering at Juno's bidding.

*And now base Lycus has taken advantage of her husband's absence in the lower world to kill her father, Creon, king of Thebes, and all his sons, and to usurp the throne—*

*And Lycus rules the Thebes of Hercules!*

*She prays her husband soon to come and right these wrongs, though in her heart she fears that he will never come again.*

*Old Amphitryon tries to reassure her by recalling the superhuman valor and strength of Hercules, but without success.*

*Now Lycus appears, boasting of the power which he has gained, not by long descent from a noble line, but by his own valor. But his house cannot stand by valor alone. He must strengthen his power by union with some princely house—he will marry Megara! Should she refuse, he will give to utter ruin all the house of Hercules.*

*Meeting her at the moment, he attempts with specious arguments to persuade her to his plan. But Megara repulses his monstrous proposition with indignant scorn. Lycus attempts to defend his slaughter of her father and brother as done through the exigency of war, and pleads with her to put away her wrath; but all in vain, and in the end he bids his attendants heap high a funeral pyre on which to burn the woman and all her brood.*

*When Lycus has retired, Amphitryon in his extremity prays to heaven for aid; but suddenly checks himself with incredulous joy, for he hears approaching the well-known step of Hercules!*

*First choral interlude.*—The chorus sings in praise of the mighty works of Hercules, describing these in picturesque detail, from the destruction of the Nemean lion to his last adventure which has taken him to the world of shades, whence, alas, he will never more return. And meanwhile, lacking his protection, his friends and family are plunged in hopeless misery.



*First choral interlude.—Verily fortune is unjust, for while Eurystheus sits at ease, the nobler Hercules must suffer unending hardships. His labors are briefly recapitulated. Now has he gone to hell to bring back Cerberus. Oh, that he may conquer death as all things else, and come back again, as did Orpheus by the charm of his lyre.*

*Second episode.—*Forth from the palace, all dressed in the garb of death, come Megara and her children. She is ready for the doom which has been pronounced upon them. She sadly recalls the fond hopes that she and her husband had cherished for these sons. But these bright prospects have vanished now, for death is waiting to claim them all, herself as well. She will fold them in a last motherly embrace, and pour out her grief:

How, like the bee with variegated wings,  
Shall I collect the sorrows of you all,  
And blend the whole together in a flood  
Of tears exhaustless!

But perhaps even yet her absent lord has power to intervene in her behalf, though he be but a ghost. She prays despairingly that he will come to aid. Amphitryon would try the favor of Jove once more in this extremity:

I call on thee, O Jove, that, if thou mean  
To be a friend to these deserted children,  
Thou interpose without delay and save them;  
For soon 'twill be no longer in thy power.

But at this juncture, when no help seems possible from heaven or hell, to their amazed joy, Hercules himself appears, and in the flesh. He perceives the mourning garments of his family, and the grief-stricken faces of the chorus, and quickly learns the cause of all this woe. He at once plans vengeance upon the wretch who has wrought it all. He has, himself, forewarned by a "bird of evil omen perched aloft," entered Thebes in secret; and now he will hide within his own palace and wait until Lycus comes to fetch the victims whom he has doomed to death. But first he

briefly replies to Amphitryon's questions as to the success of his errand to the lower world.

*Second episode.—Hercules enters, fresh from the lower world, rejoicing that he again beholds the light of day, and exulting in the accomplishment of his latest and most difficult task; when suddenly he notices soldiers on guard, and his wife and children dressed in mourning garments. He asks what these things mean. Amphitryon answers briefly that Lycus has killed Creon and his sons, usurped the throne, and now has doomed Megara and her children to death.*

*Hercules leaves his home at once to find, and take vengeance on, his enemy, though Theseus, whom he has rescued from the world of shades, begs for the privilege himself of slaying Lycus. Left with Amphitryon, in reply to the latter's questions, Theseus gives in great detail an account of the lower world, its way of approach, its topography, and the various creatures who dwell within its bounds. After describing in particular the operations of justice and the punishment of the condemned, he tells how Hercules overcame Cerberus and brought him to the upper world.*

*Second choral interlude.—The old men sing in envy of youth and complaint of old age:*

But now a burden on my head  
Heavier than Aetna's rock, old age, I bear.

They hold that had the gods been wiser they would have given renewed youth as a reward to the virtuous, leaving the degenerate to fall asleep and wake no more. And yet, though oppressed by age, they still may "breathe the strain Mnemosyne inspires," and sing unceasingly the deeds of Hercules:

Alcides, the resistless son of Jove;  
Those trophies which to noble birth belong  
By him are all surpassed; his forceful hand,  
Restoring peace, hath cleansed this monster-teeming land.

*Second choral interlude.—The chorus, with Theseus' words in mind, dwell in fancy still upon the lower world. They follow Hercules along "that dark way, which to the distant manes leads," and picture the thronging shades, the "repulsive glooms," and the "weary inactivity of that still, empty universe." They pray that it may be long ere they must go to that dread world, to which all the wandering tribes of earth must surely come. But away with gloomy thoughts! Now is the time for joy, for Hercules is come again. Let animals and men make holiday, and fitly celebrate their prince's world-wide victories, and their own deliverance from their recent woes.*

*Third episode.—Lycus enters and encounters Amphytrion without the palace. Him he bids to go within and bring out the victims to their death. To this Amphytrion objects on the ground that it would make him an accomplice in their murder. Whereupon Lycus enters the palace to do his own errand. The old man, looking after him, exclaims:*

Depart; for to that place the fates ordain  
You now are on the road;

while the chorus rejoices that now the oppressor is so soon to meet his just punishment. Now the despairing cries of Lycus are heard within and then—silence.

*Third episode.—Hercules returns to his house, fresh from the slaying of Lycus, and proceeds to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving to Jupiter. But in the midst of the sacrifice the madness planned by Juno begins to come upon him. His sight is darkened, and his reason changed to delirium. Now he catches sight of his children, cowering in fright; he thinks they are the children of Lycus, immediately lets fly an arrow at one of them, and seizes a second, whom he drags from the scene. Amphitryon, standing where he can see all that takes place, describes the wretched death of the second, and then the third, though Megara tries to save her last remaining child. She also falls before the blow of her husband, who thinks in his madness that she is his cruel stepmother, Juno. Hercules, re-entering, exults in his supposed victory over his enemies, and then sinks down in a deep faint.*

*Third choral interlude.—All is now joy and exultation. Fear has departed, hope has come back again, and faith in the protecting care of the gods is restored. Therefore, let all Thebes give herself up to the rapture and triumph of this hour.*

But now two specters are seen hovering over the palace, one of whom introduces herself to the chorus as Iris, the ambassadress of Juno, and announces that her companion is a fiend, daughter of the night. Their mission hither is, at the command of Juno, to drive Hercules into a madness in which he shall slay his children. The fiend, indeed, makes a weak protest against such a mission, but speedily yields and goes darting into the palace, where we know that she begins at once her deadly work within the breast of Hercules.

The chorus bemoans the city's short-lived joy, and the new and terrible disaster that has fallen upon their hero's house. Soon they hear the mad shouts of Hercules, and know by these that the fiend has already done her fatal work.

*Third choral interlude.—The chorus calls upon heaven, earth, and sea to mourn for Hercules in this new disaster that has*

*befallen him. They pray that he may be restored to sanity. In a long apostrophe to Sleep they pray that the soothing influences of this god may hold and subdue him until his former mind returns to its accustomed course. They watch his feverish tossings, and suffer with him in the grief which he so soon must realize. They close with a pathetic lament over the dead children.*

*Exode.*—A messenger hurries out of the palace, and describes the dreadful scenes that have just been enacted there. Hercules was offering sacrifices of purification before Jove's altar, with his three sons and Megara beside him. All was propitious, when suddenly a madness seized on Hercules. He ceased his present sacrifice, declaring that he must first go to Mycenae and kill Eurystheus and his sons, and so make an end of all his enemies at once. In fancy he mounted a chariot and speedily arrived at Mycenae. His own sons seemed to his disordered vision to be Eurystheus' sons; and, rushing savagely upon them, he soon had slain them all, and Megara herself. Then did he fall into a deep, swoonlike slumber, prostrate beside a mighty column, to which the attendants tied him securely with cords, lest he awake and do further mischief.

The palace doors are now thrown open, and the prostrate, sleeping Hercules is seen. Amphitryon warns the chorus not to wake him lest they restore him to his miseries. Soon Hercules awakes, and in his right mind. He seems to himself to have had a dreadful dream. He looks in wonder at the cords which bind his arms, at the fresh-slain corpses lying near, at his own arrows scattered on the floor. He calls aloud for someone to explain these things to him. Amphitryon advances and informs him that in his madness, sent by Juno's hate, he has destroyed his wife and all his sons.

And now Theseus, having heard that Lycus has usurped the throne of Thebes, and grateful for his own deliverance from the world of shades by Hercules, has come with an army of Athenian youth to aid his friend. He is shocked to find the hero sitting in deepest dejection, with head bowed low, and covered with a mourning-veil. Quickly he inquires and learns the truth from Amphitryon. With noble and unselfish friendship, he offers his sympathy and help to Hercules, although the latter warns him to avoid the

contagion which his own guilty presence engenders. He bids Hercules be a man, and give over his threats of self-destruction.

Hercules gives the reasons why it is impossible for him to live. First, Juno's inveterate hate, which attacked him in his very cradle, pursues him still, relentlessly; but, most and worst of all, he has incurred such odium because of the murder of his wife and children, that he will be henceforth an outcast on the earth. No land will give him refuge now. Why should he live? Let him die; and let Juno's cup of happiness be full.

Theseus reminds him that no man escapes unscathed by fate. Nay, even the gods themselves have done unlawful things, and yet live on and do not feel the obloquy their deeds should cause. As for a place of refuge, Athens shall be his home. There shall he obtain full cleansing for his crimes, a place of honor, and ample provision for his wants. All that a generous and grateful friend can give shall be his own.

Hercules accepts this offer of Theseus, reflecting also that he might be charged with cowardice should he give up to his troubles and seek refuge in death. He accordingly takes a mournful farewell of his dead wife and children, commends their bodies to Amphitryon for burial, which it is not lawful for him to give, and so commits himself to the hands of his faithful friend:

I will follow Theseus,  
Towed like a battered skiff. Whoe'er prefers  
Wealth or dominion to a steadfast friend  
Judges amiss.

*Exode.—Hercules wakes up in his right mind, bewildered and uncertain where he is. His eyes fall on the murdered children, though he does not as yet recognize them as his own. He misses his familiar club and bow, and wonders who has been bold enough to remove these and not to fear even a sleeping Hercules. Now he recognizes in the corpses his own wife and children:*

*Oh, what sight is this?  
My sons lie murdered, weltering in their blood;  
My wife is slain. What Lycus rules the land?  
Who could have dared to do such things in Thebes,  
And Hercules returned?*

*He notices that Theseus and Amphitryon turn away and will not meet his gaze. He asks them who has slain his family. At last, partly through their half-admissions, and partly through his own surmise, it comes to him that this dreadful deed is his own. His soul reels with the shock, and he prays wildly for death. No attempts of his two friends to palliate his deed can soothe his grief and shame. At last the threat of old Amphitryon instantly to anticipate the death of Hercules by his own leads the hero to give over his deadly purpose.*

*He consents to live—but where? What land will receive a polluted wretch like him? He appeals to Theseus:*

*O Theseus, faithful friend, seek out a place,  
Far off from here where I may hide myself.*

*Theseus offers his own Athens as a place of refuge, where his friend may find at once asylum and cleansing from his sin:*

*My land awaits thy coming; there will Mars  
Wash clean thy hands and give thee back thy arms.  
That land, O Hercules, now calls to thee,  
Which even gods from sin is wont to free.*

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**THE *HIPPOLYTUS* OF EURIPIDES, AND THE  
*HIPPOLYTUS* OF SENECA**

*Prologue.*—Venus complains that Hippolytus alone of all men sets her power at naught and owns allegiance to her rival, Diana. She announces her plan of revenge: that Phaedra shall become enamored of her stepson, that Theseus shall be made aware of this and in his rage be led to slay his son. If Phaedra perish too, it will but add to the triumph of the goddess' slighted power.

Hippolytus comes in from the chase and renders marked homage to Diana. He is warned by an aged officer of the palace "to loathe that pride which studies not to please." Inquiring the meaning of this warning, he is told to recognize the presence of Venus, too, and to include her in his devotions; but from this advice he turns away in scorn.

*Prologue.*—*Hippolytus, in hunting-costume, appears in the court of the palace, which is filled with huntsmen bearing nets and all sorts of hunting-weapons, and leading dogs in leash. The young prince, in a long, rambling speech, assigns places for the hunt, and their duties to his various servants and companions. He ends with an elaborate ascription of praise to his patroness Diana, as goddess of the chase, and with a prayer to her for success in his own present undertaking. The whole speech is in lyric strain, the anapestic measure, most commonly employed by Seneca.*

*Parode, or chorus entry.*—The chorus of Troezenian women deplores the strange malady that has befallen the young queen. They relate how

This is the third revolving day,  
Since, o'erpowered by lingering pains,  
She from all nourishment abstains,  
Wasting that lovely frame with slow decay.

At the conclusion of the lyric part of the chorus, the queen, closely veiled, in company with her aged nurse, is seen coming from the palace gates.

*Parode, or chorus entry.*—*The technical chorus entry is entirely lacking in this play. While the chorus may be assumed to have entered and to have been present during the long interview*



*between Phaedra and her nurse, which forms the first episode, still its presence is in no way manifested until the end of this interview.*

*First episode.*—Full of anxiety, the nurse strives to indulge her mistress' every whim. Phaedra answers feebly at first, but suddenly, to the amazement of her companion, her speech is filled with language of the chase, and she again relapses into her mute lethargy. At last, under the insistence of the nurse to probe her mystery, Phaedra confesses that the wretched fate of her house pursues her, too, and that she now feels the torments of love; and, though she does not speak his name, the truth at last is clear that Hippolytus is the object of her passion. The nurse recoils in horror and shame from this confession.

Phaedra describes how she has struggled against her unhappy love, but in vain, and is now resolved on death in order to save her honor. At this the nurse throws all her influence in the opposite scale, arguing that, after all, the sway of Venus is universal, that it is only human to love, and that this is no reason why one should cast his life away. She even proposes to acquaint Hippolytus with her mistress' feelings, and strive to win his love in return. This proposal Phaedra indignantly rejects. The nurse then offers to fetch from the house certain philters which will cure the queen of her malady. The queen reluctantly consents to this, and the nurse retires into the palace.

*First episode.*—*Phaedra bewails her present lot, in that she has been forced to leave her native Crete, and live in wedlock with her father's enemy. And even he has now deserted her, gone to the very realms of Dis, in company with a madcap friend, to seduce and bear away the gloomy monarch's queen. But a worse grief than this is preying on her soul. She feels in her own heart the devastating power of unlawful love, which has already destroyed all the natural interests of her life. She recalls her mother's unhappy passion; but this was bearable compared with her own. For Venus has, from deadly hatred of her family, filled her with a far more hopeless love. She does*

*not name the object of her passion, but, from her guarded references, it is clear that Hippolytus, her stepson, is meant.*

*The nurse urges her mistress to drive this passion from her breast, moralizing upon the danger of delay. Has not her house already known sinful love enough? Such love is dangerous for it cannot long be hid. Granting that Theseus may never return to earth, can her sin be concealed from her father? from her grandsires, both gods of heaven? And what of her own conscience? Can she ever be happy or at peace with such a sin upon her soul? She pictures her mistress' passion in all its hideousness. Besides, it is most hopeless, since Hippolytus, woman-hater that he is, can never be brought to respond to it. Phaedra yields to these arguments and entreaties of the nurse, and says that now she is resolved upon death as her only refuge. Hereupon the nurse (the usual rôle) begs her not to take this desperate course, and undertakes to bend Hippolytus to their will.*

*First choral interlude.*—The chorus prays that love may never come upon its breast with immoderate power, and relates instances of the resistless sway of Venus and her son.

*First choral interlude.*—*The chorus sings at length upon the universal and irresistible sway of love.*

*Second episode.*—Phaedra, standing near the doors of the palace, suddenly becomes agitated, and utters despairing cries. The chorus, inquiring the cause of these, is told to listen. At first there is only a confused murmur from within; but this soon resolves itself into the angry denunciations of Hippolytus and the pleading tones of the nurse. By these Phaedra learns that the nurse has indeed revealed the fatal secret to Hippolytus under an oath that he will not betray the truth to anyone, and that the youth has received the announcement with horror and scorn. He breaks forth into bitter reproaches against all womankind. He regrets that his lips are sealed

by his oath, else would he straightway reveal to Theseus all his wife's unfaithfulness.

Phaedra, on her side, reproaches the nurse for betraying her secret. She angrily dismisses her, and, after exacting an oath of silence from the chorus, goes out, reiterating her resolve to die, and suggests that she has one expedient left by which her name may be preserved from infamy, and her sons from dishonor.

*Second episode.—On the inquiry of the chorus as to how the queen is faring, the nurse describes the dreadful effect which this malady of love has already produced upon her. Then the palace doors open, and Phaedra is seen reclining upon a couch, attended by her tiring-women. She rejects all the beautiful robes and jewels which they offer, and desires to be dressed as a huntress, ready for the chase.*

*The nurse prays to Diana to conquer the stubborn soul of Hippolytus and bend his heart toward her mistress. At this moment the youth himself enters and inquires the cause of the nurse's distress.*

*Thereupon ensues a long debate, in which the nurse chides Hippolytus for his austere life and argues that the pleasures of life were meant to be enjoyed, and that no life comes to its full fruition unless youth is given free rein. The young man replies by a rhapsody on the life of the woods, so full of simple, wholesome joys, and so free from all the cares of life at court and among men. He compares this with the Golden Age, and traces the gradual fall from the innocence of that time to the abandoned sin of the present. He concludes with laying all the blame for this upon woman.*

*Phaedra now comes forth, and, seeing Hippolytus, falls fainting, but is caught in the young man's arms. He attempts to reassure her and inquires the cause of her evident grief. After much hesitation, she at last confesses her love for him and begs him to pity her. With scorn and horror he repulses her and starts to kill her with his sword; but, deciding not so to stain*

*his sword, he throws the weapon away and makes off toward the forest.*

*The nurse now plans to save her mistress by inculcating Hippolytus. She accordingly calls loudly for help, and tells the attendants who come rushing in that the youth has attempted an assault upon the queen, and shows his sword in evidence.*

*Second choral interlude.*—The chorus prays to be wafted far away from these scenes of woe; and laments that the hapless queen had ever come from Crete, for then she would not now be doomed by hopeless love to self-inflicted death.

*Second choral interlude.*—*The chorus dwells upon and praises the beauty of Hippolytus, and discourses upon the theme that beauty has always been a dangerous possession, citing various mythological instances in proof of this.*

*Third episode.*—A messenger hurriedly enters with the announcement that the queen has destroyed herself by the noose. The chorus, though grieved, manifests no surprise at this, and is divided as to a plan of action. And now enters Theseus, who demands the cause of the lamentations of the servants, which may be heard from within the palace. He learns from the chorus the fact and manner, but not the cause, of Phaedra's death.

The palace doors are now thrown open and the shrouded body of the queen is discovered within. Theseus, in an agony of lamentations, seeks to know the cause of his queen's death. He at length discovers a letter clasped in her dead hand, by which he is informed that Phaedra has slain herself in grief and shame because her honor has been violated by the king's own son, Hippolytus. Thereupon Theseus curses his son, and calls on Neptune to destroy him, offering this as one of the three requests which, in accordance with the promise of the god, should not be denied.

Here enters Hippolytus, hearing the sound of his father's voice. He looks in amazement upon the corpse of Phaedra, and begs his father to explain her death. Theseus, supposing that his son conceals a guilty conscience, makes no direct answer, but inveighs against the specious arts of man. This

strange speech, and still more the manner of his father, now show Hippolytus that he himself is connected in his father's mind with Phaedra's death; and he seeks to know who has thus calumniated him. The wrath of Theseus now breaks over all bounds. He charges his son with the dishonor and murder of his wife, and with withering scorn taunts him with his former professions of purity. Hippolytus protests his innocence, but Theseus continues obdurate, and produces the fatal letter in proof of his statements. Then the youth realizes the terrible mesh of circumstances in which he is taken; but, bound by his oath of secrecy, he endures in silence. After Theseus has pronounced the doom of exile upon him, and retired within the gates, he himself goes forth to seek his comrades and acquaint them with his fate.

*Third episode.—Theseus, just returned to earth from hades, and with all the horrors of the lower world still upon him, briefly refers to his dreadful experiences and his escape by the aid of Hercules. Then, hearing the sounds of lamentation, he asks the cause. He is told by the nurse that Phaedra, for some reason which she will not disclose, has resolved on immediate self-destruction. Rushing into the palace, he encounters Phaedra just within. After urgent entreaties and threats from Theseus, she confesses that she is determined to die in order to remove the stain upon her honor; and without mentioning the name of him who has ruined her, she shows the sword which Hippolytus has left behind in his flight. This is at once recognized by Theseus, who flies into a wild passion of horror, rage, and bitter scorn. He vows dire vengeance upon his son, which shall reach him wherever he may flee; and ends by claiming from Neptune, as the third of the boons once granted him, that the god will destroy Hippolytus.*

*Third choral interlude.—The chorus reflects upon the precarious life of man, lauds the golden mean, and prays for the blessings of life without conspicuous fame. No man can hope for continued security in life, when such a youth as Hippolytus is driven off by Theseus' ire. It laments that no longer will his steeds, his lyre, his wonted woodland haunts know the well-*

loved youth; and reproaches the gods that they did not better screen their guiltless votary.

*Third choral interlude.—The chorus complains that while nature is so careful to maintain the order of the heavenly bodies, the atmospheric phenomena, the seasons, and the productiveness of wealth, for the affairs of men alone she has no care. These go all awry. Sin prospers and righteousness is in distress. Verily, it does not at all profit a man to strive to live uprightly, since all the rewards of life go to the vain and profligate. While the case of Hippolytus is not mentioned, it is clearly in mind throughout.*

*Exode.*—The last words of the chorus are interrupted by the approach of a messenger who hastily inquires for the king. As the latter comes forth from the palace, the messenger announces the death of his son. At the king's request he gives a detailed account of the disaster: how Hippolytus was driving his fiery coursers along the shore, when Neptune sent a monstrous bull from out the sea, which drove the horses to a panic of fear; how the car was at length dashed against a ragged cliff, and Hippolytus dragged, bruised and bleeding, by the maddened horses; how, though yet living, he could not long survive. Theseus expresses pleasure at his son's sufferings, and bids that he be brought into his presence that he may behold his punishment.

The chorus interjects a single strophe, acknowledging Venus as the unrivaled queen of heaven and earth.

Diana now appears to Theseus and reveals to him the whole truth, explaining the infatuation of the queen, the fatal letter, and the wiles of Venus. The father is filled with horror and remorse. Diana tells him that he may yet hope for pardon for his sin, since through the wiles of Venus, which she herself could not frustrate, the deed was done.

Here the dying Hippolytus is borne in by his friends. In his agony he prays for death; but by the voice of his loved goddess he is soothed and comforted. After a touching scene of reconciliation between the dying

prince and his father, the youth perishes, leaving Theseus overcome with grief.

*Exode.—A messenger, hurrying in, announces to Theseus the death of his son. Theseus receives the news calmly and asks for a detailed account. The messenger relates how Hippolytus had yoked his horses to his car and was driving madly along the highway by the sea, when suddenly the waves swelled up and launched a strange monster in the form of a bull upon the land. This monster charged upon Hippolytus, who fronted the beast with unshaken courage. But in the end the horses became unmanageable through fright, and dragged their master to his death among the rocks. The body of the hapless Hippolytus has been torn in pieces and scattered far and wide through the fields; and even now attendants are bringing these in for burning on the pyre. Theseus laments, not because his son is dead, but because it is through his, the father's, act.*

*The chorus expatiates upon the fact that the blows of fate fall heavily upon men of exalted condition, but spare the humble. The great Theseus, once so mighty a monarch, but now so full of woe, is an example of this truth. It has not profited him to escape from hades, since now his son has hastened thither.*

*But now their attention is turned to Phaedra who appears, wailing aloud, and with a drawn sword in hand. She rails at Theseus as the destroyer of his house, weeps over the mangled remains of Hippolytus, confesses to Theseus that her charge against his son was false, and ends by falling upon the sword.*

*Theseus, utterly crushed by the weight of woe that has fallen upon him, prays only that he may return to the dark world from which he has just escaped.*

*The chorus reminds him that he will find ample time for mourning, and that he should now pay due funeral honors to his son. Whereat Theseus bids all the fragments be hunted out and brought before him. These he fits together as best he can, lamenting bitterly as each new gory part is brought to him.*

*He ends by giving curt command for the burial of Phaedra, with a prayer that the earth may rest heavily upon her.*

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**THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIN OF SOPHOCLES, AND THE  
HERCULES OETAÆUS OF SENECA**

*Prologue.*—In the courtyard of her palace in Trachin, Deianira recounts to her attendants and the chorus of Trachinian maidens how her husband had won her from the river god, Acheloüs, and how, during all these years, she has lived in fear and longing for her husband, who has been kept constantly wandering over the earth by those who hold him in their power; and even now he has been for many months absent, she knows not where.

An old servant proposes that she send her son, Hyllus, abroad to seek out his father. This the youth, who enters at this juncture, readily promises to do, especially on hearing from his mother that the oracle declares this is the year in which his father shall end his life,

Or, having this his task accomplished,  
Shall, through the coming years of all his life,  
Rejoice and prosper.

*Prologue.*—*Hercules, about to sacrifice to Cenean Jove after having conquered Eurytus, king of Oechalia, recounts at length his mighty toils on earth, and prays that now at last he may be given his proper place in heaven. He dispatches his herald, Lichas, home to Trachin, to tell the news of his triumph, and to conduct the train of captives thither.*

*Parode, or chorus entry.*—The chorus prays to Helios, the bright sun-god, for tidings of Hercules, for Deianira longs for him, and "ever nurses unforgetting dread as to her husband's paths." Hercules is tossed upon the



stormy sea of life, now up, now down, but ever kept from death by some god's hands. Deianira should, therefore, be comforted:

For who hath known in Zeus forgetfulness  
Of those he children calls?

*Parode, or chorus entry.—The place of the chorus entry, which should be filled by the chorus proper, composed of Aetolian maidens, is taken by the band of captive Oechalian maidens. They bewail their lot and long for death; they dwell upon the utter desolation of their fatherland, and upon the hard-heartedness of Hercules who has laid it waste.*

*Iole, their princess, joins in their lamentations, recalls the horrors of her native city's overthrow, and looks forward with dread to her captivity.*

*First episode.—Deianira confides to the chorus her special cause for grief: she feels a strong presentiment that Hercules is dead; for, when he last left home, he left a tablet, as it were a will, disposing of his chattels and his lands,*

and fixed a time,  
That when for one whole year and three months more  
He from his land was absent, then 'twas his  
Or in that self-same hour to die, or else,  
Escaping that one crisis, thenceforth live with life unvexed.

At this moment, however, a messenger enters and announces the near approach of Hercules accompanied by his spoils of victory.

*First episode.—During the interval just preceding this episode, the captives have been led to Trachin, Deianira has seen the beauty of Iole, and learned of Hercules' infatuation for her. She has by this news been thrown into a mad rage of jealousy, and counsels with her nurse as to how she may take vengeance upon her faithless husband, while the nurse vainly advises moderation.*

*The nurse at last suggests recourse to magic, professing herself to be proficient in these arts. This suggests to Deianira the use of that blood of Nessus which the dying centaur had commended to her as an infallible love-charm. She takes occasion to relate at length the Nessus incident. She at once acts upon her decision to use the charm; and speedily, with the nurse's aid, a gorgeous robe is anointed with the blood, and this is sent by Lichas' hand to Hercules.*

*First choral interlude.*—The chorus voices its exultant joy over this glad and unexpected news.

*First choral interlude.*—The chorus of Aetolian women, who have followed Deianira from her girlhood's home to this refuge in Trachin, now tender to her their sympathy in her present sufferings. They recall all their past intercourse with her, and assure her of their undying fidelity.

*This suggests the rarity of such fidelity especially in the courts of kings, and they discourse at large upon the sordidness and selfishness of courtiers in general. The moral of their discourse is that men should not aspire to great wealth and power, but should choose a middle course in life, which only can bring happiness.*

*Second episode.*—Lichas, the personal herald of Hercules, now enters, followed by Iole and a company of captive women. He explains to Deianira how Hercules had been driven on by petty persecutions to slay Iphitus, the son of Eurytus, treacherously; how he had for this been doomed by Zeus to serve Omphale, queen of Lydia, for a year; and how in revenge he has now slain Eurytus, and even now is sending home these Oechalian captives as spoil; Hercules himself is delaying yet a little while in Euboea, until he has sacrificed to Cenean Jove.

Deianira looks in pity upon the captives praying that their lot may never come to her or hers; and is especially drawn in sympathy to one beautiful girl, who, however, will answer no word as to her name and state.

As all are passing into the palace, the messenger detains Deianira and tells her the real truth which Lichas has withheld: that this seemingly unknown girl is Iole, daughter of Eurytus; that it was not in revenge but for love of Iole that Hercules destroyed her father's house, and that he is now sending her to his own home not as his slave, but mistress, and rival of his wife.

Lichas, returning from the palace, on being challenged by the messenger and urged by Deianira to speak the whole truth, tells all concerning Hercules' love for Iole.

Deianira receives this revelation with seeming equanimity and acquiescence.

*Second episode.—Deianira comes hurrying distractedly out of the palace, and relates her discovery as to the horrible and deadly power of the charm which she has sent to her husband.*

*While she is still speaking, Hyllus rushes in and cries out to his mother to flee from the wrath of Hercules, whose dreadful sufferings, after putting on the robe which his wife had sent to him, the youth describes at length. He narrates also the death of Lichas. The suffering hero is even now on his way by sea from Euboea, in a death-like swoon, and will soon arrive at Trachin.*

*Deianira, smitten with quick repentance, begs Jupiter to destroy her with his wrathful thunderbolts. She resolves on instant self-destruction, though Hyllus and the nurse vainly try to dissuade her, and to belittle her responsibility for the disaster; and in the end she rushes from the scene, Hyllus following.*

*Second choral interlude.—The chorus briefly reverts to the battle of Acheloüs and Hercules for the hand of Deianira.*

*Second choral interlude.—The chorus, contemplating the changing fates of their prince's house, is reminded of the saying of Orpheus, "that naught for endless life is made." This leads to an extended description of Orpheus' sweet music and its power*

*over all things, both animate and inanimate, and suggests the story of his unsuccessful attempt to regain Eurydice.*

*Returning to the original theme, the chorus speculates upon the time when all things shall fall into death, and chaos resume her primeval sway.*

*It is startled out of these thoughts by loud groans, which prove to be the outcries of Hercules, borne home to Trachin.*

*Third episode.*—Deianira tells to the chorus the story of how Nessus, the centaur, had once insulted her, and for this had been slain by Hercules with one of his poisoned arrows; how, also, the centaur in dying had given her a portion of his blood, saying this would be a charm able to restore to her her husband's wandering love. She now resolves to use this charm. She anoints a gorgeous robe with the blood which she has preserved through all these years, and bids Lichas carry this to her lord as a special gift from her. He is to wear it as he offers his sacrifices to Cenean Jove, Lichas departs upon this mission.

*Third episode.*—Hercules in his ravings warns Jove to look well to his heavens, since now their defender is perishing. The giants will be sure to rise again and make another attempt upon the skies. He bitterly laments that he, who has overcome so many monsters, must die at last, slain by a woman's hand, and that woman not Juno, nor even an Amazon:

*Ah, woe is me,  
How often have I 'scaped a glorious death!  
What honor comes from such an end as this?*

*His burning pains coming on again, he cries out in agony, and describes the abject misery and weakness that have come upon him. Are these the shoulders, the hands, the feet, that were once so strong to bear, so terrible to strike, so swift to go? He strives to apprehend and tear away the pest that is devouring him, but it is too deep-hidden in his frame. He curses the day that has*

*seen him weep and beseeches Jove to smite him dead with a thunderbolt.*

*Alcmena enters, and, while she herself is full of grief, she strives to soothe and comfort her suffering son. He falls into a delirium, and thinks that he is in the heavens, looking down upon Trachin. But soon he awakes, and, realizing his pains once more, calls for the author of his misery, that he may slay her with his own hands.*

*Hyllus, who has just entered from the palace, now informs his father that Deianira is already dead, and by her own hand; that it was not her fault, moreover, but by the guile of Nessus, that Hercules is being done to death. The hero recognizes in this the fulfilment of an oracle once delivered to him:*

*By the hand of one whom thou hast slain, some day,  
Victorious Hercules, shalt thou lie low.*

*And he comforts himself with the reflection that such an end as this is meet, for*

*Thus shall no conqueror of Hercules  
Survive to tell the tale.*

*He now bids Philoctetes prepare a mighty pyre on neighboring Mount Oeta, and there take and burn his body, still in life. Hyllus he bids to take the captive princess, Iole, to wife. He calls upon his mother, Alcmena, to comfort her grief by pride in her great son's deeds on earth, and the noble fame which he has gained thereby.*

*Third choral interlude.*—The chorus prays for the early and safe return of Hercules from where he lingers:

*Thence may lie come, yea, come with strong desire,  
Tempered by suasive spell  
Of that rich unguent, as the monster spake.*

*Third choral interlude.*—The chorus bids all nature mourn the death of Hercules. Verily the earth is bereft of her defender, and there is no one left to whom she may turn if again harassed by monsters. They speculate upon the place of the departed Hercules. Shall he sit in judgment among the pious kings of Crete in hades, or shall he be given a place in heaven? At least on earth he shall live in deathless gratitude and fame.

*Fourth episode.*—Deianira discovers by experiment, now that it is too late, the destructive and terrible power of the charm which she has sent, and is filled with dire forebodings as to the result.

Her lamentations are interrupted by Hyllus, who comes hurrying in; he charges his mother with the murder of his father, and curses her. He then describes the terrible sufferings that have come upon the hero through the magic robe, and how Hercules, in the madness of pain, has slain Lichas, as the immediate cause of his sufferings. He has brought his father with him from Euboea to Trachin. Deianira withdraws into the palace, without a word, in an agony of grief.

*Fourth choral interlude.*—The chorus recalls the old oracle that after twelve years the son of Zeus should gain rest from toil, and sees in his impending death the fulfilment of this oracle. They picture the grief of Deianira over her act, and foresee the great changes that are coming upon their prince's house.

*Fifth episode.*—The nurse rushes in from the palace, and tells how Deianira has slain herself with the sword, bewailing the while the sufferings which she has unwittingly brought on Hercules; and how Hyllus repents him of his harshness toward his mother, realizing that she was not to blame.

*Fifth choral interlude.*—The chorus pours out its grief for the double tragedy. And now it sees Hyllus and attendants bearing in the dying Hercules.

*Exode.*—Hercules, awaking from troubled sleep, laments the calamity that has befallen him; he chides the lands which he has helped, that now they

do not hasten to his aid; and prays Hyllus to kill him with the sword, and so put him out of his misery.

He denounces Deianira because she has brought suffering and destruction upon him which no foe, man or beast, has ever been able to bring. He curses his own weakness, and laments that he must weep and groan like a woman.

He marvels that his mighty frame, which for years has withstood so many monsters, which he recounts at length, can now be so weak and wasted. Reverting to his wife, he bids that she be brought to him that he may visit punishment upon her.

Hyllus informs his father that Deianira has died by her own hand, for grief at what she has unwittingly brought upon her dear lord. It was, indeed, through Nessus' guile that the deed was done.

Hercules, on hearing this, recognizes the fulfilment of the oracle;

Long since it was revealéd of my sire  
That I should die by hand of none that live,  
But one who, dead, had dwelt in hades dark.

He exacts an oath of obedience from Hyllus, and then bids him bring his father to Mount Oeta, and there place him upon a pyre for burning. Hyllus reluctantly consents in all but the actual firing of the pyre. The next request is concerning Iole, that Hyllus should take her as his wife. This mandate he indignantly refuses to obey, but finally yields assent. And in the end Hercules is borne away to his burning, while the chorus mournfully chants its concluding comment:

What cometh no man may know;  
What is, is piteous for us,  
Base and shameful for them;  
And for him who endureth this woe,  
Above all that live hard to bear.

*Exode.*—*Philoctetes enters, and, in response to the questions of the nurse, describes the final scene on Oeta's top. There a mighty pyre is built, on which Hercules joyfully takes his place.*

*There he reclines, gazing at the heavens, and praying his father, Jupiter, to take him thither, in compensation for his service on the earth. His prayer seems to be answered, and he cries aloud:*

*"But lo, my father calls me from the sky,  
And opens wide the gates. O sire, I come!"  
And as he spake his face was glorified.*

*He presents his famous bow and arrows to Philoctetes, bidding him for this prize apply the torch and light the pyre, which his friend most reluctantly does. The hero courts the flames, and eagerly presses into the very heart of the burning mass.*

*In the midst of this narrative, Alcmena enters, bearing in her bosom an urn containing the ashes of Hercules. The burden of her lament is that so small a compass and so pitiful estate have come to the mighty body of her son, which one small urn can hold. But when she thinks upon his deeds, her thoughts fly to the opposite pole:*

*What sepulcher, O son, what tomb for thee  
Is great enough? Naught save the world itself.*

*Then she takes up in quickened measures her funeral song of mourning in the midst of which the deified Hercules, taking shape in the air above, speaks to his mother, bidding her no longer mourn, for he has at last gained his place in heaven.*

*The chorus strikes a fitting final note, that the truly brave are not destined to the world below:*

*But when life's days are all consumed,  
And comes the final hour, for them  
A pathway to the gods is spread  
By glory.*

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## THE *TROADES* OF EURIPIDES, AND THE *TROADES* OF SENECA

*Prologue.*—Neptune appearing from the depths of the sea, briefly recounts the story of the overthrow of Troy, which he laments, states the present situation of the Trojan women, dwells upon the especial grief of Hecuba, and places the blame for all this ruin upon Minerva:

But, oh my town, once flourishing, once crowned  
With beauteous-structured battlements, farewell!  
Had not Minerva sunk thee in the dust,  
On thy firm base e'en now thou mightst have stood.

To him appears Minerva, who, though she had indeed helped the Greeks to their final triumph over Troy, had been turned against them by the outrage of Cassandra on the night of Troy's overthrow. She now makes common cause with Neptune, and plans for the harassing of the Greek fleet by storm and flood on the homeward voyage. The Greeks are to be taught a lesson of reverence:

Unwise is he, whoe'er of mortals storms  
Beleaguered towns, and crushed in ruins wastes  
The temples of the gods, the hallowed tombs  
Where sleep the dead; for he shall perish soon.

[The two gods disappear.]

Hecuba, lying prone upon the ground before Agamemnon's tent, gives voice to her sufferings of body and of spirit; laments her accumulated losses of home, friends, station, liberty; blames Helen for all, and calls upon the chorus of captive women to join her in lamentation.

*Prologue.—Hecuba bewails the fall of Troy, and draws from it a warning to all who are high in power:*

*For of a truth did fortune never show  
In plainer wise the frailty of the prop  
That doth support a king.*

*She graphically describes the mighty power and mighty fall of her husband's kingdom, and portrays the awe with which the Greeks behold even their fallen foe. She asserts that the fire by which her city has been consumed sprang from her, the brand that she had dreamed of in her dream before the birth of Paris. She dwells horribly upon the death of Priam which she had herself witnessed.*

*But still the heavenly powers are not appeased.*

*The captives are to be allotted to the Greek chiefs, and even now the urn stands ready for the lots.*

*Hecuba next calls upon the chorus of Trojan women to join her in lamenting their fallen heroes, Hector and Priam.*

*Parode, or chorus entry.—The chorus with Hecuba indulges in speculation as to the place of their future home, speaking with hope of some Greek lands, and deprecating others.*

*Parode, or chorus entry.—The chorus, under the direction of Hecuba as chorus leader, in true oriental fashion, bewails the downfall of Troy, and in particular the death of Priam and Hector.*

*First episode.—Talthybius, the herald, enters and announces that the lots have been drawn, and reveals to each captive her destined lord: that Cassandra has fallen to Agamemnon, Andromache to Pyrrhus, Hecuba to Ulysses. At news of this her fate, Hecuba is filled with fresh lamentations, counting it an especial hardship that she should fall to the arch-enemy of*

her race. The herald also darkly alludes to the already accomplished fate of Polyxena,

At the tomb raised to Achilles doomed to serve.

Hecuba does not as yet catch the import of these words.

Cassandra now enters, waving a torch, and celebrates in a mad refrain her approaching union with Agamemnon. Hecuba remonstrates with her for her unseemly joy; whereupon Cassandra declares that she rejoices in the prospect of the vengeance upon Agamemnon which is to be wrought out through this union. She contrasts the lot of the Greeks and Trojans during the past ten years, and finds that the latter have been far happier; and even in her fall, the woes of Troy are far less than those that await the Greek chieftains. She then prophesies in detail the trials that await Ulysses, and the dire result of her union with Agamemnon:

Thou shalt bear me  
A fury, an Erinys from this land.

Hecuba here falls in a faint, and, upon being revived, again recounts her former high estate, sadly contrasts with that her present condition, and shudders at the lot of the slave which awaits her:

Then deem not of the great  
Now flourishing as happy, ere they die.

*First episode.—Talthybius announces that the shade of Achilles has appeared with the demand that Polyxena be sacrificed upon the hero's tomb.*

*Enter Pyrrhus and Agamemnon, the former demanding that his father's request be carried out, the latter resisting the demand as too barbarous to be entertained. It is finally agreed to leave the decision to Calchas. He is accordingly summoned, and at once declares that only by the death of the maiden can the Greeks be allowed to set sail for home. And not this alone, but Astyanax also must be sacrificed—hurled from the lofty Scaean tower of Troy.*

*First choral interlude.*—The chorus graphically describes the wooden horse, its joyful reception by the Trojans into the city, their sense of relief from danger, and their holiday spirit; and at last their horrible awakening to death at the hands of the Greeks within the walls.

*First choral interlude.*—*The chorus maintains that all perishes with the body; the soul goes out into nothingness:*

*For when within the tomb we're laid,  
No soul remains, no hov'ring shade.  
Like curling smoke, like clouds before the blast,  
This animating spirit soon has passed.*

*The evident purpose of these considerations is to discount the story that Achilles' shade could have appeared with its demand for the death of Polyxena.*

*Second episode.*—The appearance of Andromache with Astyanax in her arms, borne captive on a Grecian car, is a signal for general mourning. She announces her own chief cause of woe:

I, with my child, am led away, the spoil  
Of war; th' illustrious progeny of kings,  
Oh, fatal change, is sunk to slavery.

Her next announcement comes as a still heavier blow to Hecuba:

Polyxena, thy daughter, is no more;  
Devoted to Achilles, on his tomb,  
An offering to the lifeless dead, she fell.

Andromache insists that Polyxena's fate is happier than her own; argues that in death there is no sense of misery:

Polyxena is dead, and of her ills  
Knows nothing;

while Andromache still lives to feel the keen contrast between her former and her present lot.

Hecuba is so sunk in woe that she can make no protest, but advises Andromache to forget the past and

honor thy present lord,  
And with thy gentle manners win his soul;

this with the hope that she may be the better able to rear up Astyanax to establish once more some day the walls and power of Troy.

But the heaviest stroke is yet to fall. Talthylbius now enters and announces with much reluctance that Ulysses has prevailed upon the Greeks to demand the death of Astyanax for the very reason that he may grow up to renew the Trojan war. The lad is to be hurled from a still standing tower of Troy. The herald warns Andromache that if she resist this mandate she may be endangering the boy's funeral rites. She yields to fate, passionately caressing the boy, who clings fearfully to her, partly realizing his terrible situation. The emotional climax of the play is reached, as she says to the clinging, frightened lad:

Why dost thou clasp me with thy hands, why hold  
My robes, and shelter thee beneath my wings  
Like a young bird?

She bitterly upbraids the Greeks for their cruelty, and curses Helen as the cause of all her woe, and then gives the boy up in an abandonment of defiant grief:

Here, take him, bear him, hurl him from the height,  
If ye must hurl him; feast upon his flesh:  
For from the gods hath ruin fall'n on us.

And now what more can happen? Surely the depth of misfortune has been sounded. In the voice of Hecuba:

Is there an ill  
We have not? What is wanting to the woes  
Which all the dreadful band of ruin brings?

*Second episode.—Andromache appears with Astyanax and recounts a vision of Hector which she has had, in which her dead husband has warned her to hide the boy away beyond the reach of threatening danger. After discussion with an old man as to the best place of concealment, she hides Astyanax in Hector's tomb which is in the near background.*

*Enter Ulysses, who reluctantly announces that Calchas has warned the Greeks that they must not allow the son of Hector to grow to manhood; for if they do so, the reopening of the Trojan war will be only a matter of time, and the work will have to be done all over again. He therefore asks Andromache to give up the boy to him. Then ensues a war of wits between the desperate mother and the crafty Greek. She affects not to know where the boy is—he is lost. But if she knew, no power on earth should take him from her. Ulysses threatens death, which she welcomes; he threatens torture, which she scorns. She at last states that her son is "among the dead." Ulysses, taking these words at their face meaning, starts off gladly to tell the news to the Greeks, but suddenly reflects that he has no proof but the mother's word. He therefore begins to watch Andromache more narrowly, and discovers that her bearing is not that of one who has put her grief behind her, but of one who is still in suspense and fear. To test her, he suddenly calls to his attendants to hunt out the boy. Looking beyond her he cries: "Good! he's found! bring him to me." Whereat Andromache's agitation proves that the boy is indeed not dead but in hiding. Where is he hid? Ulysses forces her to choose between the living boy and the dead husband; for, unless her son is forthcoming, Hector's tomb will be invaded and his ashes scattered upon the sea. To her frantic prayer for mercy he says:*

*Bring forth the boy—and pray.*

*Follows a canticum, in which Andromache brings Astyanax out of the tomb and sets him in Ulysses' sight:*

*Here, here's the terror of a thousand ships!*

*and prays him to spare the child. Ulysses refuses, and, after allowing the mother time for a passionate and pathetic farewell to her son, he leads the boy away to his death.*

*Second choral interlude.*—The chorus first tells of the former fall of Troy under Hercules and Telamon; and then refers to the high honors that had come to the city through the translation of Ganymede to be the cupbearer of Jove, and through the special grace of Venus. But these have not availed to save the city from its present destruction.

*Second choral interlude.*—*The chorus discusses the various places to which it may be its misfortune to be carried into captivity. It professes a willingness to go anywhere but to the homes of Helen, Agamemnon, and Ulysses.*

*Third episode.*—Menelaüs appears, announcing that the Greeks have allotted to him Helen, his former wife, the cause of all this strife, to do with as he will. He declares his intention to take her to Greece, and there destroy her as a warning to faithless wives.

Hecuba applauds this decision, and thinks that at last heaven has sent justice to the earth:

Dark thy ways  
And silent are thy steps to mortal man;  
Yet thou with justice all things dost ordain.

Helen, dragged forth from the tent at the command of Menelaüs, pleads her cause. She lays the blame for all upon Hecuba and Priam:

She first, then, to these ills  
Gave birth, when she gave Paris birth; and next  
The agéd Priam ruined Troy and thee,  
The infant not destroying, at his birth  
Denounced a baleful firebrand.

Blame should also fall upon Venus, since through her influence Helen came into the power of Paris.

Hecuba refutes the excuses of Helen. She scouts the idea that Venus brought Paris to Sparta. The only Venus that had influenced Helen was her own passion inflamed by the beauty of Paris:

My son was with surpassing beauty graced;  
And thy fond passion, when he struck thy sight,  
Became a Venus.

As for the excuse that she was borne away by force, no Spartan was aware of that, no cries were heard. Hecuba ends by urging Menelaüs to carry out his threat. This, he repeats, it is his purpose to do.

*Third episode.—Helen approaches the Trojan women, saying that she has been sent by the Greeks to deck Polyxena for marriage with Pyrrhus, this being a ruse to trick the girl into an unresisting preparation for her death. This news Polyxena, though mute, receives with horror.*

*Andromache bitterly cries out upon Helen and her marriages as the cause of all their woe. But Helen puts the whole matter to this test:*

Count this true,  
If 'twas a Spartan vessel brought me here.

*Under the pointed questions of Andromache she gives up deception, and frankly states the impending doom of Polyxena to be slaughtered on Achilles' tomb, and so to be that hero's spirit bride. At this the girl shows signs of joy, and eagerly*



*submits herself to Helen's hands to be decked for the sacrificial rite.*

*Hecuba cries out at this, and laments her almost utter childlessness; but Andromache envies the doomed girl her fate.*

*Helen then informs the women that the lots have been drawn and their future lords determined; Andromache is to be given to Pyrrhus, Cassandra to Agamemnon, Hecuba to Ulysses.*

*Pyrrhus now appears to conduct Polyxena to her death, and is bitterly scorned and cursed by Hecuba.*

*Third choral interlude.*—The chorus sadly recalls the sacred rites in Troy and within the forests of Mount Ida, and grieves that these shall be no more. They lament the untimely death of their warrior husbands, whose bodies have not received proper burial rites, and whose souls are wandering in the spirit-world, while they, the hapless wives, must wander over sea to foreign homes. They pray that storms may come and overwhelm the ships, and especially that Helen may not live to reach the land again.

*Third choral interlude.*—*The chorus enlarges upon the comfort of company to those in grief. Hitherto they have had this comfort; but now they are to be scattered, and each must suffer alone. And soon, as they sail away, they must take their last, sad view of Troy, now but a smouldering heap; and mother to child will say, as she points back to the shore:*

*See, there's our Troy, where smoke curls high in air,  
And thick, dark clouds obscure the distant sky.*

*Exode.*—Enter Talthybius, with the dead body of Astyanax borne upon the shield of Hector. He explains that Pyrrhus has hastened home, summoned by news of insurrection in his own kingdom, and has taken Andromache with him. He delivers Andromache's request to Hecuba that she give the boy proper burial, and use the hollow shield as a casket for the dead.

Hecuba and the chorus together weep over the shield, which recalls Hector in his days of might, and over the poor, bruised body of the dead boy, sadly contrasting his former beauty with this mangled form. They then wrap it in such costly wrappings as their state allows, place him upon the shield, and consign him to the tomb.

Talthybius then orders bands of men with torches to burn the remaining buildings of Troy; and in the light of its glaring flames and with the crashing sound of its falling walls in their ears, Hecuba and her companions make their way to the waiting ships, while the messenger urges on their lagging steps.

*Exode.—The messenger relates with much detail to Hecuba, Andromache and the rest, the circumstances of the death of Astyanax and Polyxena: how crowds of Greeks and Trojans witnessed both tragedies, how both sides were moved to tears at the sad sight, and how both victims met their death as became their noble birth.*

*Andromache bewails and denounces the cruel death of her son, and sadly asks that his body be given her for burial; but she is told that this is mangled past recognition.*

*But Hecuba, having now drained her cup of sorrow to the dregs, has no more wild cries to utter; she almost calmly bids the Grecians now set sail, since nothing bars their way. She longs for death, complaining that it ever flees from her, though she has often been so near its grasp.*

*The messenger interrupts, and bids them hasten to the shore and board the ships, which wait only their coming to set sail.*

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**THE AGAMEMNON OF AESCHYLUS, AND THE  
AGAMEMNON OF SENECA**

*Prologue.*—A watchman, stationed upon the palace roof at Argos, laments the tedium of his long and solitary task; and prays for the time to come when, through the darkness of the night, he shall see the distant flashing of the beacon fire, and by this sign know that Troy has fallen and that Agamemnon is returning home. And suddenly he sees the gleam for which so long he has been waiting. He springs up with shouts of joy and hastens to tell the queen. At the same time he makes dark reference to that which has been going on within the palace, and which must now be hushed up.

*Prologue.*—*The ghost of Thyestes coming from the lower regions recites the motif of the play: how he had been most foully dealt with by Agamemnon's father, Atreus, and how he had been promised revenge by the oracle of Apollo through his son Aegisthus, begotten of an incestuous union with his daughter. The ghost announces that the time for his revenge is come with the return of Agamemnon from the Trojan war, and urges Aegisthus to perform his fated part.*

*Parode, or chorus entry.*—A chorus of twelve Argive elders sings of the Trojan War, describing the omens with which the Greeks started on their mission of vengeance. They dwell especially upon the hard fate which forced Agamemnon to sacrifice his daughter. And in this they unconsciously voice one of the motives which led to the king's own death.

*Parode, or chorus entry.*—*The chorus of Argive women complains of the uncertain condition of exalted fortune, and recommends the golden mean in preference to this.*

*First episode.*—Clytemnestra appears with a stately procession of torch-bearers, having set the whole city in gala attire, with sacrificial incense burning on all the altars. The chorus asks the meaning of this. Has she had news from Troy? The queen replies that this very night she has had news, and describes at length how the signal fires had gleamed, and thus the news had leaped from height to height, all the long way from Troy to Argos.

And this sure proof and token now I tell thee,  
Seeing that my lord hath sent it me from Troy.

She expresses the hope that the victors in their joy will do nothing to offend the gods and so prevent their safe return:

May good prevail beyond all doubtful chance!  
For I have got the blessing of great joy.

With these words she covers up the real desires of her own false heart, while at the same time voicing the principle on which doom was to overtake the Greeks.

The chorus receives Clytemnestra's news with joy and prepares to sing praises to the gods, as the queen with her train leaves the stage.

*First episode.—Clytemnestra, conscious of guilt, and fearing that her returning husband will severely punish her on account of her adulterous life with Aegisthus, resolves to add crime to crime and murder Agamemnon as soon as he comes back to his home. She is further impelled to this action by his conduct in the matter of her daughter, Iphigenia, and by his own unfaithfulness to her during his long absence. Throughout this scene the nurse vainly tries to dissuade her.*

*Clytemnestra is either influenced to recede from her purpose by the nurse, or else pretends to be resolved to draw back in order to test Aegisthus who now enters. In the end, the two conspirators withdraw to plan their intended crime.*

*First choral interlude.—The chorus sings in praise of Zeus, who has signally disproved the skeptic's claim that*

The gods deign not to care for mortal men  
By whom the grace of things inviolable  
Is trampled under foot.

The shameful guilt of Paris is described, the woe of the wronged Menelaüs, and the response of all Greece to his cry for vengeance. But, after all, the chorus is in doubt as to whether the good news can be true—when a herald enters with fresh news.

*First choral interlude.—The chorus sings in praise of Apollo for the victory over Troy. To this are added the praises of Juno, Minerva, and Jove. In the end the chorus hails the approach of the herald Eurybates.*

*Second episode.—The herald describes to the chorus the complete downfall of Troy, which came as a punishment for the sin of Paris and of the nation which upheld him in it. At the same time the sufferings of the Greeks during the progress of the war are not forgotten. Clytemnestra, entering, prompted by her own guilty conscience, bids the herald tell Agamemnon to hasten home, and take to him her own protestation of absolute faithfulness to him:*

who has not broken  
One seal of his in all this length of time.

The herald, in response to further questions of the chorus, describes the great storm which wrecked the Greek fleet upon their homeward voyage.

*Second episode.—Eurybates announces to Clytemnestra the return and approach of Agamemnon, and describes the terrible storm which overtook the Greeks upon their homeward voyage. At the command of the queen victims are prepared for sacrifice to the gods, and a banquet for the victorious Agamemnon. At last the captive Trojan women headed by Cassandra are seen approaching.*

*Second choral interlude.—The chorus sings of Helen as the bane of the Trojans:*

Dire cause of strife with bloodshed in her train.

And now

The penalty of foul dishonor done  
To friendship's board and Zeus

has been paid by Troy, which is likened to a man who fosters a lion's cub, which is harmless while still young, but when full grown "it shows the nature of its sires," and brings destruction to the house that sheltered it.

*Second choral interlude.—A chorus of captive Trojan women sings the fate and fall of Troy; while Cassandra, seized with fits of prophetic fury, prophesies the doom that hangs over Agamemnon.*

*Third episode.—*Agamemnon is seen approaching in his chariot, followed by his train of soldiers and captives. The chorus welcomes him, but with a veiled hint that all is not well in Argos. Agamemnon fittingly thanks the gods for his success and for his safe return, and promises in due time to investigate affairs at home.

Clytemnestra, now entering, in a long speech of fulsome welcome, describes the grief which she has endured for her lord's long absence in the midst of perils, and protests her own absolute faithfulness to him. She explains the absence of Orestes by saying that she has intrusted him to Strophius, king of Phocis, to be cared for in the midst of the troublous times. She concludes with the ambiguous prayer:

Ah Zeus, work out for me  
All that I pray for; let it be thy care  
To look to that thou purposest to work.

Agamemnon, after briefly referring to Cassandra and bespeaking kindly treatment for her, goes into the palace, accompanied by Clytemnestra.

*Third episode.—*Agamemnon comes upon the scene, and, meeting Cassandra, is warned by her of the fate that hangs over him; but she is not believed.

*Third choral interlude.*—The chorus, though it sees with its own eyes that all is well with Agamemnon, that he is returned in safety to his own home, is filled with sad forebodings of some hovering evil which it cannot dispel.

*Third choral interlude.*—*Apropos of the fall of Troy, the chorus of Argive women sings the praises of Hercules whose arrows had been required by fate for the destruction of Troy.*

*Exode.*—Clytemnestra returns and bids Cassandra, who still remains standing in her chariot, to join the other slaves in ministering at the altar. But Cassandra stands motionless, paying no heed to the words of the queen, who leaves the scene saying:

I will not bear the shame of uttering more.

Cassandra now descends from her chariot and bursts into wild and woeful lamentations. By her peculiar clairvoyant power she foresees and declares to the chorus the death of Agamemnon at the hands of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, as well as the manner of it; she also foretells the vengeance which Orestes is destined to work upon the murderers. Her own fate is as clearly seen and announced, as she passes through the door into the palace.

Soon the chorus hears the death cry of Agamemnon, that he is "struck down with deadly stroke." They are faint-heartedly and with a multiplicity of counsel discussing what it is best to do when Clytemnestra, with blood-stained garments and followed by a guard of soldiers, enters to them from the palace. The corpses of Agamemnon and Cassandra are seen through the door within the palace. The queen confesses, describes, and exults in the murder of her husband. The chorus makes elaborate lamentation for Agamemnon, and prophesies that vengeance will light on Clytemnestra. But she scorns their threatening prophecies. In the end Aegisthus enters, avowing that he has plotted this murder and has at last avenged his father, Thyestes, upon the father of Agamemnon, Atreus, who had so foully wronged Thyestes. The chorus curses him and reminds him that Orestes still lives and will surely avenge his father.

*Exode.*—*Cassandra, either standing where she can see within the palace, or else by clairvoyant power, reports the murder of*

*Agamemnon, which is being done within.*

*Electra urges Orestes to flee before his mother and Aegisthus shall murder him also. Very opportunely, Strophius comes in his chariot, just returning as victor from the Olympic games. Electra intrusts her brother to his care, and betakes her own self to the altar for protection.*

*Electra, after defying and denouncing her mother and Aegisthus, is dragged away to prison and torture, and Cassandra is led out to her death.*



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## INDEX OF MYTHOLOGICAL SUBJECTS

[References are to the lines of the Latin text. If the passage is longer than one line, only the first line is cited. Line citations to passages of especial importance to the subject under discussion are starred. A few historical characters from the *Octavia* are included in the Index. The names of the characters appearing in these tragedies are printed in large capitals, with the name of the tragedy in which the character occurs following in parentheses.]

ABSYRTUS, a son of Aeëtes, and brother of Medea. Medea, fleeing with Jason from Colchis, slew her brother and scattered his mangled remains behind her, in order to retard her father's pursuit, *Med.* 121, 125, \*131, 452, 473, 911; his dismembered ghost appears to the distracted Medea, *ibid.* 963.

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ACHELŌUS, the river-god of the river of the same name. He fought with Hercules for the possession of Deianira, changing himself into various forms, *H. Oct.* \*299; defeated by Hercules, *ibid.* \*495.

ACHERON, one of the rivers of hades, *Thy.* 17; described by Theseus, *H. Fur.* 715.

ACHILLES, son of Peleus and Thetis, and one of the celebrated Greek heroes in the Trojan War. He was connected by birth with heaven (Jupiter), the sea (Thetis), and the lower world (Aeacus), *Tro.* 344; educated by Chiron, the centaur, *ibid.* 832 hidden by his mother in the court of Lycomedes, king of Scyros, in the disguise of a girl's garments, in order to keep him from the war, *ibid.* 213; while there, became the father of Pyrrhus by Deïdamia, daughter of the king, *ibid.* 342; his activities in the early period of the Trojan War, *ibid.* 182; wounds and cures Telephus, *ibid.* \*215; overthrows Lyrnessus and Chrysa, taking captive Briseïs and Chryseïs, *ibid.* 220; effect of his anger on account of the loss of Briseïs, *ibid.* 194 318; example of the taming power of love, *Oct.* 814; slays Memnon and trembles at his own victory, *Tro.* \*239; slays Penthesilea, the Amazon, *ibid.* 243; works dire havoc among Trojans in revenge for death of Patroclus, *Agam.* 619; slays Hector and drags his dead body around walls of Troy, *Tro.* 189; is slain by Paris, *ibid.* 347; his ghost appears to the Greeks on the eve of their homeward voyage, and demands the sacrifice of Polyxena upon his tomb, *ibid.* \*170.

ACTAEON, a grandson of Cadmus, who accidentally saw Diana bathing in a pool near Mt. Cithaeron. For this he was changed by the angry goddess into a stag, and in this form was pursued and slain by his own dogs, *Oed.* \*751; *Phoen.*, 14.

ACTE, the mistress of Nero who displaced Poppaea, *Oct.* 195.

ADMĒTUS, see [ALCESTIS](#).

ADRASTUS, king of Argos. He received the fugitive Polynices at his court, gave him his daughter in marriage, and headed the expedition of the Seven against Thebes, in order to reinstate his son-in-law upon the throne, *Phoen.* 374.

AEACUS, son of Jupiter and Europa, father of Peleus; on account of his just government on earth he was made one of the judges of spirits in hades, *H. Oet.* 1558; *H. Fur.* 734. See under [JUDGES IN HADES](#).

AEĒTES, king of Colchis, son of Phoebus and Persa, and father of Medea, *Med.* 210; grandeur, extent, and situation of kingdom described, *ibid.* 209; wealth of his kingdom, *ibid.* 483; had received a wonderful gold-wrought robe from Phoebus as proof of fatherhood; this Medea anoints with magic poison, and sends to Creüsa, *ibid.* 570; he was despoiled of his realm through the theft of the golden fleece, *ibid.* 913.

AEGEUS, see [THESEUS](#).

AEGISTHUS (*Agamemnon*), son of an incestuous union between Thyestes and his daughter. His birth was the result of Apollo's advice to Thyestes, that only thus could he secure vengeance upon the house of Atreus, *Agam.* 48, 294; at opening of play he recognizes that the fatal day is come for which he was born, *ibid.* 226; lived in guilty union with Clytemnestra, wife of Agamemnon, *ibid. passim*.

AEGOCEROS, a poetic expression for the more usual *Capricornus*, the zodiacal constellation of the Goat, *Thy.* 864.

AEGYPTUS, see [DANAÏDES](#).

AESCULAPIUS, son of Apollo and the nymph Coronis; he was versed in the knowledge of medicine, was deified, and had the chief seat of

his worship at Epidaurus, *Hip.* 1022.

AETNA, a volcano in Sicily, *Phoen.* 314; its fires were used as a type of raging heat, *Hip.* 102; *H. Oet.* 285; considered as the seat of the forge of Vulcan, *H. Fur.* 106; supposed to be heaped upon the buried Titan's breast, *Med.* 410.

AGAMEMNON (*Troades, Agamemnon*), king of Mycenae, son of Atreus, brother of Menelaüs, commander of the Greek forces at Troy. He and Menelaüs used by Atreus to entrap Thyestes, *Thy.* 325; tamed by the power of love, *Oet.* 815; took captive Chryseïs, daughter of the priest of Apollo, *Agam.* 175; compelled to give her up, he took from Achilles by force his maiden Briseïs, *ibid.* 186; attempts to dissuade Pyrrhus from the sacrifice of Polyxena to Achilles' ghost, *Tro.* \*203; inflamed by love for Cassandra, *Agam.* 188, 255; his power magnified as the great king who has come unscathed out of a thousand perils, *ibid.* 204; his homeward voyage and wreck of his fleet described, *ibid.* \*421; returns to Mycenae and hails his native land, *ibid.* 782; his murder described by Cassandra who either beholds it through the palace door, or sees it by clairvoyant power, *ibid.* \*867. See [CASSANDRA](#), [CLYTEMNESTRA](#), [IPHIGENIA](#), [PYRRHUS](#).

AGĀVE, a daughter of Cadmus and Harmonia, mother of Pentheus, king of Thebes. She, with her sisters, in a fit of Bacchic frenzy, slew Pentheus on Mt. Cithaeron, rent away his head, and bore it back to Thebes, *Oed.* 1006; *Phoen.* 15, 363; her shade appears from hades, raging still, *Oed.* 616. See [PENTHEUS](#).

AGRIPPINA I, daughter of M. Vipsanius Agrippa and Julia, the daughter of Augustus, mother of the emperor Caligula. She died in exile at Pandataria, *Oet.* \*932.

AGRIPPINA II (*Octavia*), daughter of the preceding, wife of Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus, and mother of Nero. She married the emperor Claudius, whom she murdered by poison, *Oet.* 26, 45, 165, 340; she was the stepmother of Octavia, and the cause of all her woes, *ibid.* 22; plotted the murder of Silanus, the betrothed lover of Octavia, and forced the latter into marriage with Nero, *ibid.* 150; she sought in all this her own power and world-wide sway, *ibid.*

155, 612; murdered by her own son, Nero, *ibid.* 46, 95, 165; her murder briefly described and attributed to Poppaea's influence, *ibid.* 126; described in full detail, *ibid.* \*310, \*600; former high estate and pitiable death contrasted, *ibid.* 952; her ghost appears to curse Nero for his impieties, *ibid.* \*593.

AJAX, son of Oïleus, called simply Oïleus; his death described, *Med.* 660; for his blasphemous defiance of the gods he was destroyed by Pallas and Neptune in the great storm which wrecked the Greek fleet on its homeward voyage, *Agam.* \*532.

AJAX, son of Telamon, crazed with rage because the armor of the dead Achilles was awarded to Ulysses, *Agam.* 210.

ALCESTIS, wife of Admetus, king of Pherae, for the preservation of whose life she resigned her own, *Med.* 662.

ALCĪDES, see [HERCULES](#).

ALCMĒNA (*Hercules Oetaeus*), wife of Amphitryon, a Theban prince, beloved of Jupiter, and mother by him of Hercules, *H. Fur.* 22, 490. See [HERCULES](#).

ALCYONE, see [CEYX](#).

ALTHAEA, wife of Oeneus, king of Calydonia, and mother of Meleager. In revenge for the latter's slaughter of her two brothers, she burned the charmed billet of wood on which her son's life depended, and so brought to pass his death, *Med.* 779; on this account considered as a type of unnatural woman, *H. Oet.* 954.

AMALTHĒA, the goat of Olenus which fed with its milk the infant Jove, and was set as constellation in the sky; not yet known as such in the golden age, *Med.* 313. See [OLENUS](#).

AMAZONS, a race of warlike women who dwelt on the river Thermodon, *Med.* 215; even they have felt the influence of love, *Hip.* 575; conquered by Bacchus, *Oed.* 479; Clytemnestra compared to them, *Agam.* 736; allies of Troy, *Tro.* 12; their queen, Penthesilea, slain by Achilles, *ibid.* 243; Hercules laments that if he was fated to die by a woman's hand he had not been slain by the

Amazon, Hippolyte, *H. Oet.* 1183. See [ANTIOPE](#), [PENTHESILEA](#), [HIPPOLYTE](#).

AMPHION, son of Antiope by Jupiter, king of Thebes, and husband of Niobe; renowned for his music; built the walls of Thebes by the magic of his lyre, *Phoen.* 566; *H. Fur.* 262; his hounds are heard baying at the time of the great plague at Thebes, *Oed.* 179; his shade arises from hades holding still in his hand the wonderful lyre, *ibid.* 612.

AMPHITRYON (*Hercules Furens*), a Theban prince, husband of Alcmena, the mother of Hercules, *H. Fur.* 309; he proves that not he but Jupiter is the father of Hercules, *ibid.* 440; welcomes Hercules upon his return from hades, *ibid.* 618.

ANCAEUS, an Arcadian hero, one of the Argonauts, slain by the Calydonian boar, *Med.* 643.

ANDROMACHE (*Troades*), wife of Hector and mother of Astyanax; attempts to hide and save her son from Ulysses, *Tro.* \*430; given by lot to Pyrrhus, *ibid.* 976. See [ASTYANAX](#).

ANTAEUS, a Libyan giant, son of Neptune and Terra, a famous wrestler, who gained new strength by being thrown to mother earth; strangled by Hercules, who held him aloft in the air, *H. Fur.* 482, 1171; *H. Oet.* 24, 1899; Alcmena fears that a possible son of his may come to vex the earth, *H. Oet.* 1788. See [HERCULES](#).

ANTIGONE (*Phoenissae*), the daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta; she refuses to desert her father in his blindness and exile, *Phoen.* 51; Oedipus wonders that such a pure girl should have sprung from so vile a house, *ibid.* 80; she argues her father's innocence, *ibid.* 203.

ANTIOPE, an Amazon, wife of Theseus and slain by him, *Hip.* 226, 927, 1167; mother of Hippolytus by Theseus, *ibid.* 398; her personal appearance and dress described, *ibid.* \*398; her stern and lofty beauty inherited by Hippolytus, *ibid.* 659.

ANTONIUS (Marc Antony), a great Roman general, defeated by Octavianus at the battle of Actium; fled with Cleopatra to Egypt, *Oct.* 518.

APOLLO, son of Jupiter and Latona, born in Delos, a "roving land," *H. Fur.* 453; twin brother of Diana, *Med.* 87; the laurel his sacred tree, *Agam.* 588; god of the prophetic tripod, *Med.* 86; inspirer of priestess at his oracle, *Oed.* 269; god of the bow, is himself pierced by the arrows of Cupid, *Hip.* 192; killed the dragon Python, *H. Fur.* 455; exiled from heaven and doomed to serve a mortal for killing the Cyclopes, he came to earth and kept the flocks of Admetus, king of Pherae, *ibid.* 451; *Hip.* 296; hymn in praise of, *Agam.* 310; worshiped as the sun, lord of the sky, under the name of Phoebus Apollo. See [PHOEBUS](#).

AQUARIUS, the zodiacal constellation, known as the Water-bearer, *Thy.* 865.

ARABES, the inhabitants of Arabia, famed for their spice groves, *Oed.* 117; sun-worshippers, *H. Oet.* 793; use poisoned darts, *Med.* 711.

ARCTOPHYLAX, the Bear-keeper, a northern constellation, called also Boötes, according as the two adjacent constellations are called the Bears (*Arctos, Ursae*), or the Wagons (*Plaustra*). By a strange mixture of the two conceptions, this constellation is called *Arctophylax* and *custos plaustris* ("the wagon's guardian") in the same connection, *Thy.* 874. See [BOÖTES](#).

ARCADIANS, the most ancient race of men, older than the moon, *H. Oet.* 1883; *Hip.* 786.

ARCADIAN BEARS, the constellations of the Great and Little Bears, which wheel round their course in the northern sky, but do not set, *H. Fur.* 129. See [ARCTOS](#), [BEARS](#), and [CALLISTO](#).

ARCADIAN BOAR, captured by Hercules and brought alive to Eurystheus as his fourth labor, *Agam.* 832; *H. Fur.* 229; *H. Oet.* 1536. See [HERCULES](#).

ARCADIAN STAG, captured by Hercules, *H. Fur.* 222. See [HERCULES](#).

ARCTOS, a name given to the double constellation of the Great and Little Bears, *Oed.* 507; called also Arcadian stars, *ibid.* 478. See [BEARS](#) and [CALLISTO](#).



ARGO, the name of the ship in which the Greek heroes under Jason sailed to Colchis in quest of the golden fleece, *Med.* 361; chorus comments upon the rashness of the man who first intrusted his life to a ship, and recalls the adventure of the Argonautic heroes, *ibid.* \*301; this voyage was impious, since it broke the law of the golden age, that the lands should be severed, not connected by the seas, *ibid.* 335; Tiphys was the builder and the pilot of the Argo, *ibid.* 3, 318; he was instructed by Minerva, patron goddess of the arts and crafts, *ibid.* 3, 365; the Argo had its keel made of wood from the talking oak of Dodona, *ibid.* 349; the sailing of the new ship described, *ibid.* \*318; how it escaped the Symplegades, *ibid.* \*341; the roll of the Argonautic heroes, "the bulwark of the Greeks, the offspring of the gods," *ibid.* \*227; nearly all came to a violent death, *ibid.* \*607.

ARGOS, the capital of Argolis, sacred to Juno, the home of heroes, *Agam.* 808; paid homage to Bacchus, after the favor of Juno had been won by him, *Oed.* 486.

ARIADNE, daughter of Minos, king of Crete; she fell in love with Theseus, and supplied him with a thread by which to find his way out of the labyrinth, *Hip.* 662; she fled with Theseus, but was ruined and deserted by him on the island of Naxos, *ibid.* 665; and there found and beloved by Bacchus, *Oed.* 448; who made her his wife and immortalized her by setting her as a constellation in the heavens, *ibid.* 497; *H. Fur.* 18; *Hip.* 663; pardoned by her father for her love of Theseus, *ibid.* 245.

ARIES, the golden-fleeced ram which bore Phrixus and Helle through the air, and which was afterward set in the heavens as one of the zodiacal constellations, *Thy.* 850.

ASTRAEA, the goddess of Justice, who lived among men during the golden age, but finally left the earth because of the sins of man, *Oct.* 424; she is the zodiacal constellation, Virgo, *H. Oet.* 69; called, incorrectly and perhaps figuratively, the mother of Somnus, *H. Fur.* 1068. See [JUSTICE](#).

ASTYANAX (*Troades*), the young son of Hector and Andromache, pictured as leading his youthful playmates in joyful dance around

the wooden horse, *Agam.* 634; compared with his father, *Tro.* 464; his death demanded by the Greeks, as announced by Calchas, *ibid.* 369; reasons for his death from the standpoint of the Greeks, *ibid.* 526; the doom of Astyanax announced to his mother, *ibid.* 620; she pathetically recounts all the activities into which he would have grown, but which must now be given up, *ibid.* \*770; his death described by messenger, *ibid.* \*1068.

ATLANTIADES, see [PLEIADES](#).

ATLAS, a high mountain in the north-west of Libya, conceived as a giant upon whose head the heavens rested, *H. Oet.* 12, 1599; eased awhile of his burden by Hercules, *ibid.* 1905.

ATREUS (*Thyestes*), a son of Pelops, father of Agamemnon and Menelaüs, and brother of Thyestes, between whom and himself existed a deadly feud. He plans how he will avenge himself upon his brother, *Thy.* 176; describes his brother's sins against himself, *ibid.* 220; his revenge takes shape and expression, *ibid.* 260; the place and scene of his murder of the sons of Thyestes described at length, *ibid.* \*650; he gloats over the horrible agony of his brother, *ibid.* 1057.

ATTIS, a young Phrygian shepherd, mourned by the priests of Cybele, *Agam.* 686.

AUGE, an Arcadian maiden, loved by Hercules, and mother by him of Telephus, *H. Oet.* 367.

AUGĒAN STABLES, the stables of Augeas, king of Elis, containing three thousand head of cattle, and uncleansed for thirty years; they were cleaned by Hercules in a single day, *H. Fur.* 247.

AUGUSTUS, the first emperor of Rome; his rule cited by Seneca to Nero as a model of strong but merciful sway, *Oct.* \*477; his bloody path to power described by Nero, *ibid.* \*505; deified at death, *ibid.* 528.

AULIS, a seaport of Boeotia, the rendezvous of the Greek fleet, whence they sailed to Troy. Here they were stayed by adverse winds until they were appeased by the sacrifice of Iphigenia, *Agam.* 567; *Tro.* 164; the hostility of Aulis to all ships because her king, Tiphys, had

met death on the Argonautic expedition, assigned as a reason for her detention of the Greek fleet, *Med.* 622. See [IPHIGENIA](#).

## B

**BACCHUS**, son of Jupiter and Semele, the daughter of Cadmus. The unborn infant was saved from his dying mother who had been blasted by the lightnings of her lover, *Oed.* 502; *Med.* 84; *H. Fur.* 457; to escape the wrath of Juno, he was hid in Arabian (or Indian) Nysa, where, disguised as a girl, he was nourished by the nymphs, *Oed.* 418; in childhood captured by Tyrian pirates, who, frightened by marvelous manifestations of divine power on board their ship, leaped overboard and were changed into dolphins, *ibid.* \*449; visited India, accompanied by Theban heroes, *ibid.* \*113; *H. Fur.* 903; visited Lydia and sailed on the Pactolus, *Oed.* 467; conquered the Amazons and many other savage peoples, *ibid.* 469; god of the flowing locks, crowned with ivy, carrying the thyrsus, *ibid.* 403; *H. Fur.* 472; *Hip.* \*753; marvelous powers of the thyrsus described, *Oed.* \*491; attended by his foster father Silenus, *ibid.* 429; called Bassareus, *Oed.* 432; Bromius, *Hip.* 760; Ogygian Iacchus, *Oed.* 437; Nyctelius, *ibid.* 492; destroyed Lycurgus, king of Thrace, because of that king's opposition to him, *H. Fur.* 903; inspired his maddened worshipers, the women of Thebes, to rend Pentheus in pieces, *Oed.* 441, 483; helped Jupiter in war against the giants, *H. Fur.* 458; found Ariadne on island of Naxos, where she had been deserted by Theseus, made her his wife, and set her as a constellation in the heavens, *Oed.* 488, 497; *Hip.* 760; *H. Fur.* 18; dithyrambic chorus in his praise, giving numerous incidents in his career, *Oed.* \*\*403; won the favor of Juno and the homage of her city of Argos, *ibid.* 486; gained a place in heaven, *H. Oet.* 94. See [ARIADNE](#), [BASSARIDES](#), [BROMIUS](#), [NYCTELIUS](#), [OGYGES](#), [PENTHEUS](#), [PROETIDES](#), [SEMELE](#), [SILENUS](#).

**BASSARIDES**, female worshipers of Bacchus, so called because they were clad in fox skins, *Oed.* 432. Hence Bacchus was called *Bassareus*.

**BEARS**, the northern constellations of the Great and Little Bears; they were forbidden by the jealous Juno to bathe in the ocean (an

explanation of the fact that these constellations never set), *H. Oet.* 281, 1585; *Thy.* 477; *Med.* 405; have plunged into the sea under the influence of magic, *ibid.* 758; shall some day, by a reversal of nature's laws, plunge beneath the sea, *Thy.* 867; the Great Bear used for steering ships by the Greeks, the Little Bear by the Phoenicians, *Med.* 694. See [ARCADIAN BEARS](#), [ARCTOS](#), [CALLISTO](#).

BELIAS, one of the Belides, or grand-daughters of Belus, the same as the Danaïdes, since Danaüs was the son of Belus, *H. Oet.* 960.

BELLONA, the bloody goddess of war, conceived of as dwelling in hell, *H. Oet.* 1312; haunts the palace of kings, *Agam.* 82.

BOEOTIA, land named from the heifer which guided Cadmus to the place where he should found his city, *Oed.* 722.

BOÖTES, the northern constellation of the Wagoner, driving his wagons, under which form also the two Bears are conceived, *Oct.* 233; *Agam.* 70; unable to set beneath the sea, *ibid.* 69; not yet known as a constellation in the golden age, *Med.* 315.

BRIAREUS, one of the giants pictured as storming heaven, *H. Oet.* 167.

BRISĒIS, a captive maiden, beloved by her captor, Achilles, from whom she was taken by Agamemnon, *Tro.* 194, 220, 318.

*Britannicus*, son of the emperor Claudius and Messalina, brother of Octavia, and stepbrother of Nero, by whom, at the instigation of Agrippina, the mother of Nero, he was murdered, in order that Nero might have undisputed succession to the throne, *Oct.* 47, 67, \*166, 242, 269.

BROMIUS (the "noisy one"), an epithet of Bacchus, on account of the noisy celebration of his festivals, *Hip.* 760.

BRUTUS, the friend of Julius Caesar, and yet the leader of the conspirators against him, *Oct.* 498.

BUSĪRIS, a king of Egypt who sacrificed strangers upon his altars, and was himself slain by Hercules, *Tro.* 1106, *H. Fur.* 483; *H. Oet.* 26; Alcmena fears that a possible son of his may come to vex the earth now that Hercules is dead, *ibid.* 1787.

## C

CADMEIDES, daughters of Cadmus, e. g., Agave, Autoñoë, Ino, who in their madness tore Pentheus in pieces, *H. Fur.* 758.

CADMUS, son of Agenor, the king of Phoenicia. Being sent by his father to find his lost sister, Europa, with the command not to return unless successful, he wandered over the earth in vain, and at last founded a land of his own (Boeotia), guided thither by a heifer sent by Apollo. Here he kills the great serpent sacred to Mars, sows its teeth in the earth from which armed men spring up, *Oed.* \*\*712; *H. Fur.* 917; *Phoen.* 125; he was at last himself changed to a serpent, *H. Fur.* 392; his house was cursed, so that no king of Thebes from Cadmus on held the throne in peace and happiness, *Phoen.* 644.

CAESAR, Julius, quoted as a mighty general, unconquered in war, but slain by the hands of citizens, *Oct.* 500.

CALCHAS (*Troades*), a distinguished seer among the Greeks before Troy; his prophetic power described, *Tro.* \*353; he decides that Polyxena must be sacrificed, *ibid.* 360.

CALLISTO, a nymph of Arcadia, beloved of Jove, changed into a bear by Juno, and set in the heavens by her lover as the constellation of the Great Bear, while her son Arcas was made the Little Bear, *H. Fur.* 6; is the constellation by which the Greek sailors guided their ships, *ibid.* 7; called the frozen Bear, *ibid.* 1139. See [JUPITER](#), [ARCTOS](#), [BEARS](#).

CALPE, one side of a rocky passage rent by Hercules, thus letting the Mediterranean Sea into the outer ocean. Calpe was one of the so-called "pillars of Hercules," or Gibraltar, while the opposite mass in Africa from which it was rent was called Abyla, *H. Fur.* 237; *H. Oet.* 1240, 1253, 1569.

CANCER, the zodiacal constellation of the Crab, in which the sun is found in the summer solstice, *Thy.* 854; *Hip.* 287; *H. Oet.* 41, 67, 1219, 1573.

CAPHEREUS, a cliff on the coast of Euboea, where Nauplius lured the Greek fleet to destruction by displaying false fires, *Agam.* 560. See

[NAUPLIUS.](#)

CAPNOMANTĪA, a method of divining by observation of the smoke of the sacrifice, described, *Oed.* \*325.

CASSANDRA (*Agamemnon*), beloved by Apollo, but false to him; for this, the gift of prophecy bestowed by him was made of no avail by his decree that she should never be believed, *Tro.* 34; *Agam.* 255, 588; given by lot to Agamemnon in the distribution of the captives, *Tro.* 978; raves in prophetic frenzy and describes the murder of Agamemnon in progress, *Agam.* \*720; is led away to death, rejoicing in the prospect, and predicting the death of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, *ibid.* 1004.

CASTOR, one of the twin sons of Jupiter and Leda, wife of Tyndarus, king of Sparta; his brother was Pollux, *Phoen.* 128; Castor was the rider of the famous horse, Cyllarus, given to him by Juno, *Hip.* 810; the twins were members of the Argonautic expedition, *Med.* 230; called Tyndaridae, from the name of their reputed father, *H. Fur.* 14; Castor a famous horseman, Pollux, a famous boxer, *Med.* 89; the two were set as constellations in the sky to the grief of Juno, *Oct.* 208.

CAUCASUS, a rough mountain range between the Black and Caspian Seas, *Thy.* 1048; here Prometheus was chained, *H. Oet.* 1378; *Med.* 709. See [PROMETHEUS.](#)

CECROPS, the mythical founder and first king of Athens; hence the Athenians were called Cecropians, *Med.* 76; *Thy.* 1049.

CENAEUM, a promontory on the north-west point of the island of Euboea; here Hercules sacrificed to Jove, who was called Cenean Jove from the position of his temple, after his victory over Eurytus, *H. Oet.* 102; while sacrificing here, Hercules donned the poisoned robe sent by Deianira, *ibid.* 782.

CENTAURS, a race of wild people in Thessaly, half man, half horse, *H. Oet.* 1049, 1195, 1925; fight of, with the Lapithae, *H. Fur.* 778; the centaur, Nessus, killed by Hercules, *H. Oet.* \*503 See [CHIRON,](#) [NESSUS.](#)

CERBERUS, the monstrous three-headed dog, guardian of hades, *Thy.* 16; *H. Oet.* 23; *H. Fur.* 1107; his existence denied, *Tro.* 404; said to have broken out of hades, and to be wandering abroad in the Theban land, *Oed.* 171; his clanking chains heard on earth, *ibid.* 581; Hercules, in the accomplishment of his twelfth labor, brought the dog in chains to the upper world, *H. Oet.* 1245; *Agam.* 859; *H. Fur.* \*50, 547; Theseus describes the dog in great detail, and how he was brought to the upper world by Hercules, *ibid.* \*760; his actions in the light of day, *ibid.* \*813. See [HERCULES](#).

CERES, the daughter of Saturn, sister of Jupiter, mother of Proserpina, and goddess of agriculture; her vain and anxious search for her daughter, *H. Fur.* 659; taught Triptolemus the science of agriculture, *Hip.* 838; the mystic rites of her worship, *H. Fur.* 845. Her name used frequently by metonymy for grain. See [ELEUSIN](#), [PROSERPINA](#), [TRIPTOLEMUS](#).

CEYX, king of Trachin who suffered death by shipwreck. His wife Alcyone, mourned him incessantly, until finally both he and she were changed into kingfishers, *H. Oet.* 197; *Agam.* 681; *Oct.* 7.

CHAONIAN OAKS, a sacred grove in Chaonia of Epirus containing a temple and oracle of Jupiter, said to be the oldest oracle in Greece; the oracle was supposed to be given out by the oaks themselves, which were endowed with the miraculous power of speech, or by the doves which resorted there. These great "Chaonian trees" are used as a type of tall trees in general, *Oed.* 728; the "talking oak" of Chaonia, *H. Oet.* 1623. See [DODONA](#).

CHARON, the aged man who ferries souls across the river Styx, *H. Fur.* 555; his personal appearance described by Theseus, *ibid.* \*764; forced by Hercules to bear him across the Lethe (not Styx), *ibid.* \*770; overweared by his toil of transporting such throngs of Theban dead, *Oed.* 166; charmed by the music of Orpheus, *H. Oet.* 1072; Cassandra prophesies that his skiff shall on that day carry two royal souls across the river of death, *Agam.* 752.

CHARYBDIS, a whirlpool between Italy and Sicily, opposite to Scylla, alternately sucking in and vomiting up the sea, *Med.* 408; *H. Oet.* 235; *Thy.* 581. See [SCYLLA](#).

CHIMAERA, a monster combining a lion, a dragon, and a goat, which vomited forth fire, *Med.* 828.

CHIRON, a centaur dwelling in a cavern on Mt. Pelion, famous for his knowledge of plants, medicine, and divination. To his training was intrusted the young Jason, Hercules, Aesculapius, and Achilles, *H. Fur.* 971; *Tro.* 832; set in the sky as the zodiacal constellation of Sagittarius, the "Archer," *Thy.* 860.

CHRYSĒIS, the daughter of Chryses, a priest of Apollo at Chrysa. She was taken captive by the Greeks and fell to the lot of Agamemnon, who, being forced by a pestilence sent by Apollo to give her up, claimed Briseis, the captive maid of Achilles. Hence arose a deadly strife between the two, *Tro.* 223. See [ACHILLES](#).

CIRRHA, a very ancient town in Phocis, near Delphi, where were the famous temple and oracle of Apollo, *Oed.* 269; *H. Oet.* 92, 1475.

CITHAERON, a mountain near Thebes where the infant Oedipus had been exposed, *Phoen.* 13; the scene of many wild and tragic deeds. See [ACTAEON](#), [AGAVE](#), [DIRCE](#), [PENTHEUS](#).

CLAUDIUS, the fourth Roman emperor, father of Octavia, murdered by his second wife, Agrippina, *Oct.* 26, 45, 269.

CLOTHO, one of the three fates or Parcae, supposed to hold the distaff and spin the thread of life, *H. Oet.* 768; *Oct.* 16; *Thy.* 617.

CLYTEMNESTRA (*Agamemnon*), the daughter of Tyndarus and Leda, wife of Agamemnon, mother of Orestes, Iphigenia, and Electra. During the absence of her husband at the Trojan War, she engaged in a guilty conspiracy with Aegisthus to murder Agamemnon. She deliberates whether she shall give up her course of crime or carry it out to the end, *Agam.* 108; tests the courage and determination of Aegisthus *ibid.* 239; her murder of Agamemnon prophesied and described by Cassandra, *ibid.* \*734. See [AGAMEMNON](#) and [AEGISTHUS](#).

COCŪTUS, "the river of lamentation," a gloomy, repulsive river of hades, *H. Oet.* 1963; "sluggish, vile," *H. Fur.* 686; conceived as the river over which spirits cross to the land of the dead, *ibid.* 870.



COLCHIAN BULL, the fire-breathing monster which Jason was set to tame and yoke to the plow; Medea claims to have preserved some of his fiery breath for her magic uses, *Med.* 829.

COLCHIAN WOMAN, See [MEDEA](#).

CREON (*Medea*), king of Corinth, to whose court Jason and Medea fled after they were driven out of Thessaly; father of Creüsa, for whom he selected Jason as a husband, decreeing the banishment of Medea; headstrong and arbitrary, he breaks the most sacred ties to work his own will, *Med.* 143; after a stormy interview with Medea, he finally allows her a single day of respite from exile, *ibid.* \*190; called the son of Sisyphus, *ibid.* 512; his death and that of his daughter by means of magic fire announced and described, *ibid.* \*879.

CREON (*Oedipus*), a Theban prince, brother of Queen Jocasta, *Oed.* 210; sent by Oedipus to consult the oracle as to the cause of the plague at Thebes, he reports that it is because of the unavenged murder of their former king, Laius, *ibid.* \*210; he returns from necromantic rites which Tiresias had performed, and announces that Oedipus himself is guilty of the murder of Laius. He is thereupon thrown into prison by Oedipus on the charge of conspiracy with Tiresias, *ibid.* \*509; slain by the usurper, Lycus, as described by his daughter, Megara, who had been given as wife to Hercules, *H. Fur.* 254.

CRETAN BULL, a wild bull of prodigious size, which laid waste the island of Crete; caught and taken alive to Eurystheus by Hercules as his seventh labor, *H. Fur.* 230; *Agam.* 833; See [HERCULES](#).

CREÜSA (*Medea*), daughter of Creon, king of Corinth, for whom Creon chose Jason as husband, *Med.* 105; Jason's wife, Medea, bitterly protests that Creüsa shall not bear brothers to her children, *ibid.* 509; Jason is charged by his wife with love for Creüsa, *ibid.* 495; Medea prepares a magic robe as a present for Creüsa by which she shall be burned to death, *ibid.* \*816; Creüsa's death announced and described, *ibid.* 879.

CRISPINUS, a Roman knight, the husband of Poppaea, *Oct.* 731.

CUPID, the god of love, son of Venus; addressed and characterized by Deianira, *H. Oet.* \*541; all powerful over the hearts of gods and men, *Hip.* \*185; hymn recounting his wide sway, with special instances of his irresistible power, *ibid.* \*\*275; his dire power, *Oct.* 806; there is no such god; he is created by the error of men, who seek to hide their own lustful passions behind such a being, *ibid.* \*\*557; *Hip.* \*\*275.

CYBELE, a goddess worshiped in the Phrygian groves, *Hip.* 1135; the pines of Ida were sacred to her, *Tro.* 72; crowned with a turreted crown, her worship described, *Agam.* 686.

CYCLOPES, a fabulous race of giants on the coast of Sicily, having each but one eye in the middle of the forehead; they are said to have built the walls of Mycenae, *H. Fur.* 997; *Thy.* 407; Polyphemus, one of the Cyclopes, is pictured as sitting on a crag of Mt. Aetna, *ibid.* 582.

CYCNUM, a son of Mars, slain by Hercules, *H. Fur.* 485.

CYCNUM, a son of Neptune, slain by Achilles and changed at the moment of death into a swan, *Agam.* 215; *Tro.* 184.

CYLLARUS, a famous horse which Juno received from Neptune and presented to Castor, *Hip.* 811.

CYNOSŪRA, the constellation of the Lesser Bear, *Thy.* 872.

## D

DAEDALUS, an Athenian architect, the father of Icarus, in the time of Theseus and Minos. He helped Pasiphaë, wife of Minos, to accomplish her unnatural desires, *Hip.* 120; built the labyrinth for the Minotaur, *ibid.* 122, 1171; story of his escape from Crete on wings which he himself had constructed *Oed.* \*822; safe because he pursued a middle course, *H. Oet.* 683.

DANAË, daughter of Acrisius, and mother of Perseus by Jupiter who approached her in the form of a golden shower, *Oct.* 207, 772. See [PERSEUS](#).

DANAÏDES, the fifty daughters of Danaüs, brother of Aegyptus. These fifty daughters, being forced to marry the fifty sons of Aegyptus,

slew their husbands on their wedding night, with the single exception of Hypermnestra, *H. Fur.* 498; their punishment in hades for this crime was the task of filling a bottomless cistern with water carried in sieves, *ibid.* 757; Medea summons these to her aid in getting vengeance upon her own husband, *Med.* 749; Deianira would fill up the vacant place in their number left by the absence of Hypermnestra, *H. Oet.* 948; called also Belides, *ibid.* 960. See [BELIAS](#), [HYPERMNESTRA](#).

DARDANUS, the son of Jupiter and Electra, one of the ancestors of the royal house of Troy. He is represented as exulting in hades over the impending doom of Agamemnon, the enemy of his house, *Agam.* 773.

DAULIAN BIRD, i. e., Philomela, who was changed into a nightingale after the sad tragedy connected with her name, which was enacted at Daulis, a city of Phocis. She mourns continually, in her bird form, for Itys, *H. Oet.* 192. See [PHILOMELA](#) and [ITYS](#).

DEIANĪRA (*Hercules Oetaeus*), the daughter of Oeneus, king of Calydonia, sister of Meleager, wife of Hercules, and mother of Hyllus, pictured as playing with her maidens on the banks of the Acheloüs, *H. Oet.* 586; relates to her nurse the affair of her abduction by Nessus, *ibid.* \*500; her wild rage when she hears of Hercules' infatuation for Iole, *ibid.* 237; ignorant of its real power, she prepares to send the charmed robe to Hercules, *ibid.* \*535; she gives it to Lichas to bear to his master, *ibid.* 569; makes test of the remnant of the poisoned blood of Nessus after the anointed robe has been sent away and is horrified to discover its terrible power, *ibid.* \*716; later learns from Hyllus the terrible effects of the poison on Hercules, *ibid.* \*742; she prays for death, *ibid.* 842; begs Hyllus to slay her, *ibid.* 984; goes distracted and seems to see the furies approaching, *ibid.* 1002; her death by her own hand reported by Hyllus, *ibid.* 1420.

DEĪDAMĪA, daughter of Lycomedes, king of Scyros, and mother of Pyrrhus by Achilles while the latter was hiding in the disguise of maidens' garments at that court, *Tro.* 342.

DEIPHOBUS, a son of Priam and Hecuba and husband of Helen after the death of Paris; slain and mangled by the Greeks through the treachery of his wife, *Agam.* 749.

DELOS, a small island in the Aegean Sea, formerly floating about from place to place, in which condition it became the birthplace of Apollo and Diana, *H. Fur.* 453; made firm at the command of Diana, *Agam.* 384.

DELPHIC ORACLE, the famous oracle of Apollo at Delphi in Phocis; expressed in enigmatic form, *Oed.* 214; the giving-out of an oracle described, *ibid.* \*225.

DEUCALION, son of Prometheus, husband of Pyrrha; this pair were alone saved of all mankind from the flood, *Tro.* 1039. See [PYRRHA](#).

DIANA, daughter of Jupiter and Latona; twin sister of Apollo, *H. Fur.* 905; hymn in praise of, *Agam.* \*367; caused her native Delos to be a firm island, *ibid.* 369; punished Niobe for her impiety, *ibid.* 375; conceived as in triple manifestation, *Luna* or *Phoebe* in heaven, *Diana* on earth, and *Hecate* in hades, *Hip.* 412; hence called *Trivia* and worshiped where three ways meet, *Agam.* 367; Hippolytus prays to her as goddess of the chase, *Hip.* 54; her wide sway described, *ibid.* \*54; nurse of Phaedra prays that she may turn Hippolytus to love, *ibid.* 406; in form of *Luna*, an object of attack by Thessalian witchcraft, *ibid.* 421; being slighted by Oeneus, king of Aetolia or Calydon, she sent a huge boar to ravage the country. Hence Pleuron, a city of Aetolia, is said to be hostile to her, *Tro.* 827.

DICTYNNA, "goddess of the nets," an epithet applied to Diana, *Med.* 795; assumed from Britomartys, a Cretan nymph, sometimes called the Cretan Diana, who, to escape from the pursuit of her lover, leaped over a cliff into the sea, where she fell into a fishing-net.

DIOMÈDES, a bloody king of the Bistones, in Thrace, who fed his captives to fierce, man-eating horses which he kept in his stalls, *H. Oet.* 1538; *Tro.* 1108; Hercules, as his eighth labor, captured these horses, having previously fed their master to them, *Agam.* 842; *H.*

*Fur.* 226, 1170; Alomena fears that she may be given to these horses now that Hercules is dead, *H. Oet.* 1790. See [HERCULES](#).

DIRCE, the wife of Lycus, king of Thebes, who, on account of her cruelty to Antiope, was tied by her sons, Zethus and Amphion, by the hair to a wild bull, and so dragged to death on Mt. Cithaeron, *Phoen.* 19; changed to a fountain of the same name, *ibid.* 126; *H. Fur.* 916; the water of this fountain was said to flow with blood at the time of the great plague at Thebes, *Oed.* 177.

DISCORD, one of the furies, summoned by Juno from hades to drive Hercules to madness, *H. Fur.* 93; her abode described, *ibid.* \*93.

DODŌNA, a city of Chaonia in Epirus, famous for its ancient oracle of Jupiter, situated in a grove of oaks. The oracle was given in some mysterious way as if by the talking of these sacred oaks, *H. Oet.* 1473; Minerva aided in the construction of the Argo, and set in the prow a piece of timber cut from the speaking oak of Dodona, and this piece had itself the power of giving oracles; hence the "voice" which it is said that the Argo lost through fear of the clashing Symplegades, *Med.* 349. See [CHAONIAN OAKS](#).

DOMITIUS, the father of Nero, *Oct.* 249.

DRAGON, (1) the guardian of the apples of the Hesperides, slain by Hercules, and afterward set in the heavens as the constellation, Draco, lying between the two Bears, *Thy.* 870; *Med.* 694; (2) the dragon of Colchis, guardian of the Golden Fleece, put to sleep by the magic of Medea, *Med.* 703; (3) dragon sacred to Mars killed by Cadmus near the site of his destined city of Thebes. The teeth of this dragon were sown in the earth by Cadmus, and from these armed men sprung up, *Oed.* \*\*725; *H. Fur.* 260; a part of these same teeth were sown by Jason in Colchis with a similar result, *Med.* 469; the brothers who sprang up against Cadmus are described as living in hades, *Oed.* 586.

DRUSUS, Livius, the fate of, *Oct.* 887, 942.

DRYADS, a race of wood-nymphs, *H. Oet.* 1053; *Hip.* 784.

ECHO, a nymph who pined away to a mere voice for unrequited love of Narcissus. She dwells in mountain caves, and repeats the last words of all that is said in her hearing, *Tro.* 109.

ELECTRA (*Agamemnon*), daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, and sister of Orestes; gives her brother to Strophius, king of Phocis, that he may be rescued from death at the hands of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, *Agam.* 910; defies her mother, and scorns both her threats and those of Aegisthus, *ibid.* 953; is taken away to imprisonment, *ibid.* 1000; Octavia compares her woes with Electra's, to the advantage of the latter, *Oct.* 60.

ELEUSIN, an ancient city of Attica, famous for its mysteries of Ceres, *H. Oet.* 599; *Tro.* 843; *H. Fur.* 300; *Hip.* 838; the celebration of the mysteries described, *H. Fur.* \*842. See [CERES](#), [TRIPTOLEMUS](#).

ELYSIUM, the abode of the blest in the spirit world, *Tro.* 159, 944; *H. Oet.* 1916; *H. Fur.* 744; Deianira thinks that she should be expelled from Elysium by all faithful wives, *H. Oet.* 956.

ENCELADUS, one of the giant Titans who attempted to dethrone Jove, overthrown and buried under Sicily, *H. Fur.* 79; *H. Oet.* 1140, 1145, 1159, 1735.

ERIDANUS, the mythical and poetical name of the river Po, *H. Oet.* 186. See [PHAËTHONIADES](#).

ERINYES, the furies, *H. Fur.* 982; *Med.* 952; *Oed.* 590; *Agam.* 83; *Thy.* 251; *H. Oet.* 609, 671; *Oet.* 23, 161, 263, 619, 913. See [FURIES](#).

ERYX, the son of Butes and Venus, a famous boxer, overcome by Hercules, *H. Fur.* 481; a mountain in Sicily, said to have been named from the preceding, *Oed.* 600.

ETEOCLES (*Phoenissae*), one of the two sons of Oedipus and Jocasta. After Oedipus went into voluntary banishment, abandoning the throne of Thebes (*Phoen.* 104), Eteocles and Polynices agreed to reign alternately, each a year. Eteocles, the elder, first ascended the throne, but when his year was up refused to give way to his brother, *Phoen.* 55, 280, 389. See [POLYNICES](#).

EUMENIDES ("the gracious ones"), a euphemistic name for the furies, *H. Fur.* 87; *H. Oet.* 1002.

EURŌPA, daughter of Agenor, king of Tyre, beloved of Jupiter, who, in the form of a bull, carried her away to Crete, *Oct.* 206, 766; *H. Oet.* 550; this episode is immortalized by the constellation of Taurus, which rises in April, *H. Fur.* 9; sought in vain by her brother Cadmus, *Oed.* 715; the continent of Europe named after her, *Agam.* 205, 274; *Tro.* 896.

EURYBATES (*Agamemnon*), a messenger of Agamemnon who announces the victory of the Greeks over Troy, and the near approach of the hero to Mycenae, *Agam.* 392; he relates at great length the sufferings of the Greek fleet by storm and shipwreck on the homeward voyage, *ibid.* \*421.

EURYDICE, the wife of Orpheus, slain by a serpent's sting on her wedding day; story of Orpheus' quest for her in hades, *H. Fur.* \*569; rescued by Orpheus from the lower world, but lost again, *H. Oet.* \*1084. See [ORPHEUS](#).

EURYSTHEUS, the son of Sthenelus and grandson of Perseus, who, by a trick of Juno, was given power over Hercules, and, at Juno's instance, set to Hercules his various labors, *H. Oet.* 403; *H. Fur.* 78, 479, 526, 830; lord of Argos and Mycenae, *ibid.* 1180; *H. Oet.* 1800; his time of punishment will come, *ibid.* 1973.

EURYTUS, king of Oechalia and father of Iole, *H. Oet.* 1490; he and his house destroyed by Hercules because he refused the latter's suit for Iole, *ibid.* 100, 207, 221; *H. Fur.* 477. See [HERCULES](#).

## F

FESCENNINE, of Fescennia, an ancient town of Etruria, famous for a species of coarse, jeering dialogues in verse which bear its name, *Med.* 113.

FORTUNE, the goddess of fate, ruling over the affairs of men, *H. Fur.* 326, 524; *Tro.* \*1, \*259, 269, 697, 735; *Phoen.* 82, 308, 452; *Med.* 159, 176, 287; *Hip.* 979, 1124, 1143; *Oed.* 11, 86, 674, 786, 825, 934; *Agam.* 28, 58, 72, 89, 101, 248, 594, 698; *H. Oet.* 697; *Oet.* 36, 377, 479, 563, 888, 898, 931, 962; *Thy.* 618.

FURIES, avenging goddesses, dwelling in hades, set to punish and torment men both on earth and in the lower world; described and appealed to for aid in punishment of Jason, *Med.* 13; Juno plots to summon them from hades in order to drive Hercules to madness, *H. Fur.* 86; described as to their horrible physical aspect, *ibid.* 87; described in clairvoyant vision by Cassandra, *Agam.* \*759; moving in bands, *Thy.* 78, 250; *Med.* 958; one of the furies used as a character in dramatic prologue, driving the ghost of Thyestes on to perform his mission, *Thy.* \*23. See [EUMENIDES](#), [ERINYES](#), [MEGAERA](#), [TISIPHONE](#).

## G

GEMINI, the zodiacal constellation of the Twins, Castor and Pollux, *Thy.* 853.

GERYON, a mythical king in Spain having three bodies; Hercules slew him and brought his famous cattle to Eurystheus as his tenth labor, *H. Fur.* 231, 487, 1170; *Agam.* 837; *H. Oet.* 26, 1204, 1900. See [HERCULES](#).

GHOSTS. The ghost appears as a *dramatis persona* in the following plays: *Agamemnon*, in which the ghost of Thyestes appears in the prologue to urge Aegisthus on to fulfil his mission; *Thyestes*, in which the ghost of Tantalus similarly appears in the prologue; *Octavia*, in which the ghost of Agrippina appears. In the following plays the ghost affects the action though not actually appearing upon the stage: *Troades*, in which the ghost of Achilles is reported to have appeared to the Greeks and demanded the sacrifice of Polyxena, 168 ff.; Andromache also claims to have seen the ghost of Hector warning her of the impending fate of Astyanax, 443 ff.; *Oedipus*, in which the ghost of Laius and other departed spirits are described as set free by the necromancy of Tiresias, 582 ff.; *Medea*, in which the mangled ghost of Absyrtus seems to appear to the distracted Medea, 963; ghosts appear larger than mortal forms, *Oed.* 175.

GIANTS, monstrous sons of Earth, fabled to have made war upon the gods, scaling heaven by piling mountains (Pelion, Ossa, and Olympus) one on another, *Tro.* 829; *Thy.* 804, 810, 1084; *H. Fur.*



445; they were overthrown by the thunderbolt of Jupiter, *H. Oet.* 1302; *Oed.* 91; with the help of Hercules, *H. Oet.* 1215; buried under Sicily, *ibid.* 1309; seem to the mad Hercules to be again in arms, and to be hurling mountains, *H. Fur.* 976; after death of Hercules there is danger that they will again pile up mountains and scale heaven, *H. Oet.* 1139, \*1151. See [BRIAREUS](#), [ENCCELADUS](#), [GYAS](#), [MIMAS](#), OTHRYS, [TYPHOEUS](#), [TITANS](#).

GOLDEN AGE, the first age of mankind, when peace and innocence reigned on the earth; described, *Hip.* \*525; *Oet.* \*395; *Med.* \*329.

GOLDEN-FLEECE RAM, (1) the ram on which Phrixus and his sister, Helle, escaped from Boeotia; as they fled through the air Helle fell off into the sea, *Tro.* 1035; on arrival at Colchis Phrixus sacrificed the ram and gave his wonderful fleece to King Aeëtes, who hung it in a tree sacred to Mars. This fleece was the prize sought by the Argonauts under Jason, *Med.* 361, 471. See [PHRIXUS](#), [HELLE](#), [ARGONAUTS](#). (2) The emblem and pledge of sovereignty in the house of Pelops, *Thy.* \*225.

GORGON, Medusa, one of the three daughters of Phorcys, whose head was covered with snaky locks, and sight of whom had power to turn to stone. She was killed by Perseus, and her head presented to Minerva who fixed it upon her shield, *H. Oet.* 96; *Agam.* 530. See [PERSEUS](#).

GRACCHI, two popular leaders of the Sempronian gens, quoted as examples of men brought to ruin by popular renown, *Oet.* 882.

GRADIVUS, a surname of Mars, *H. Fur.* 1342.

GYAS, one of the giants who sought to dethrone Jove, *H. Oet.* 167, 1139.

## H

HADES, the place of departed spirits, situated in the under world; the upper world entrance to, and downward-leading passage, *H. Fur.* 662; description of, *ibid.* 547; Theseus, returned with Hercules from hades, describes in great detail the places and persons of the lower world, *ibid.* \*\*658; chorus sings of the world of the dead and of the thronging peoples who constantly pour into its all-holding

depths, *ibid.* \*830; its torments and personages described by ghost of Tantalus, *Thy.* 1; its regions and inhabitants seen by Creon through the yawning chasm in the earth made by Tiresias' incantations, *Oed.* \*582.

HARPIES, mythical monsters, half woman and half bird; driven from Phineus by Zetes and Calais, *Med.* 782; still torment Phineus in hades as upon earth, *H. Fur.* 759; used as type of winged speed, *Phoen.* 424.

HEBE, the daughter of Juno, cupbearer to the gods, and given as bride to the deified Hercules, *Oct.* 211.

HECATE, daughter of Perses, presider over enchantments; often identified with Proserpina as the underworld manifestation of the deity seen in Diana on earth and Luna in heaven, *H. Oet.* 1519; *Med.* 6, 577, 833, 841; *Tro.* 389; *Hip.* 412; *Oed.* 569.

HECTOR, the son of Priam and Hecuba, husband of Andromache, the bravest warrior and chief support of Troy, *Tro.* 125; burns the Greek fleet, *ibid.* 444; *Agam.* 743; slays Patroclus, *Tro.* 446; slain by Achilles and his body dragged around the walls of Troy, *ibid.* \*413; *Agam.* 743; his body ransomed by Priam, *ibid.* 447; lamented by the band of captive Trojan women, *Tro.* 98; his ghost warns Andromache in a dream of the danger of their son Astyanax, *ibid.* 443; she hides the boy in Hector's tomb, *ibid.* 498; she loves Astyanax for the boy's resemblance to his father, *ibid.* 646.

HECUBA (*Troades*), the wife of Priam, unhappily survives Troy; as one of the captive Trojan women, leads them in a lament for Troy's downfall, for Hector and Priam, *Tro.* \*1; before the birth of Paris, dreamed that she had given birth to a firebrand, *ibid.* 36; her once happy estate described, and contrasted with her present wretchedness, *ibid.* \*958; given to Ulysses by lot, *ibid.* 980; having suffered the loss of all her loved ones she is at last changed into a dog, *Agam.* \*705; rejoices for the first time after Hector's death on occasion of wooden horse being taken into Troy, *ibid.* 648.

HELEN (*Troades*), daughter of Jupiter and Leda, sister of Clytemnestra, wife of Menelaüs, reputed the most beautiful woman

in Greece; given by Venus to Paris as a reward for his judgment in her favor, *Oct.* 773; fled from her husband for love of Paris, *Agam.* 123; afterward pardoned by Agamemnon and returned home with Menelaüs, *ibid.* 273; sent by Greeks to deceive Polyxena and prepare her for sacrifice on tomb of Achilles, *Tro.* 861; cursed by Andromache as the common scourge of Greeks and Trojans, *ibid.* \*892; bewails and describes her own hard lot, *ibid.* 905; she is not to blame for the woes of Troy, *ibid.* 917.

HELLE, sister of Phrixus, who fled with him on the golden-fleeced ram, and fell off into the sea which thereafter bore her name (Hellespont), *Tro.* 1034; *Thy.* 851. See [PHRIXUS](#).

HERCĒAN JOVE, an epithet of Jupiter as the protector of the house; it was at his altar in the courtyard of his own palace that Priam was slain, *Tro.* 140; *Agam.* 448, 793.

HERCULES (*Hercules Furens*, *Hercules Oetaeus*), the son of Jupiter and Alcmena, *H. Fur.* 20; *H. Oet.* 7 and *passim*; night unnaturally prolonged at his conception, *Agam.* 814; *H. Fur.* 24, 1158; *H. Oet.* 147, 1500, 1697, 1864; in his infancy he strangled the two serpents which Juno sent against him in his cradle, *H. Fur.* \*214; *H. Oet.* 1205; by a trick of Juno who hastened the birth of Eurystheus, made subject to Eurystheus who set him various labors, *H. Oet.* 403; *H. Fur.* 78, 524, \*830. These twelve labors are as follows: (1) The killing of the Nemean lion, *H. Fur.* 46, 224; *H. Oet.* 16, 411, 1192, 1235, 1885; *Agam.* 829; (2) the destruction of the hydra of Lerna, *Agam.* 835; *Med.* 701; *H. Fur.* 46, 241, 529, 780, 1195; *H. Oet.* 19, 918, 1193, 1534, 1813; (3) the capture alive of the Arcadian stag, famous for its fleetness and its golden antlers, *H. Fur.* 222; *H. Oet.* 17, 1238; *Agam.* 831; (4) the capture of the wild boar of Erymanthus, *H. Fur.* 228; *H. Oet.* 1536, 1888; *Agam.* 832; (5) the cleansing of the Augean stables, *H. Fur.* 247; (6) the killing of the Stymphalian birds, *H. Fur.* 244; *H. Oet.* 17, 1237, 1813, 1889; *Agam.* 850; (7) the capture of the Cretan bull, *H. Fur.* 230; *H. Oet.* 27; *Agam.* 834; (8) the obtaining of the mares of Diomedes which fed on human flesh and the slaying of Diomedes himself, *H. Fur.* 226; *H. Oet.* 20, 1538, 1814, 1894; *Agam.* 842; (9) the securing of the girdle of Hippolyte, *H. Fur.* 245, 542; *H. Oet.* 21, 1183, 1450;

*Agam.* 848; (10) the killing of Geryon and the capture of his oxen, *H. Fur.* 231, 487; *H. Oet.* 26, 1204, 1900; *Agam.* 837; (11) the securing of the golden apples of the Hesperides, *H. Fur.* 239, 530; *H. Oet.* 18; *Phoen.* 316; *Agam.* \*852; (12) the descent to hades and bringing to the upper world of the dog Cerberus, *H. Fur.* \*46, \*\*760; *H. Oet.* 23, 1162, 1244; *Agam.* 859. Other heroic deeds done by Hercules are as follows: he bore up the heavens upon his shoulders in place of Atlas, *H. Fur.* \*69, 528, 1101; *H. Oet.* 282, 1241, 1764, 1905; burst a passage for the river Peneus between Ossa and Olympus, *H. Fur.* \*283; rent Calpe and Abyla (the "Pillars of Hercules") apart and made a passage for the Mediterranean Sea into the ocean, *H. Fur.* 237; *H. Oet.* 1240, 1253, 1569; fought with and overcame the Centaurs, *ibid.* 1195; fought with Acheloüs for the possession of Deianira, *ibid.* 299, 495; slew the centaur Nessus who was carrying off his bride, *ibid.* \*500, 921; overcame Eryx, the famous boxer, *H. Fur.* 481; slew Antaeus, *H. Fur.* 482, 1171; *H. Oet.* 24, 1899; killed Busiris, *H. Fur.* 483; *H. Oet.* 26; *Tro.* 1106; slew Cycnus, son of Mars, *H. Fur.* 485; killed Zetes and Calais, *Med.* 634; killed Periclymenus, *ibid.* 635; wounded Pluto, who was going to the aid of the Pylians, *H. Fur.* 560; wrecked off the African coast, he made his way on foot to the shore, *ibid.* 319; assisted the gods in their fight against the giants, *ibid.* 444; captured Troy with aid of Telamon during the reign of Laomedon, *Tro.* 136, 719; his arrows said to be twice fated for the destruction of Troy, *ibid.* 825; *Agam.* 863; forced Charon to bear him across the Lethe (not Styx), *H. Fur.* \*762; *H. Oet.* 1556; rescued Theseus from hades, *Hip.* 843; *H. Fur.* 806; *H. Oet.* 1197, 1768; overcame Eurytus, king of Oechalia, *H. Fur.* 477; *H. Oet.* 422. More or less extended recapitulations of the deeds of Hercules are found in the following passages: *Agam.* 808-866; *H. Fur.* 205-308, 481-487, 524-560; *H. Oet.* 1-98, 410-435, 1161-1206, 1218-1257, 1518-1606, 1810-1830, 1872-1939. The loves of Hercules are as follows: Hesione, daughter of Laomedon, rescued from the sea-monster, and made captive to Hercules with the first fall of Troy; he afterward gave her to Telamon, *H. Oet.* 363; Auge, daughter of Aleus, king of Tegea, *ibid.* 367; the Thespiades, the fifty daughters of Thespius, *ibid.* 369; Omphale, queen of Lydia, to whom Hercules, in

expiation of an act of sacrilege, went into voluntary servitude for three years, *ibid.* \*371, 573; *H. Fur.* \*465; *Hip.* 317; Iole, daughter of Eurystus, king of Oechalia, whom Hercules destroyed because Iole was denied to him, *H. Oet.* 100, 207, 221; *H. Fur.* 477. His wives were (1) Megara daughter of Creon, king of Thebes; Hercules, in a fit of madness, brought upon him by Juno's machinations, slew her and his children by her, *H. Fur.* \*987, \*1010; *H. Oet.* 429, 903; when his sanity returned, Theseus promised him cleansing for his crime by Mars at Athens, *H. Fur.* 1341; elsewhere said to have been cleansed by washing in the Cinyps, a river in Africa, *H. Oet.* 907; (2) Deianira, daughter of Oeneus, king of Calydonia. See DEIANIRA and ACHELOÛS. The favorite tree of Hercules was the poplar, *H. Fur.* 894, 912; *H. Oet.* 1641. Hercules himself was destined to come to a tragic end after a life of great deeds, *Med.* 637; his death was in accordance with an oracle which declared that he should die by the hand of one whom he had slain, *H. Oet.* 1473; Deianira, ignorantly seeking to regain her husband's love from Iole, sends him a robe anointed with the poisoned blood of Nessus, *ibid.* 535; Lichas bears the robe to his master, *ibid.* 569; Hercules was worshiping Cenean Jove in Euboea when the robe was brought to him, *ibid.* 775; his sufferings caused by the terrible burning poison described, *ibid.* \*749, 1218; hurls Lichas, the innocent cause of his pains, over a cliff, *ibid.* 809; after dire suffering, is borne by boat from Euboea to Mt. Oeta where he was to perish, *ibid.* 839; he orders a funeral pyre to be built for him on the top of the mountain, *ibid.* 1483; speculation upon his probable place in heaven after death, *ibid.* 1565; his glorious and triumphant death in the midst of the flames described, *ibid.* \*\*1610, 1726; his fated bow is presented by the dying hero to his friend Philoctetes, *ibid.* 1648; his ashes are collected into an urn by his mother, Alcmena, *ibid.* 1758; Medea was said to have in her magical store some of the ashes of Oeta's pyre soaked with the dying (poisoned) blood of Hercules, *Med.* 777; the voice of the hero is heard from heaven, declaring that he has been deified, *H. Oet.* \*1940; now received into heaven as a god, in spite of Juno's opposition, he is given Hebe as his wife, *Oct.* 210.

HERMIONE, daughter of Menelaüs and Helen; the Trojans pray that she may suffer the same doom as Polyxena, *Tro.* 1134.

HESIONE, daughter of Laomedon, exposed to a sea-monster sent by Neptune to punish the perfidy of Laomedon. She was rescued by Hercules and captured by him when he with Telamon's aid took Troy, *H. Oet.* 363.

HESPERIDES, APPLES OF, golden apples on certain islands far in the west, watched over by three nymphs, and guarded by a sleepless dragon; it was the eleventh labor of Hercules to get these apples and take them to Eurystheus, *Agam.* 852; *Phoen.* 316; *H. Fur.* 239, 530.

HESPERUS, the evening star, messenger of night, *Med.* 878; *Hip.* 750; *H. Fur.* 883; impatiently awaited by lovers, *Med.* 72; as example of perverted nature, Hesperus will bring in the day, *Phoen.* 87; functions of evening and morning stars interchanged at the conception of Hercules, *H. Fur.* 821; *H. Oet.* 149.

HIEROSCOPIA (*extispicium*), a method of prophesying by inspecting the viscera of a newly slain sacrificial victim practiced by Tiresias in his effort to discover the murderer of Laius, *Oed.* \*353.

HIPPODAMIÄ, daughter of Oenomaüs, king of Pisa. See [MYRTILUS](#).

HIPPOLYTE, a queen of the Amazons, possessed of the belt of Mars; Eurystheus imposed upon Hercules as his ninth labor that he should secure and bring this belt, or girdle, to him; this the hero accomplished, *Agam.* 848; *H. Fur.* 245, 542; *H. Oet.* 21, 1183, 1450.

HIPPOLYTUS (*Hippolytus*), son of Theseus and Hippolyte, or, according to others, of Theseus and Antiope; represented as devoted to the hunt, and to Diana, the goddess of the hunt, *Hip.* 1; the object of the guilty love of Phaedra, his father's wife, *ibid.* \*99; he hates and avoids all womankind, *ibid.* 230; his severe life as a recluse described, *ibid.* 435; sings the praises of the simple life in the woods and fields, and contrasts this with city life, *ibid.* \*483; is charged with a criminal attack upon Phaedra, *ibid.* 725; his death caused by a monster sent by Neptune in response to the prayer of Theseus, *ibid.* 1000; his innocence discovered, *ibid.* 1191.

HYADES, daughters of Atlas and sisters of the Pleiades; a constellation seemingly borne on the horns of Taurus, *Thy.* 852; a storm-bringing constellation, but not yet recognized as such in the golden age, *Med.* 311; disturbed by the magic power of Medea, *ibid.* 769.

HYDRA, a monster which infested the marsh of Lerna; it had eight heads, and one besides which was immortal. When any one of the eight heads was severed there sprang forth two in its stead. After a desperate struggle with this creature, Hercules killed it as his second labor assigned by Eurystheus, *Agam.* 835; *Med.* 701; *H. Fur.* 46, 241, 529, 780, 1195; *H. Oet.* 19, 94, 851, 914, 918, 1193, 1534, 1650, 1813, 1927.

HYLAS, a beautiful youth, beloved by Hercules, who accompanied that hero on the Argonautic expedition; while stopping on the coast of Mysia for water, the boy was seized and kept by the water-nymphs of a stream into which he had dipped his urn, *Hip.* 780, *Med.* \*647.

HYLLUS (*Hercules Oetaeus*), son of Hercules and Deianira; describes to his mother the terrible sufferings of Hercules after putting on the poisoned robe, *H. Oet.* 742; called the grandson of Jove, *ibid.* 1421; Iole is consigned to him as his wife by the dying Hercules, *ibid.* 1490.

HYMEN, the god of marriage, *Tro.* 861, 895; *Med.* \*66, 110, 116, 300.

HYPERMNESTRA, one of the fifty daughters of Danaüs, who refused to murder her husband at her father's command, *H. Fur.* 500; for this act of mercy, she is not suffering among her sisters in hades, *H. Oet.* 948. See [DANAÏDES](#).

## I

ICARUS, the son of Daedalus, who, attempting to escape from Crete on wings which his father had made, melted the wax of his wings by a flight too near the sun, and so fell into the sea which took its name from him, *Agam.* 506; *Oed.* \*892; *H. Oet.* 686. See [DAEDALUS](#).

IDMON, son of Apollo and Asteria, one of the Argonauts, with prophetic power; he died from the stroke of a wild boar, not, as Seneca says, from a serpent's bite, *Med.* 652.

INO, daughter of Cadmus, sister of Semele, wife of Athamas, king of Thebes. Her husband, driven mad by Juno, because Ino had nursed the infant Bacchus, attempted to slay her, but she escaped him by leaping off a high cliff into the sea with her son Melicerta. They were both changed into sea-divinities, *Phoen.* 22; *Oed.* 445. See [PALAEMON](#).

IOLE (*Hercules Oetaeus*), daughter of Eurytus, king of Oechalia. She was sought in marriage by Hercules, who destroyed her father and all his house because she was refused to him, *H. Oet.* 221; in captivity to Hercules, she mourns her fate, *ibid.* 173; sent as a captive to Deianira, *ibid.* 224; her reception by Deianira described, *ibid.* 237; is consigned to Hyllus as wife, by the dying Hercules, *ibid.* 1490.

IPHIGENĪA, daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra; taken from her mother to be sacrificed at Aulis, on the pretext that she was to be married to Achilles, *Agam.* 158; sacrificed to appease Diana to the end that the Greek fleet might be allowed to sail from Aulis, *ibid.* 160; *Tro.* 249, 360; her sacrifice described, *Agam.* \*164; rescued by Diana at the last moment and taken to serve in the goddess' temple at Tauris, *Oct.* 972.

IRIS, the messenger of Juno, and goddess of the rainbow, *Oed.* 315.

ITYS, son of Tereus, king of Thrace, and Procne, who, to punish her husband for his outrage upon her sister, Philomela, slew the boy Itys and served him as a banquet to his father. The sisters, changed to birds, ever bewail Itys, *H. Oet.* 192; *Agam.* 670.

IXĪON, for his insult to Juno fixed to an ever-revolving wheel in hades, *Hip.* 1236; *Thy.* 8; *Agam.* 15; *Oct.* 623; *H. Fur.* 750; *H. Oet.* 945, 1011; his wheel stood still at the music of Orpheus, *ibid.* 1068; Medea prays that he may leave his wheel and come to Corinth, and that Creon may take his place upon the wheel, *Med.* 744. See [NEPHELE](#).

## J

JASON (*Medea*), son of Aeson, king of Thessaly, and nephew of the usurping king, Pelias. He was persuaded by Pelias to undertake the



adventure of the Golden Fleece, for which he organized and led the Argonautic expedition. He was able to perform the hard tasks in Colchis which King Aeëtes set, through the aid of Medea: the taming of the fire-breathing bull, *Med.* 121, 241, 466; overcoming of the giants sprung from the sown serpents' teeth, *ibid.* 467; putting to sleep of the ever-watchful dragon, *ibid.* 471; he had had no part in the murder of Pelias for which he and Medea were driven out of Thessaly, *ibid.* 262; but this and all Medea's crimes had been done for his sake, *ibid.* \*275; living in exile in Corinth, he is forced by Creon into a marriage with the king's daughter, Creüsa, *ibid.* 137; Medea imprecates a dreadful curse upon him, *ibid.* 19; he laments the hard dilemma in which he finds himself placed, *ibid.* 431; and at last decides to yield to Creon's demands for the sake of his children, *ibid.* 441.

JOCASTA (*Oedipus, Phoenissae*), wife of Laius, king of Thebes, mother and afterward wife of Oedipus; on learning that Oedipus is her son, she kills herself in an agony of grief and shame, *Oed.* 1024. According to another version of the story, she is still living after the events leading to the voluntary exile of Oedipus; she bewails the fratricidal strife between her two sons, Eteocles and Polynices, and knows not with which she ought to side, *Phoen.* 377; rushing between the two hosts, she pleads with her sons to be reconciled with each other, *ibid.* \*443.

JUDGES IN HADES, Aeacus, Minos, and Rhadamanthus, weep for the first time on hearing Orpheus' plaintive strains, *H. Fur.* 579; Theseus describes at length their persons and their judgments, the moral law under which the souls of men are judged, and the punishments and rewards meted out after judgment, *ibid.* \*\*727.

JULIA, daughter of Drusus and Livia Drusilla, exiled and afterward slain, *Oct.* 944.

JUNO (*Hercules Furens*), speaks the prologue, revealing her motive in bringing about the catastrophe of the play; she recounts in order Jove's infidelities with mortals whose constellations she points out, and relates especially her fruitless struggles with Hercules; she cannot overcome him by any toil which she can invent, *H. Fur.* \*1;

she looks forward with hatred and dread to the time when Hercules will force his entrance into heaven, *ibid.* 64; she is cited to Octavia by her nurse as a type of wife who, by wise management, finally won a wayward husband's love to herself again, *Oct.* \*201; hymn in praise of, *Agam.* 340; Argos is dear to her, *ibid.* 809.

JUPITER, lord of Olympus, ruler of the skies and seasons, *Hip.* \*960; ruler of heaven and earth, to whom victors consecrate their spoils, *Agam.* \*802; his mother, Rhea, brought him forth in Crete and hid him in a cave of Mount Ida, lest his father, Saturn, should discover and destroy him, *H. Fur.* 459; hymn in praise of, *Agam.* 381; his thunderbolts are forged in Aetna, *Hip.* 156; his amours with mortals are as follows: with Leda to whom he appeared in the form of a swan, *Hip.* 301; *H. Fur.* 14; with Europa, in form of a bull, *Hip.* 303; *H. Fur.* 9; *H. Oet.* 550; with Danaë, in form of a golden shower, *H. Fur.* 13; with Callisto, *ibid.* 6; the Pleiades (Electra, Maia, Taygete), *ibid.* 10; Latona, *ibid.* 15; Semele, *ibid.* 16; Alcmena, *ibid.* 22. For his ancient oracle in Epirus, see [DODONA](#); see also [HERCEAN JOVE](#) and [CENAEUM](#).

JUSTICE (*Justitia*), the goddess Astraea, who once lived on earth during the innocence of man in the golden age of Saturn, *Oct.* 398; she fled the earth when sin became dominant, *ibid.* 424. See [ASTRAEA](#).

## L

LABDACIDAE, a name for the Thebans, derived from Labdacus, king of Thebes, father of Laius, *Oed.* 710; *Phoen.* 53; *H. Fur.* 495.

LACHESIS, one of the three fates, or Parcae, who measured out the thread of human life, *Oed.* 985. The other two were Clotho and Atropos. See [CLOTHO](#).

LAËRTEΣ, the father of Ulysses, dwelling in Ithaca, *Tro.* 700; "feels the shock of reeling Ithaca" in a storm, *Thy.* 587.

LAIUS, king of Thebes, husband of Jocasta, father of Oedipus, whom, fearing an oracle, he had exposed in infancy; at the time of the opening of the play of *Oedipus*, he had been murdered by an unknown man, and his murder must be avenged before the plague afflicting Thebes can be relieved, *Oed.* \*217; place and supposed manner of his death described to Oedipus by Creon, *ibid.* \*276; time and circumstances of his murder described by Jocasta, *ibid.* 776; his shade is raised by Tiresias and declares that Oedipus is his murderer, *ibid.* \*619; his shade seems to appear to the blind Oedipus in exile and call him to death, *Phoen.* 39.

LAOMEDON, king of Troy, father of Priam; he deceived Apollo and Neptune, who built the walls of Troy, and again cheated Hercules out of his promised reward for delivering Hesione; hence his house is called a "lying house," *Agam.* 864.

LAPITHAE, a tribe of Thessaly, associated in story with the Centaurs, and both with a great struggle against Hercules in which they were worsted by that hero; in hades they still fear their great enemy when he appears, *H. Fur.* 779.

LATŌNA, beloved of Jupiter, to whom she bore Apollo and Diana; hence these gods are called the children of Latona, *Agam.* 324; the floating island, Delos, was the only spot allowed her by the jealous Juno for the birth of her children, *H. Fur.* 15.

LEDA, the wife of Tyndarus, king of Sparta; she was beloved by Jupiter in the form of a swan, *Oct.* 205, 764; and became by him the mother of Castor and Pollux, who were falsely called Tyndaridae, and set in the heavens as constellations, *H. Fur.* 14; *Oct.* 208; Clytemnestra was the daughter of Leda and Tyndarus, *Agam.* 125, 234.

LEMNOS, an island in the Aegean Sea, the seat of fierce fires, as connected with the fall of Vulcan on that island where he established his forges, *H. Oet.* 1362; according to story all the Lemnian women at one time, except Hypsipyle, murdered all their male relatives, *Agam.* 566.

LEO, the zodiacal constellation of the Lion, representing the Nemean lion slain by Hercules, and set as a constellation in the sky, *H. Fur.* 69, 945; *Thy.* 855; said to have fallen from the moon, where, according to the opinion of the Pythagoreans, all monsters had their origin, *H. Fur.* 83.

LETHE, a river of the lower world whose waters possessed the power of causing those who drank of them to forget the past, *H. Oet.* 936; *H. Fur.* 680; *Hip.* 1202; elsewhere it loses its distinctive meaning and is used as equivalent to Styx or the lower world in general, *ibid.* 147; *Oed.* 560; *H. Oet.* 1162, 1208, 1550, 1985; Charon even plies his boat over this river, *H. Fur.* 777.

LIBRA, the zodiacal constellation of the Scales, marking the autumnal equinox, *Hip.* 839; *Thy.* 858.

LICHAS, the ill-fated bearer of the poisoned robe from Deianira to Hercules, thrown over a cliff by the agonized hero, *H. Oet.* 567, 570, 809, 814, 978, 1460; he had previously been sent home by Hercules to announce the hero's triumph over Eurytus, *ibid.* 99.

LIVIA, the wife of Drusus; her fate, *Oct.* 942.

LUCIFER, the morning star, or "light-bringer," the herald of the sun, *Hip.* 752; *Oed.* 507, 741; *H. Oet.* 149.

LUCĪNA, the goddess who presides over child-birth, i.e., Diana or Luna, *Agam.* 385; *Med.* 2; or Juno, *ibid.* 61.

LUCRETIA, daughter of Lucretius, wife of Collatinus, avenged by a bloody war for the outrage committed upon her by Sextus Tarquinius, *Oct.* 300.

LUNA, the goddess of the moon, identified with Diana upon the earth, called also Phoebe as sister of Phoebus, *Oed.* 44; she reflects her brother's fires, *ibid.* 253; and passes his car in shorter course, *Thy.*

838; in love with Endymion, she seeks the earth, *Hip.* 309, 422, 785; and gives her chariot to her brother to drive, *ibid.* 310; saved by the clashing of vessels from the influence of magic, *ibid.* 790.

LYCURGUS, a king of Thrace, who, for his opposition to Bacchus, was destroyed by that god, *H. Fur.* 903; *Oed.* 471.

LYCUS (*Hercules Furens*), a usurper, who took advantage of the absence of Hercules in hades, and slew Creon and his sons, and is, at the opening of the play, ruler in Thebes, *H. Fur.* 270; he boasts that, though low born, he has by conquest gained great power and wealth, *ibid.* 332; he desires to repair his fault of birth by a union with Megara, wife of the absent Hercules, and daughter of Creon, *ibid.* 345; proposes marriage to Megara, *ibid.* 360; is scorned by her, *ibid.* 372; is slain by Hercules, *ibid.* 895.

LYNCEUS, one of the Argonautic heroes, renowned for his wonderful keenness of vision, *Med.* 232.

## M

MAEANDER, a river of Phrygia, celebrated for its exceedingly winding course, *Phoen.* 606; used to illustrate the windings of the river Lethe, *H. Fur.* 684.

MAENADS, female attendants and worshippers of Bacchus, *Oed.* 436; their bewildered madness while under the inspiration of Bacchus, *H. Oet.* 243; their unconsciousness of pain, *Tro.* 674; they go wildly ranging over the mountain tops, *Med.* 383.

MAGIC ARTS, the powers of, as practiced by Medea, *Med.* 670-842; by Tiresias, *Oed.* 548-625; by the nurse of Deianira, *H. Oet.* 452-64.

MANTO (*Oedipus*), the prophetic daughter of the seer Tiresias, *Agam.* 22; she leads her blind old father into the presence of Oedipus, *Oed.* 290; describes the appearance of the sacrifices which he interprets, *ibid.* 303.

MARS, the son of Jupiter and Juno, god of war, *Tro.* 185, 783, 1058; *Phoen.* 527, 626, 630; *Med.* 62; *Hip.* 465, 808; *Oet.* 293; *Agam.* 548; called also *Mavors*, *Hip.* 550; *Thy.* 557; *Oed.* 90; used of war or battle itself, *ibid.* 275, 646; *Agam.* 921; the amour of Mars and

Venus was discovered by Phoebus, and by him with the aid of Vulcan they two were caught in a cunningly wrought net; for this reason Venus hates the race of Phoebus, *Hip.* 125; Mars, summoned to judgment by Neptune for the murder of his son, was tried and acquitted by the twelve gods sitting in judgment at Athens in the Areopagus (Mars Hill), *H. Fur.* 1342; Mars is here called *Gradivus*.

MEDĒA (*Medea*), daughter of Aeëtes, king of Colchis, and granddaughter of Sol and Perseüs, *Med.* 28, 210; the grandeur of her estate in her father's kingdom, *ibid.* \*209, 483; mistress of magic arts, *ibid.* \*750; by means of these arts she helped Jason perform the deadly tasks set him by her father, *ibid.* 169, 467, 471; helped Jason carry off the golden fleece upon the possession of which her father's kingdom depended, *ibid.* 130; left her father's realm through crime for love of Jason, *ibid.* 119; slew her brother, Absyrtus, and strewed his dismembered body upon the sea to retard her father's pursuit, *ibid.* 121; *H. Oet.* 950; tricked the daughters of Pelias into murdering their father, *Med.* 133, 201, \*258; driven out of Thessaly and pursued by Acastus, she with Jason sought and received a place of safety in Corinth, *ibid.* 247, 257; did all her crimes not for her own but for Jason's sake, *ibid.* 275; exiled now by Creon, she obtains one day of respite, *ibid.* 295; prepares a deadly, enchanted robe for her rival, Creüsa, *ibid.* 570; her magic incantations described, *ibid.* \*675; sends the robe to Creüsa, *ibid.* 816; and rejoices in its terrible effect, *ibid.* 893; kills her two sons, *ibid.* 970, 1019; gloats over her husband's misery and vanishes in the air in a chariot drawn by dragons, *ibid.* 1025; goes to Athens and marries Aegeus; is a type of an evil woman, *Hip.* 563; the stepmother of Theseus, *ibid.* 697.

MEDŪSA, one of the three Gorgons, slain by Perseus. He cut off her head which had the power of petrifying whatever looked upon it, and gave it to Minerva who set it upon her aegis, *Agam.* 530; her gall used by Medea in magic, *Med.* 831.

MEGAERA, one of the furies, summoned by Juno to drive Hercules to madness, *H. Fur.* 102; appears to the maddened Medea with scourge of serpents, *Med.* 960; seems to appear to the distracted

Deianira, *H. Oet.* 1006, 1014; summoned by Atreus to assist him in his revenge upon his brother, *Thy.* 252. See [FURIES](#).

MEGARA (*Hercules Furens*), the daughter of Creon, king of Thebes, and wife of Hercules, *H. Fur.* 202; laments the constant toils which hold her husband from his home, and keep her anxious for his life, *ibid.* \*205; scorns the advances of Lycus who has usurped the throne of Thebes, *ibid.* \*372; slain by her husband in his fit of madness brought upon him by the jealous Juno, *ibid.* 1010; *H. Oet.* 429, \*903, 1452.

MELEÄGER, son of Oeneus, king of Calydon, and Althaea; his tragic death brought upon him by his mother's wrath because he had killed her brothers, *Med.* 644, 779. See [ALTHAEA](#).

MELICERTA, see [INO](#).

MEMNON, the son of Aurora, slain by Achilles, *Tro.* 239; *Agam.* 212.

MENELÄUS, son of Atreus, brother of Agamemnon, husband of Helen, king of Sparta, employed by his father to trick his uncle, Thyestes, *Thy.* 327; Helen looks forward with fear to his judgment, *Tro.* 923; he pardoned Helen for her desertion of him for Paris, *Agam.* 273.

MEROPE, the wife of Polybus, king of Corinth; she adopted the infant Oedipus and brought him up to manhood as her own child, *Oed.* 272, 661, 802.

MESSALINA, the wife of Claudius, and mother of Octavia, *Oct.* 10; cursed by Venus with insatiate lust, *ibid.* 258; openly married Silius in the absence of Claudius, *ibid.* \*260; slain for this by the order of her husband, *ibid.* 265; her former proud estate, as the wife of Claudius, contrasted with her wretched fate; her death described, *ibid.* \*974.

MIMAS, one of the giants, *H. Fur.* 981. See [GIANTS](#).

MINOS, a son of Jupiter, king of Crete; father of Phaedra, *Hip.* 149; father of Ariadne, *ibid.* 245; widely ruling and powerful monarch, *ibid.* 149; no daughter of Minos loved without sin, *ibid.* 127; because of his righteousness on earth made one of the judges in hades, *Agam.* 24; *Thy.* 23; *H. Fur.* 733. See [JUDGES IN HADES](#).

MINOTAUR, a hybrid monster, born of the union of Pasiphaë, the wife of Minos, and a bull; called brother of Phaedra, *Hip.* 174; confined in the labyrinth in Crete, *ibid.* 649, 1171.

MOPSUS, a Thesalian soothsayer, one of the Argonauts, who died by the bite of a serpent in Libya, *Med.* 655.

MULCIBER, one of the names of Vulcan. He gave to Medea the hidden fires of sulphur for her magic, *Med.* 824.

MYCALE, a celebrated witch of Thessaly, *H. Oet.* 525.

MYCĒNAE, a city of Argolis, near Argos; its walls were built by the hands of the Cyclopes, *Thy.* 407; *H. Fur.* 997; ruled by the house of Pelops, *Thy.* 188, 561, 1011; *Tro.* 855; the favorite city of Juno, *Agam.* 351; the home of Agamemnon, *ibid.* 121, 251, 757, 871, 967, 998; *Tro.* 156, 245.

MYRRHA, a daughter of Cinyras, who conceived an unnatural passion for her father. Pursued by him, she was changed into the myrrh tree, whose exuding gum resembles tears, *H. Oet.* 196.

MYRTILUS, a son of Mercury, charioteer of Oenomaüs. Bribed by Pelops, suitor for the hand of Hippodamia, daughter of Oenomaüs, he secretly withdrew the lynch-pins of his master's chariot, thus wrecking his master's car in the race which was to decide the success of Pelop's suit. His sin and fate described, *Thy.* 140; the wrecked chariot preserved as a trophy in the palace of the Pelopidae, *ibid.* 660.

## N

NAÏDES, deities, generally conceived as young and beautiful maidens, inhabiting brooks and springs. *Hip.* 780. See [HYLAS](#).

NAUPLIUS, a son of Neptune and king of Euboea; to avenge the death of his son, Palamedes, he lured the Greek fleet to destruction by displaying false beacon fires off the rocky coast of Euboea, *Agam.* \*567; when, however, Ulysses, whom he hated most, escaped, he threw himself headlong from the cliff, *Med.* 659. See [PALAMEDES](#).

NECROMANTĪA, necromancy, a raising of the dead for purposes of consultation; practiced by Tiresias, in his effort to discover the



murderer of Laius, *Oed.* \*\*530.

NEMEAN LION, the beast slain by Hercules near Nemea, a city of Argolis, as the first of his twelve labors, *Agam.* 830; *H. Fur.* 224; *H. Oet.* 1193, 1235, 1665, 1885; set in the heavens as a zodiacal constellation, *Oed.* 40. See [LEO](#).

NEPHELE, the cloud form of Juno, devised by Jupiter, upon which Ixion begot the centaur, Nessus, in the belief that it was Juno herself, *H. Oet.* 492.

NEPTUNE, son of Saturn, brother of Jupiter and Pluto, with whom, after the dethronement of Saturn, he cast lots for the three great divisions of his father's realm: the second lot, giving him the sovereignty over the sea, fell to Neptune, *Med.* 4, 597; *H. Fur.* 515, 599; *Oed.* 266; *Hip.* 904, 1159; rides over the surface of the deep in his car, *Oed.* 254; sends a monster out of the sea to destroy Hippolytus in answer to the prayer of Theseus, *Hip.* 1015; assists Minerva in the destruction of Ajax, the son of Oileus, in the great storm which assailed the Greek fleet upon its homeward voyage, *Agam.* 554; bidden by Hercules to hide beneath his waves lest he behold Cerberus, *H. Fur.* 600; is the father of Theseus, to whom he gave three wishes, *ibid.* 942; other sons were Cycnus, *Agam.* 215; *Tro.* 183; and Periclymenus, *Med.* 635.

NEREUS, a sea-deity, used often, by metonymy, for the sea itself, *Oed.* 450, 508; *H. Oet.* 4; *Hip.* 88; he is the father by Doris of Thetis and the other Nereïds, *Tro.* 882; *Oed.* 446; even they feel the fires of love, *Hip.* 336.

NERO (*Octavia*), the son of Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus and Agrippina, *Oct.* 249; married his stepsister, Octavia, whom he treated with great cruelty; his character depicted by her, *ibid.* 86; emperor from A.D. 54 until his death in 68; murdered his mother, *ibid.* 46, 95, 243; lauds the beauty of Poppaea and announces her as his next wife, *ibid.* 544; his death prophesied and described by the ghost of Agrippina, *ibid.* \*\*618; decrees the banishment and death of Octavia, *ibid.* 861.

NESSUS, a centaur, son of Ixion and Nephele, *H. Oet.* 492; insults Deianira, is slain by Hercules, and while dying gives a portion of his blood, reeking with the poison of the arrow of Hercules, to Deianira as a charm which shall recall to her her husband's wandering affections, *ibid.* \*500; some of this blood is in Medea's collection of charms, *Med.* 775; the terrible power of this poisoned blood tested by Deianira after she has innocently sent the fatal robe to her husband, *H. Oet.* 716; Nessus declared to have been the one who conceived the plot against Hercules, while Deianira was but the innocent instrument, *ibid.* 1468.

NIOBE, daughter of Tantalus, wife of Amphion, king of Thebes; punished by the loss of her seven sons and seven daughters by Diana for her defiance of Latona, the mother of the goddess, *Agam.* 392; changed to stone, she still sits on the top of Mt. Sipylus and mourns for her lost children, *Agam.* 394; *H. Fur.* 390; *H. Oet.* 185, 1849; her shade comes up from hades, still proudly counting her children's shades, *Oed.* 613.

NYCTELIUS, an epithet of Bacchus, because his mysteries were celebrated at night, *Oed.* 492.

## O

OCTAVIA (*Octavia*), the daughter of the Emperor Claudius and Messalina, the latter having been murdered by order of Claudius himself, *Oct.* 10; and the former by his second wife, Agrippina, *ibid.* 26, 45; she became first the stepsister and then the wife of Nero, *ibid.* 47; with whom she led a most wretched life, *ibid.* \*100; she had previously been betrothed to Silanus, *ibid.* 145; but he was murdered to make way for Nero, *ibid.* 154; She was beloved by her people, *ibid.* 183; is compared with Juno in that she is both sister and wife of her husband, *ibid.* 282; doomed by Nero to exile and death, *ibid.* 868; banished to Panditaria, *ibid.* 971.

ODRYSIAN HOUSE, that is, of the Thracian king, Tereus, whose house was polluted by a horrible banquet in which his own son was served up to him, *Thy.* 273.

OEDIPUS (*Oedipus, Phoenissae*), the son of Jocasta and of Laius, king of Thebes. An oracle had declared that Laius should meet death at the hands of his son. Oedipus was accordingly doomed before birth to be slain, *Oed.* 34, 235; *Phoen.* 243; at birth he was exposed upon Mt. Cithaeron, *ibid.* 13, \*27, with an iron rod through his ankles, *ibid.* 254; *Oed.* 857; carried by a shepherd and given to Merope, wife of the king of Corinth, by whom he was brought up as her own son, *ibid.* 806; grown to young manhood, he fled the kingdom of his supposed parents that he might not fulfil an oracle that had come to him, that he should kill his father and wed his mother, *ibid.* 12, 263; in the course of his flight he met and killed Laius, his real father, *Phoen.* 166, 260; *Oed.* 768, 782; he answered the riddle of the Sphinx, and so saved Thebes from that pest, *Phoen.* 120; *Oed.* \*92, 216; as a reward for this he gained the throne of Thebes, and Jocasta (his real mother) as his wife, *Oed.* 104; *Phoen.* 50, 262; *Oed.* 386; *H. Fur.* 388; attempts to find out the murderer of King Laius, and utters a mighty curse upon the unknown criminal, *ibid.* \*257; declared by the ghost of Laius, which Tiresias had raised, to be his father's murderer and his mother's husband, *ibid.* \*634; he refutes this charge by the assertion that his father and mother are still living in Corinth, *ibid.* 661; learns by messenger that Polybus and Merope are not his true parents, *ibid.* 784; rushes on his fate and forces old Phorbas to reveal the secret of his birth, *ibid.* \*848; in a frenzy of grief, he digs out his eyes, *ibid.* 915; goes forth into exile, thus lifting the curse from Thebes, *ibid.* 1042; *Phoen.* 104; he begs Antigone, who alone had followed him into exile, to leave him, bewailing his fate and longing for death, *ibid.* 1.

OGYGES, a mythical founder and king of Thebes; hence—

OGYGIAN, i. e., Theban, an epithet of Bacchus, whose mother was a Theban princess, *Oed.* 437; an epithet of the Thebans, *ibid.* 589.

OILEUS, used instead of his son, Ajax, *Med.* 662. See [AJAX](#).

OLENUS, a city in Aetolia, *Tro.* 826; *Oed.* 283; hence—

OELENIAN GOAT, so called because it was nurtured in the vicinity of this place. See [AMALTHEA](#).

OMPHALE, a queen of Lydia, to whose service Hercules submitted for three years, *H. Oet.* \*371, 573; *H. Fur.* 465; *Hip.* 317. See [HERCULES](#).

OPHĪON, one of the companions of Cadmus, sprung from the serpent's teeth; in adjectival form, it means simply Theban, *H. Fur.* 268; referring to Pentheus, *Oed.* 485.

OPHIÜCHUS, the northern constellation of the "Serpent Holder," representing a man holding a serpent, *Med.* 698.

Orestes (*Agamemnon*), son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, *Agam.* 196; *Tro.* 555; saved by his sister, through the agency of Strophius, king of Phocis, from death at the hands of his mother and Aegisthus, *Agam.* 910; avenged his father's murder, *Oet.* 62.

ORĪON, said to have been miraculously generated by Jupiter, Neptune, and Mercury, out of an ox's hide; set as a constellation in the heavens, where his glittering sword menaces the heavenly ones, *H. Fur.* 12.

ORPHEUS, the son of Apollo and the muse Calliope, *Med.* 625; king of Thrace; one of the Argonauts; a sweet singer and harper, whose music could draw to him the rocks and trees, *ibid.* 228; *H. Oet.* \*1036; dropped his lyre in fear of the Symplegades, *Med.* 348; played so sweetly that the Argonauts were not enchanted by the Sirens, *ibid.* \*355; went to hades in search of his wife, Eurydice, and by the charm of his music persuaded the gods of the lower world to release her; but he lost her again, because he did not keep the condition imposed upon him, *H. Fur.* \*\*569; *H. Oet.* \*1061; *Med.* 632; he sang that nothing is everlasting, *H. Oet.* 1035, 1100; his tragic death at the hands of the Thracian women, *Med.* \*625.

## P

PACTŌLUS, a river of Lydia, celebrated for its golden sands, *Phoen.* 604; *Oed.* 467.

PAEAN, an appellation given to Apollo, who gained the oracle at Delphi and earned a place in heaven by slaying the Python, *H. Oet.* 92.

PALAEEMON, once a mortal, called Melicerta, son of Athamas and Ino, but changed by Neptune into a sea divinity, *Oed.* 448. SEE INO.

PALAMĒDES, son of Nauplius, king of Euboea; he was put to death by the Greeks on false charges brought by Ulysses, and was avenged by his father, who displayed false lights to the Greek fleet, *Agam.* 568.

PALLAS, an appellation given to the goddess Minerva. She was the friend and helper of Hercules in his various labors, *H. Fur.* 900; the bearer of the terrible aegis upon which was set the horrible Medusa's head, *ibid.* 902; *Agam.* 530; the patroness of woman's handicrafts, *Hip.* 103; the patron goddess of the Athenians, *ibid.* 1149; helps to overthrow Troy, *Agam.* 370; stirs up the storm at sea against the Greek ships, *ibid.* 529; wields the thunderbolts of Jove, with which she destroys Ajax, the son of Oïleus, *ibid.* \*532; hymn in praise of, *ibid.* 368-81; helped in the building of the Argo, *Med.* 2, 365.

PANDATARIA, a lonely island off the coast of Italy, used as a place of exile under the Empire, *Oct.* 972.

PANDĪON, a mythical king of Athens, father of Procne and Philomela, both of whom were changed to birds. These "Pandionian birds" are cited as types of grief-stricken beings, *Oct.* 8.

PARCAE, the three personified fates ("harsh sisters"), who spin out the threads of human life, *H. Fur.* 181; represented with the distaff in hand, *ibid.* 559. SEE [CLOTHO](#) and [LACHESIS](#).

PARIS, son of Priam and Hecuba. He was doomed before birth to destroy his native land, *Tro.* 36; exposed to die on Mount Ida, but preserved by shepherds and brought up in ignorance of his true parentage, *Agam.* 733; the famous "judgment of Paris," *Tro.* 66; from Helen's standpoint, *ibid.* 920; Cassandra, in her inspired ravings, describes this scene, *Agam.* \*730; goes to the court of Menelaüs and abducts Helen, *Tro.* 70; slays Achilles, *ibid.* 347, 956.

PARRHASIAN (i.e., Arcadian) hind, captured by Hercules as his third labor, *Agam.* 831; bear, *Hip.* 288; axis (i. e., Northern), *H. Oet.*

1281.

PASIPHAË, a daughter of the Sun and Perseïs, and wife of Minos, king of Crete; conceived an unnatural passion for a bull, *Hip.* 113, 143; mother of the bull-man monster, the Minotaur, *ibid.* \*688.

PATRŌCLUS, one of the Grecian chiefs before Troy, beloved friend of Achilles; he fought in disguise in Achilles' armor, *Agam.* 617; was slain by Hector, *Tro.* 446.

PEGASUS, a winged horse, offspring of Neptune and Medusa; used to illustrate extreme speed, *Tro.* 385.

PELEUS, son of Aeacus, and king of Thessaly; married the sea-goddess, Thetis, *Oct.* 708; *Med.* 657; father of Achilles, *Tro.* 247, 882; *Agam.* 616; one of the Argonauts, died in exile, *Med.* 657.

PELIAS, the usurping king of Iolchos in Thessaly, whence he drove the rightful king, Aeson, the father of Jason. It was he who proposed the Argonautic expedition, and for this he was doomed to suffer a violent death, *Med.* 664; tricked by Medea, his daughters slew him, cut him in pieces, and boiled these in a pot in the expectation that through the magic of Medea Pelias would come forth rejuvenated, *Med.* 133, 201, 258, 475. 913.

PELION, a range of mountains in Thessaly whose principal summit rises near Iolchos; the giants piled Pelion, Ossa, and Olympus, one on another, in their attempt to scale the heavens, *H. Fur.* 971; *Tro.* 829; *Agam.* \*346; *Thy.* 812; *H. Oet.* 1152; the home of the Centaur, Chiron, who educated the young Achilles, *H. Fur.* 971; *Tro.* \*830; furnished the timbers for the Argo, *Med.* 609.

PELOPĪA, a daughter of Thyestes, who became by him the mother of Aegisthus, *Agam.* 30, 294.

PELOPS, the son of Tantalus; he was slain by his father and served as a banquet to the gods, *Thy.* \*144; restored by the gods to life, and Tantalus punished (see TANTALUS); Tantalus and Pelops models for outrageous sin, *ibid.* 242; his house doomed to sin, *ibid.* 22; degenerate and shameful, *ibid.* 625; supposed to have been the settler of the Peloponnesus (whence the name of the land), having

come from Phrygia, *H. Fur.* 1165; *Tro.* 855; *Agam.* 563; his palace described at length, *Thy.* \*641.

PELŌRUS, a promontory in Sicily opposite the coast of Italy; Sicilian Pelorus shall be one land with Italy—stated as type of the last extreme of improbability, *H. Oet.* 81; the sea-monster Scylla was supposed to dwell under this promontory, *Med.* 350.

PENTHESILĒA, a celebrated queen of the Amazons, who came to the aid of Priam; she was armed with battle-axe and moon-shaped shield, *Agam.* 217; her fierce struggles in battle described, *Tro.* 672; slain by Achilles, *ibid.* 243.

PENTHEUS, a king of Thebes, son of Echion and Agave; he opposed the introduction of the worship of Bacchus into his kingdom; while spying on his mother and her sisters who were engaged in the worship of Bacchus on Mt. Cithaeron, he was torn in pieces by them whom Bacchus had driven to madness, *Phoen.* 15, 363; *Oed.* 441, 483; his shade comes up from hades, torn and bleeding still, *ibid.* 618.

PERICLYMENUS, a son of Neptune, who had power of changing into various forms; he was one of the Argonauts, and was slain by Hercules, *Med.* 635.

PERSEUS, son of Danaë whom Jove approached in the form of a golden shower, *H. Fur.* 13; earned a place in heaven by slaying the Gorgon, *H. Oet.* 51, 94.

PHAEDRA (*Hippolytus or Phaedra*), daughter of Minos, king of Crete, and Pasiphaë, daughter of the Sun, *Hip.* 155, 156, 678, 688, 888; the Minotaur is her brother, *ibid.* 174; Ariadne was her sister, *ibid.* 760, 245; bewails her exile from Crete, and her marriage to a foreign and a hostile prince (Theseus), *ibid.* 85; confesses to her nurse that she is swayed by an unnatural passion, *ibid.* 113; confesses her love to Hippolytus, *ibid.* 640; is scorned by him, *ibid.* \*671; confesses her sin to her husband and slays herself, *ibid.* 1159.

PHAËTHON, son of Clymene and Phoebus; desiring to prove his sonship to Phoebus, he claimed the privilege of driving his father's chariot

for one day; he was hurled from the car by the runaway steeds, *Hip.* 1090; and smitten to death by a thunderbolt of Jove, *H. Oet.* 854; he is a warning against over-ambition and impious daring, *ibid.* 677; *Med.* 599; gave a magic fire to Medea, *ibid.* 826.

PHAËTHONIADES, the sisters of Phaëthon, who immoderately wept for his death where his charred body fell on the banks of the Po, and were changed into poplar trees, *H. Oet.* 188.

PHASIS, a river of Colchis, the country of Medea, *Med.* 44, 211, 451, 762; *Hip.* 907; *Agam.* 120; Medea named from the river, *H. Oet.* 950.

PHERAE, a city in Thessaly, ruled over by Admetus, husband of Alcestis, who died herself that so she might redeem him from death, *Med.* 663; it was here that Apollo, being doomed to serve a mortal for a year, kept the flocks of Admetus, *H. Fur.* 451.

PHILOCTÈTES (*Hercules Oetaeus*), a Thessalian prince, son of Poeas, and a friend of Hercules; he appears upon the scene of the death of Hercules, *H. Oet.* 1604; receives the famous bow and arrows of Hercules, *ibid.* 1648; applies the torch to the pyre of his friend, *ibid.* 1727; describes in detail to the nurse the death of Hercules, *ibid.* \*1610.

PHILIPPI, a city of Thrace, celebrated by the victory gained there by Antony and Octavianus over the forces of Brutus and Cassius, *Oct.* 516.

PHILOMĒLA, a daughter of Pandion, king of Athens, and sister of Procne, who had married Tereus, king of Thrace; she suffered outrage at his hands, and, with her sister, punished him by slaying his son Itys and serving him to the father; she was changed into a nightingale, and ever mourns for Itys, *Agam.* 670; *H. Oet.* 199; described, except for her name (*Thracia pellex*), purely as a nightingale singing at sunrise and hovering over her young, *H. Fur.* 146.

PHINEUS, king of Salmydessus on the coast of Thrace; blind and tormented by the Harpies, *Thy.* 154; still in hades, as on earth, tormented, *H. Fur.* 759.



PHLEGETHON, a river in the lower world, flowing with streams as of fire, *Oed.* 162; *Thy.* 73, 1018; it encircles the guilty with its fiery streams, *Hip.* 1227; mentioned instead of the Styx, as the river over which Charon rows his boat, *Agam.* 753; connotes hades in general, *Hip.* 848.

PHLEGRA, a vale in Thrace where the giants fought with the gods, *Thy.* 810; Hercules assisted the gods in this struggle, *H. Fur.* 444.

PHOEBUS, one of the names of Apollo as the "shining one." Under this name he is most frequently conceived of as the sun-god, driving his fiery chariot across the sky, seeing all things, darkening his face or withdrawing from the sky at sight of monstrous sin, lord of the changing seasons, etc., *H. Fur.* 595, 607, 844, 940; *Phoen.* 87; *Med.* 728, 874; *Hip.* 889; *Oed.* 250; *Agam.* 42, 816; *Thy.* 776, 789, 838; *H. Oet.* 2, 680, 792, 1387, 1439, 1442; his sister is Luna, or Phoebe, *H. Fur.* 905; *Med.* 86; *Hip.* 311; *Oed.* 44; the name, Phoebus, is frequently used merely of the sun, its bright light, its burning heat, etc., without personification, *H. Fur.* 25, 940; *Tro.* 1140; *Med.* 298, 768; *Oed.* 122, 540, 545; *Agam.* 463, 577; *Thy.* 602; *H. Oet.* 41, 337, 666, 688, 727, 1022, 1581, 1624, 1699; he is more intimately concerned in the affairs of men, and appears on earth; he is the grandfather of Medea, *Med.* 512; the father of Pasiphaë, *Hip.* 126, 154, 654, 889; the lover and inspirer of Cassandra, *Tro.* 978; *Agam.* 255, 722; he is god of prophesy, giving oracles to mortals, *Med.* 86; *Oed.* 20, 34, 214, 222, 225, 231, 235, 269, 288, 291, 296, 719, 1046; *Agam.* 255, 294, 295; he is god of the lyre, *H. Fur.* 906; *Oed.* 498; *Agam.* 327; and of the bow, *H. Fur.* 454; *Hip.* 192; *Agam.* 327, 549; his tree is the laurel, *Oed.* 228, 453; *Agam.* 588; Cilla is dear to him, *Tro.* 227; he is the beautiful god of the flowing locks, *Hip.* 800; worshiped under the name of Smintheus, *Agam.* 176; hymn in praise of, *ibid.* 310; slew the Python with his arrows, *H. Fur.* 454; exposed the shame of Venus and for this cause Venus' wrath is upon his descendants, *Hip.* 126; he kept the flocks of Admetus, king of Pherae, for a year, *ibid.* 296.

PHORBAS (*Oedipus*), an old man, head shepherd of the royal flocks, forced by Oedipus to tell the secret of the king's birth, *Oed.* 867.

PHRIXUS, son of Athamas and Nephele, and brother of Helle; persecuted by his stepmother, Ino, he fled away through the air with his sister upon a golden-fleeced ram obtained from Mercury, *Tro.* 1034; on the way Helle fell into the sea, called Hellespont from this incident, *H. Oet.* 776; for this same reason the Aegean Sea is called Phrixian Sea, *Agam.* 565; Phrixus fared on alone to Colchis, where he sacrificed the ram and presented the golden fleece to Aeëtes; the golden fleece was the object of the quest of the Argonauts, *Med.* 361, 471.

PIRITHOÛS, a son of Ixion, *Hip.* 1235; a close friendship existed between him and Theseus, and they shared all their adventures; when Pirithoüs formed the mad project of stealing Proserpina from hades, Theseus accompanied him thither, *ibid.* 94, 244, 831.

PISA, an ancient city of Elis where the Olympic games, sacred to Jove, were held, *H. Fur.* 840; *Thy.* 123; *Agam.* 938.

PISCES, the zodiacal constellation of the Fish, *Thy.* 866.

PLEIÄDES, called also Atlantides, the seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione, three of whom, Electra, Maia, and Taÿgete, were beloved of Jove, *H. Fur.* 10; spoken of as a constellation which pales before the moon, *Med.* 96.

PLISTHENES, a son of Thyestes, slain by Atreus, *Thy.* 726.

PLUTO, brother of Jupiter and Neptune, and lord of the under world of shades, *H. Fur.* 560, 658; *Oed.* 256, 869; *Med.* 11; *Hip.* 625, 1240; *H. Oet.* 559, 935, 938, 1142, 1369, 1954; he is called the "grim Jove," *H. Fur.* 608, and the "dark Jove," *H. Oet.* 1705; he obtained his kingdom by drawing lots with his two brothers, *H. Fur.* 833; his wife is Proserpina, *ibid.* 658; Theseus and Pirithoüs try to steal his wife, *Hip.* 95; they are punished by being placed upon an enchanted rock, *ibid.* 625; he is prevailed upon by Hercules to give up Cerberus to be led to the upper world, *H. Fur.* 805; *H. Oet.* 559; at the same time he gives up Theseus to Hercules, *H. Fur.* 805; *Hip.* 1152; he is the uncle of Hercules, *H. Oet.* 328; and of Pallas, *Hip.* 1152; unmoved by tears, *H. Fur.* 578; conquered by the music of Orpheus, *ibid.* 582; his court and appearance described, *ibid.* \*721.

POLLUX, see [CASTOR](#).

POLYBUS, king of Corinth, who adopted and reared the exposed infant, Oedipus, *Oed.* 12, 270; his peaceful death announced by messenger to Oedipus, *ibid.* 784.

POLYNĪCES (*Phoenissae*), son of Oedipus and Jocasta; wronged by his brother Eteocles in the matter of the kingdom of Thebes, he fled to Adrastus, king of Argos, who gave him refuge and made him his son-in-law. To avenge Polynices, Adrastus marched against Thebes with an army headed by seven famous chiefs of Greece, *Phoen.* 58, 320; Oedipus prophesies this fraternal strife and predicts that the brothers will slay each other, *ibid.* 273, 334, 355; remains in exile at the court of Adrastus three years before returning against Thebes to enforce his rights, *ibid.* 370, \*502; the hardships of his exile described, *ibid.* \*586; appears before the walls of Thebes at the head of an army, *ibid.* 387; the battle pauses while Jocasta appeals to her sons, *ibid.* 434. See [ETEOCLES](#).

POLYXENA, a daughter of Priam and Hecuba, one of the captive Trojan women; the ghost of Achilles, who in life had been enamored of her, and with whom both Priam and Hector had had negotiations touching the maiden, appears to the Greeks and demands that she be now sacrificed on the tomb of Achilles, *Tro.* 170; Calchas ratifies her doom, *ibid.* 360; Helen announces this fate to her, and she receives it with joy, *ibid.* 945; her death described in detail by a messenger, *ibid.* \*1117; she is described as gaily leading the Trojan maidens in a dance about the wooden horse, unconscious of the doom so soon to come to her, *Agam.* 641.

POPPAEA (*Octavia*), one of the most beautiful and unscrupulous women of her time; she was first married to Rufus Crispinus, a prefect of pretorian cohorts under Claudius; she abandoned him for Otho, and him, in turn, she left to become the mistress of Nero, and the rival of Nero's wife, Octavia, *Oct.* 125; in order to further her schemes she influenced Nero to murder his mother, *ibid.* 126; demanded the death of Octavia, *ibid.* 131; with child by Nero, *ibid.* 188, 591; her rejection by Nero prophesied, *ibid.* 193; her beauty lauded by Nero, who announced her as his next wife, *ibid.* 544; her

wedding with Nero cursed by the ghost of Agrippina, *ibid.* 595; her marriage described, *ibid.* \*698; is terrified by strange dream of Agrippina's ghost, and of her former husband, Crispinus, *ibid.* \*712.

PRIAM, king of Troy; in his youth, at the first taking of Troy, he was spared by Hercules and allowed to retain the throne, *Tro.* 719; pictured as viewing the contending hosts from the battlements of Troy in company with his little grandson, Astyanax, *ibid.* \*1068; sues to Achilles for the dead body of Hector, *ibid.* 315, 324; his city destroyed through the baleful power of love, *Oct.* 817; description of his death at the hands of Pyrrhus, *Tro.* \*44; *Agam.* 655; he fell before the altar of Hercean Jove, *Agam.* 448, 792; pathetic contrast of his death with his former greatness, *Tro.* 140.

PROCNE, daughter of Pandion, and wife of Tereus, king of Thrace; she, in revenge for the outrage upon her sister, Philomela, committed by her husband, served to him his own son, Itys, *H. Oet.* 953; *Agam.* 673; *Thy.* 275.

PROCRUSTES, a famous robber of Attica, killed by Theseus, *Hip.* 1170; *Thy.* 1050.

PROETIDES, daughters of Proetus, king of Argolis; they counted themselves more beautiful than Juno, and also refused to worship Bacchus. The god drove them to a madness in which they thought themselves cows, and went wandering through the woods. This act won for him the favor of Juno, *Oed.* 486.

PROMĒTHEUS, a son of Iapetus and Clymene; he gave the gift of fire to mortals, *Med.* 821; for this act he was bound by Jove's command to a crag of Mount Caucasus, where an eagle fed upon his ever-renewed vitals, *H. Fur.* 1206; *Med.* 709; *H. Oet.* 1378.

PROSERPINA, daughter of Ceres and Jupiter; stolen away by Pluto and made his queen in hades, *Med.* 12; *H. Fur.* 1105; sought in vain by her mother over the whole world, *ibid.* 659; Pirithoüs and Theseus attempted to steal her away from the lower world, *Hip.* 95.

PROTEUS, son of Oceanus and Tethys, shepherd and guardian of the sea-calves, *Hip.* 1205.

PYLADES, son of Strophius, king of Phocis, and one of the sisters of Agamemnon; he accompanied his father as charioteer on the occasion of Strophius' visit to Argos just after Agamemnon's murder; they take Orestes away and so save him from death, *Agam.* 940.

PYROMANTĪA, soothsaying by means of fire, practiced by Tiresias in his effort to discover the murderer of Laius, *Oed.* \*307.

PYRRHA, the sister of Deucalion, saved with him from the flood, *Tro.* 1038. See [DEUCALION](#).

PYRRHUS (*Troades*), a son of the young Achilles and Deïdamia, the daughter of Lycomedes, king of Scyros; born on the island of Scyros, *Tro.* 339; quarreled with Ulysses inside the wooden horse, *Agam.* 635; slew old Priam, *Tro.* 44, 310.

PYTHON, a huge serpent or dragon that sprang from the slime of the earth after the flood had subsided; slain by Apollo, *H. Oet.* 93; *Med.* 700.

## R

RHADAMANTHUS, a son of Jupiter and Europa, and brother of Minos; he was made one of three judges in hades, *H. Fur.* 734.

RHESUS, a king of Thrace who came, late in the Trojan War, to the aid of Priam; there was an oracle that Troy could never be taken if the horses of Rhesus should drink the waters of the Xanthus, and feed upon the grass of the Trojan plain; this oracle was frustrated by Ulysses and Diomedes, *Agam.* 216.

## S

SATURN, son of Coelus and Terra, who succeeded to his father's kingdom of the heavens and earth; the golden age was said to have been in his reign, *Oct.* 395; had been dethroned by his three sons, Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto, who divided up his kingdom among themselves; he is conceived of as chained in hades by Pluto, *H. Oet.* 1141; Hercules threatens to unchain him against Jove unless the latter grant him a place in heaven, *H. Fur.* 965.

SCALES (*Libra*), the zodiacal constellation marking the autumnal equinox, *H. Fur.* 842.

SCIRON, a celebrated robber in Attica, who threw his victims over the cliffs into the sea; he was slain by Theseus, *Hip.* 1023, 1225.

SCORPION, one of the zodiacal constellations, *Thy.* 859.

SCYLLA, one of the two shipwrecking monsters in the Sicilian Strait, *H. Fur.* 376; *H. Oet.* 235; *Med.* 350, 407; *Thy.* 579. See [CHARYBDIS](#).

SCYTHIA, a name given by the ancients to a portion of northern Asia of indefinite extent; a description of its nomadic tribes, frozen streams, changing aspect of the country with the changing seasons, *H. Fur.* \*533.

SEMELE, a Theban princess, daughter of Cadmus, beloved of Jove by whom she became the mother of Bacchus, *H. Fur.* 16; she was blasted by a thunderbolt while the child, Bacchus, was still unborn, *H. Fur.* 457; *H. Oet.* 1804. See [BACCHUS](#).

SENECA (*Octavia*), introduced into the play in the character of Nero's counselor, *Oct.* 377; he recalls his life in exile in Corsica, and considers it far happier and safer than his present life, *ibid.* 381; he strives in vain to prevent the marriage of Nero and Poppaea, *ibid.* 695.

SERES, a nation of Asia, supposed to be identical with the Chinese; they gather silken threads (spun by the silkworm) from trees, *H. Oet.* 666; *Hip.* 389.

SILĀNUS, L. Junius, praetor in A.D. 49; he was the betrothed husband of Octavia, but put out of the way by court intriguers that Octavia might marry Nero, *Oct.* 145.

SILĒNUS, a demigod, the foster-father and constant attendant of Bacchus, *Oed.* 429.

SINIS, a giant robber of the Isthmus of Corinth, who bent down treetops and, fixing his victims to these, shot them through the air; he was slain by Theseus, *H. Oet.* 1393; *Hip.*, 1169, 1223.

SINON, a Greek warrior, who deceived the Trojans as to the character and purpose of the wooden horse, and so procured the downfall of Troy, *Tro.* 39; *Agam.* \*626.

SIPYLUS, a mountain in Phrygia, on whose top Niobe, changed to stone, was said to sit and weep eternally over her lost children, *H. Oet.* 185; *Agam.* 394; *H. Fur.* 391. See [NIOBE](#).

SIRENS, mythical maidens dwelling on an island of the ocean, whose beautiful singing lured sailors to destruction, *H. Oet.* 190; they were passed in safety by the Argonauts because Orpheus played sweeter music, *Med.* 355.

SISYPHUS, the son of Aeolus, was said to have been the founder of ancient Corinth, and father of Creon, *Med.* 512, 776; *Oed.* 282; for his disobedience to the gods he was set to rolling a huge stone up a hill in hades, which ever rolled back again and so renewed his toil, *Med.* 746; *Hip.* 1230; *Agam.* 16; *H. Fur.* 751; *Thy.* 6; *Oct.* 622; *H. Oet.* 942, 1010; the stone followed the magical music of Orpheus, *ibid.* 1081.

SMINTHEUS, an epithet of Phoebus Apollo, *Agam.* 176.

SOL, the sun personified as the sun-god, used with the same force as Phoebus, *H. Fur.* 37, 61; *Med.* 29, 210; *Thy.* 637, 776, 789, 822, 990, 1035; *Hip.* 124, 1091; *H. Oet.* 150.

SOMNUS, the god of sleep, brother of death, *H. Fur.* 1069; called the son of Astraea, *ibid.* 1068; characteristics, symbols, and powers described at length, *ibid.* \*1065.

SPHINX, a fabulous monster with the face of a woman, the breast, feet, and tail of a lion, and the wings of a bird; sent to harass Thebes, slaying everyone who passed her and who could not answer her riddle, *Oed.* 246; *Phoen.* 120, 131; Oedipus' encounter with her described, *Oed.* \*92; slain by Oedipus, *ibid.* 641; seen by Creon among the shapes in hades, called by him the "Ogygian (i. e., Boeotian or Theban) pest," *ibid.* 589; used as type of winged speed, *Phoen.* 422.

STROPHIUS (*Agamemnon*), see [PYLADES](#).

STYMPHALIAN BIRDS, monstrous creatures haunting a pool near the town of Stymphalus in Arcadia; they were killed by Hercules as his sixth labor, *H. Fur.* 244; *Med.* 783; *Agam.* 850; *H. Oet.* 1237, 1890; used as type of winged speed, *Phoen.* 422.

STYX, a river of hades, *H. Fur.* 780; *Oed.* 162; over which spirits must pass into the world of the dead, the river of death; in Seneca, this conception is not confined to the Styx, but is used of that river in common with the Acheron, *H. Fur.* \*713; *Hip.* 1180; *Agam.* 608; the Lethe, *Hip.* 148; *H. Oet.* 1161, 1550; and the Phlegethon, *Agam.* \*750; it is upon the Styx alone, however, that the gods swear their inviolable oaths, *H. Fur.* 713; *Hip.* 944; *Thy.* 666; *H. Oet.* 1066; from meaning the river of death, it comes to mean death itself, *H. Fur.* 185, 558; in its most frequent use, the river signifies the lower world in general, the land of the dead; so are found Stygian "shades," "homes," "caverns," "ports," "gates," "borders," "torches," "fires," etc., *H. Fur.* 54, 90, 104, 1131; *Tro.* 430; *Med.* 632, 804; *Hip.* 477, 625, 928, 1151; *Oed.* 396, 401, 621; *Agam.* 493; *Thy.* 1007; *H. Oet.* 77, 560, 1014, 1145, 1198, 1203, 1711, 1766, 1870, 1919, 1983; *Oct.* 24, 79, 135, 162, 263, 594; Cerberus is the "Stygian dog" and "Stygian guardian," *Agam.* 13; *Hip.* 223; *H. Oet.* 79, 1245; the "deep embrace of Styx" is the pit which Andromache prays may open up beneath Hector's tomb and hide Astyanax, *Tro.* 520; the boat on which Agrippina was to meet her death is called the Stygian boat, *Oct.* 127.

SYMPLEGADES (the "clashers"), two rocks or crags at the entrance of the Euxine Sea which, according to tradition, clashed together when any object passed between them; escaped by the Argo, *Med.* 341, 456, 610; Hercules prays that he may be crushed to death between these rocks, *H. Fur.* 1210; used as a type of a hard crag, *H. Oet.* 1273, 1380.

## T

TAENARUS (also written TAENARA), a promontory on the southernmost point of the Peloponnesus, near which was a cave, said to be the entrance to the lower world, *Tro.* 402; *H. Fur.* 587, \*663, 813; *Oed.* 171; *Hip.* 1203; *H. Oet.* 1061, 1771.



TAGUS, a river of Spain, celebrated for its golden sands, *H. Fur.* 1325; *Thy.* 354; *H. Oet.* 626.

TANTALUS (*Thyestes*) (1), a king of Lydia, son of Jupiter and the nymph, Pluto, father of Pelops and of Niobe, *H. Fur.* 390; *Oed.* 613; *Med.* 954; *Agam.* 392; *H. Oet.* 198; because of his outrageous sin against the gods (see PELOPS) he was doomed to suffer in hades endless pangs of hunger and thirst, with fruit and water almost within reach of his lips, *H. Fur.* \*752; *Hip.* 1232; *Agam.* 19; *Thy.* 1011; *Oct.* 621; his sin described and punishment portrayed in detail, *Thy.* \*137; his ghost appears, describes his sufferings in hades, and is incited by a fury to urge on his house to greater crimes, *ibid.* 1; Deianira prays that she may take his punishment upon herself, *H. Oet.* 943; Medea prays that he may come and drink of the waters of Corinth, and that Creon may take his place in hades, *Med.* 745; used as type of outrageous sinner, *Thy.* 242; he forgets his thirst in his grief for the disasters which threaten his house, *Agam.* 769; he forgets his thirst under the influence of Orpheus' music, *H. Oet.* 1075.

TANTALUS (*Thyestes*) (2), one of the sons of Thyestes, great-grandson of Tantalus (1), encourages his father to hope for reconciliation with his brother, Atreus, *Thy.* 421; slain by Atreus, *ibid.* 718.

TARTARUS (also written TARTARA), in its strict sense, that portion of the lower world devoted to the punishment of the wicked, hell, the abode of the furies and of those like Tantalus, Ixion, etc., who are suffering torments, *H. Fur.* 86; *Oed.* 161; *Med.* 742; *Oct.* 965; in the great majority of cases, however, Tartarus is the lower world in general, whence ghosts come back to earth, *Agam.* 2; *Oct.* 593; to which Orpheus went in search of his wife, *Med.* 632; *H. Oet.* 1064; to which Hercules went to bring thence Cerberus, *H. Oet.* 461; *Hip.* 844; where was the palace of Dis, *ibid.* 951; *Agam.* 751; where Cerberus stands guard, *H. Fur.* 649; *H. Oet.* 1770; where are the "Tartarian pools," *Hip.* 1179; and so in general, *H. Fur.* 436, 710, 889, 1225; *Oed.* 869; *Phoen.* 144, 145; *Thy.* 1013, 1071; *H. Oet.* 1126, 1119, 1514, 1705, 1779; *Oct.* 223, 644.

TAURUS, the second zodiacal constellation, the Bull, which poets feign was the bull in the form of which Jupiter bore Europa from Phoenicia to Crete, *H. Fur.* 9, 952; *Thy.* 852.

TELEPHUS, a king of Mysia, wounded by Achilles' spear, and afterward cured by application of the rust scraped from its point, *Tro.* 215.

TEREUS, a king of Thrace, whose barbarous feast upon his own son, Itys, is called the "Thracian crime," *Thy.* 56. See [PHILOMELA](#) and [PROCNE](#).

TETHYS, the goddess of the sea, used frequently for the sea itself, in which the sun sets and from which it rises, *Hip.* 571, 1161; *H. Fur.* 887, 1328; *Tro.* 879; *Med.* 378; *H. Oet.* 1252, 1902.

THEBES, the capital city of Boeotia, founded by Cadmus, *H. Fur.* 268; its walls built by the magic of Amphion's lyre, *ibid.* 262; famed for frequent visits of the gods, especially of Jove, *ibid.* 265; plague-smitten under Oedipus, who laments the disaster, *Oed.* \*37; plague described at length by the chorus, *ibid.* \*125; a curse fell upon Thebes from the time of Cadmus, *ibid.* \*709; conquered by Lycus, the usurper, who slew King Creon, the father of Megara, *H. Fur.* 270; scene of the *Hercules Furens*, *Oedipus*, and *Phoenissae* (in part).

THESEUS (*Hercules Furens*, *Hippolytus*), king of Athens, son of Aegeus and Aethra, daughter of Pittheus, king of Troezen; according to tradition also reputed the son of Neptune, who had granted him three wishes, *Hip.* 942, 943, 1252; the last of which he used against his son, Hippolytus, *ibid.* 945; went to Crete to slay the Minotaur; his beautiful appearance described, *ibid.* \*646, 1067; finds his way out of the labyrinth by aid of a thread given him by Ariadne, *ibid.* 650, 662; fled with Ariadne, but deserted her on Naxos, *Oed.* 488; was the cause of his father's death, since he did not display the white sail on his return to Athens from slaying the Minotaur, *Hip.* 1165; married Antiope, the Amazon, who became the mother of Hippolytus, but afterward slew her, *ibid.* 226, 927, 1167; married Phaedra, *ibid. passim*; went to hades with his bosom friend, Pirithoüs, to assist the latter in carrying away Proserpina, *ibid.* 91, 627; the two were apprehended by Dis and set upon an

enchanted rock which held them fast, *H. Fur.* 1339; Theseus was rescued by Hercules, *ibid.* 806; *H. Oet.* 1197, 1768; *Hip.* 843; returns from hades, *ibid.* 829.

THESPIADES, the fifty daughters of Thespius, loved by Hercules, *H. Oet.* 369.

THETIS, a sea-goddess, daughter of Nereus; she was given as wife to Peleus, *Med.* 657; *Oct.* 707; and became by him the mother of Achilles, *Tro.* 346, 880; *Agam.* 616; to keep her son from the Trojan War she hid him disguised in garments of a girl at the court of King Lycomedes, *Tro.* 213; but this ruse was discovered and exposed by Ulysses, *ibid.* 569.

THULE, the farthest known land, differing with different stages of development of human knowledge; the time will come when all lands will be known, and there will be no *ultima Thule*, *Med.* 379.

THYESTES (*Thyestes*, *Agamemnon*), see [ATREUS](#).

TIPHYS, the pilot of the Argo, *Med.* 3, 318; picture of his management of the vessel, *ibid.* \*318; grew pale at sight of the Symplegades, *ibid.* 346; his tragic death, \*617.

TIRESIAS (*Oedipus*), a celebrated prophet of Thebes, father of Manto; blind and old, he is led by his daughter into the presence of Oedipus, where he attempts by various processes to discover the murderer of Laïus, *Oed.* 288; practices *pyromantia*, *capnomantia*, *hieroscopia*, and later *necromantia*, *ibid.* \*307; discovers by the last process that Oedipus himself slew Laïus, *ibid.* \*530.

TISIPHONE, one of the furies who seems to appear to the distracted Deianira, *H. Oet.* 1012; seems to appear to the mad Hercules, guarding the door of hell since Cerberus has been removed, *H. Fur.* 984. See [FURIES](#).

TITANS, a name given to the sons of Coelus and Terra, one of whom was Hyperion, identified by Homer with the sun. The Titans warred against one of their own number, Saturn, who had succeeded to the throne of his father. The word is, however, frequently confounded with the Giants, who banded together to dethrone Jove; they piled up mountains in their attempt to scale heaven, but were overthrown

by Jove's thunderbolt and buried under Sicily, *H. Fur.* 79, 967; *Med.* 410; *Agam.* 340; *H. Oet.* 144, 1212, 1309; in all other passages in Seneca, Titan means the sun, more or less completely personified as the sun-god, lord and ruler of the day, *H. Fur.* 124, 133, 443, 1060, 1333; *Med.* 5; *Tro.* 170; *Hip.* 678, 779; *Oed.* 1, 40; *Thy.* 120, 785, 1095; *Agam.* 460, 908; *H. Oet.* 42, 291, 423, 488, 723, 781, 891, 968, 1111, 1131, 1163, 1287, 1512, 1518, 1566, 1575, 1760; *Oct.* 2. See [GIANTS](#), [PHOEBUS](#).

TITYUS, a giant, son of Earth, who offered violence to Latona; for this he was punished in hades, where a vulture kept feeding upon his ever-renewed vitals, *H. Fur.* 756, 977; *H. Oet.* 947; *Hip.* 1233; *Agam.* 17; *Thy.* 9, 806; *Oct.* 622; relieved for a while by the music of Orpheus, *H. Oet.* 1070.

TMOLUS, a mountain in Lydia, a favorite haunt of Bacchus, *Phoen.* 602.

TOXEUS, a youth slain by Hercules, *H. Oet.* 214.

TRIPTOLEMUS, son of the king of Eleusis, through whom Ceres gave the arts of agriculture to mankind, *Hip.* 838.

TRITONS, sea-deities; they sung the marriage chorus of Achilles, *Tro.* 202.

TRIVIA, an epithet of Diana, because she presided over places where three roads meet, *Agam.* 382; *Oct.* 978; applied by association to Luna, the heavenly manifestation of Diana, *Med.* \*787.

TROÏLUS, a son of Priam, slain by Achilles, *Agam.* 748.

TROY, an ancient city of Troas, whose walls were built by Neptune and Apollo, *Tro.* 7; it was first destroyed under the reign of Laomedon, father of Priam, by Hercules and Telamon, because of the perfidy of Laomedon, *Agam.* 614, 862; *Tro.* 135, \*719; its second fall was after ten years of siege by the Greeks, *Tro.* 74; her festal day turned out to be a day of doom, *Agam.* 791; it is not the Greek heroes who destroyed Troy, but the lying traitor, Sinon, who deceived the Trojans about the wooden horse, *ibid.* 615; mourning for the fall of Troy, *ibid.* 589; distant view of the smouldering ruins

as seen by the Greek vessels from the sea on their homeward voyage, *ibid.* 456.

TULLIA, a daughter of Servius Tullius, king of Rome; her impious sin and its punishment, *Oct.* 304.

TYNDARIDAE, Castor and Pollux, the sons of Jupiter and Leda, but falsely named from Tyndarus, the mortal husband of Leda; their stars give help to sailors, *H. Fur.* 14, 552; *Oct.* 208. See [CASTOR](#), [LEDA](#).

TYPHOEUS, one of the Giants who fought against Jove, *Med.* 773; *Thy.* 809.

TYPHON, a giant, apparently the same as Typhoeus, *H. Oet.* 1733; *Oct.* 238.

TYRRHENE, an epithet applied to the band of Phoenician pirates who attempted to kidnap Bacchus, *Oed.* 249; to the dolphin, in reference to the story of how these pirates were changed into dolphins by the power of Bacchus, *Agam.* 451; to the Tuscan Sea, because the Etrurians were supposed to have been of Tyrrhenian stock, *Oct.* 311; and to Inarime, an island, possibly to be identified with Ischia, lying in the Tyrrhene sea off the coast of Campania, *H. Oet.* 1156.

## U

ULYSSES (*Troades*), *Tro. passim*.

## V

VENUS, a goddess, sprung from the foam of the sea, *Hip.* 274; she is the goddess of love, *ibid.* 417, 576, 910; *Oct.* 545; the mother of Cupid, the god of love, *Hip.* 275; *H. Oet.* 543; *Oct.* 697; called Erycina, because Mt. Eryx in Sicily was sacred to her, *Hip.* 199; she persecuted the stock of Phoebus (i. e., Pasiphaë and Phaëdra), because that god had published her amours with Mars, *ibid.* 124; cursed Messalina with insatiate lust, *Oct.* 258; the effect upon the world which the cessation of the power of Venus would produce, *Hip.* \*\*469; she has no existence, but is feigned by men as a goddess in order to excuse their own lusts, *ibid.* 203; used frequently by metonymy for the passion of love, either lawful or

unlawful, *ibid.* 211, 237, 339, 447, 462, 721, 913; *Agam.* 183, 275, 927; *Oct.* 191, 433.

VIRGINIA, the daughter of Virginius, slain by her father to save her from the lust of Appius Claudius the decemvir, *Oct.* 296.

VIRGO, the zodiacal constellation of the Virgin, Astraea, the daughter of Jove and Themis, who left the earth last of all the gods on account of man's sin, *Thy.* 857.

VULCAN, the god of fire; forges the thunderbolts of Jove, *Hip.* 190; is pierced by Cupid's darts, *ibid.* 193; is called the father of Cupid and husband of Venus, *Oct.* 560.

## Z

ZETES, a winged son of Boreas, who, together with his brother Calais, was a member of the Argonautic expedition; they were slain by Hercules, *Med.* 634; they had previously driven away the harpies from Phineus, king of Thrace, *ibid.* 782.

ZETHUS, a Theban prince, son of Antiope, the niece of Lycus, king of Thebes; he and his twin brother, Amphion, were exposed in infancy on Mt. Cithaeron, but were saved and brought up by shepherds. Arrived at manhood they killed Lycus and Dirce, his wife, on account of their cruelties to Antiope, and together reigned in Thebes. Reference is made to their rustic life in *H. Fur.* 916; the shade of Zethus comes up from hades, still holding by the horn the wild bull to which he had tied Dirce, *Oed.* 610. See [DIRCE](#).