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Author: Euripides

Author: Richard G. Moulton

Author: Sophocles

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# **BOOK OF**

**ILLUSTRATIONS**

**ANCIENT TRAGEDY**

**RICHARD G. MOULTON**

**CHICAGO**

The University of Chicago Press

## ILLUSTRATIONS

### THE ANCIENT DRAMA

(TRAGEDY)

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## REFERENCES

*In the case of Aeschylus and Sophocles the numbering of lines agrees with that in the translations of Plumptre and in the original. In the plays from Euripides the numbering is that of the lines in the cheap translation (Routledge's Universal Library).*

[Transcriber's note: In the original book, the line numbers mentioned above were right-justified. In this e-book, they are enclosed in curly braces, and placed immediately after their associated line of text, e.g. ". . . a line of text {123}"].

## A CONDENSATION OF THE TRILOGY

### STORY OF ORESTES

[*ORESTEIA*]

BEING THE ONLY GREEK TRILOGY, OR THREE-PLAY DRAMA, WHICH HAS COME

DOWN TO US COMPLETE

CONSISTING OF

**MORNING PLAY:**

AGAMEMNON

**MIDDAY PLAY:**

THE SEPULCHRAL RITES

[*CHOEPHORI*]

**AFTERNOON PLAY:**

THE GENTLE GODDESSES

[*EUMENIDES*]

COMPOSED BY AESCHYLUS, AND BROUGHT ON THE STAGE AT ATHENS AT THE FESTIVAL OF THE 'GREATER DIONYSIA,' IN MARCH OF 458 B. C., DURING THE POLITICAL EXCITEMENT OCCASIONED BY THE POPULAR ATTACK ON THE ARISTOCRATIC COURT OF MARS' HILL, OR AREOPAGUS

The passages quoted are from Plumptre's Translation

## MEMORANDUM

The Sacred Legends touched by this Trilogy would be familiar, in outline, to the Auditors: e. g.:

The woes of the House of Atreus: the foundation of them laid by Atreus when, to take vengeance on his brother Thyestes, he served up to him at a banquet the flesh of his own sons;

His grandsons were Agamemnon and Menelaus: Menelaus' wife, Helen, was stolen by a guest, Paris of Troy, which caused the great Trojan war.

Agamemnon, who commanded the Greek nations in that war, fretting at the contrary winds which delayed the setting out of the fleet, was persuaded by the Seers to slay his own daughter Iphigenia, to appease the Deities;

Her mother Clytaemnestra treasured up this wrong all through the ten years' war, and slew Agamemnon on his return, in the moment of victory, slew him while in his bath by casting a net over him and smiting him to death with her own arm;

Then she reigned in triumph with Aegisthus her paramour (himself one of the fatal house), till Orestes her son, who had escaped as an infant when his father was slaughtered, returned at last, and slew the guilty pair;

For this act of matricide, though done by the command of Apollo, Orestes was given up to the Furies, and driven over the earth, a madman, till in Athens, on Mars' Hill they say, he was cleansed and healed.

Cassandra too was involved in the fall of Agamemnon: the Trojan maiden beloved of Apollo, who bestowed upon her the gift of prophecy; when she slighted the God's love, Apollo—for no gift of a god can be recalled—left her a prophetess, with the doom that her true forebodings should ever be disbelieved. She, having thus vainly sought to save Troy, with its fall fell into captivity, and to the lot of Agamemnon, with whom she died.

The name of Orestes would suggest the proverbial friendship of Qrestes [Transcriber's note: Orestes?] and Pylades, formed in Orestes' trouble and never broken.

## TRILOGY OF THE ORESTEIA

### FIRST PLAY: IN THE MORNING:

#### AGAMEMNON

#### PROLOGUE

*The Permanent Scene is decorated to represent the facade of the Palace of Agamemnon, at Argos; the platform over the Central door appearing as a Watch-tower. At intervals along the front of the Palace, and especially by the three doors, are statues of Gods, amongst them Apollo, Zeus, and Hermes. The time is supposed to be night, verging on morning. Both Orchestra and Stage are vacant: only a Watchman is discovered on the Tower, leaning on his elbow, and gazing into the distance.*

The Watchman soliloquizes on his toilsome task of watching all night through for the first sight of the signal which is to tell of the capture of Troy: he has kept his post for years, till the constellations which usher in winter and harvest-time are his familiar companions; he must endure weather and sleeplessness, and when he would sing to keep his spirits up he is checked by thoughts of his absent master's household, in which, he darkly hints, things are "not well." [*He is settling himself into an easier posture, when suddenly he springs to his feet.*] The beacon-fire at last! [*He shouts the signal agreed upon, and begins dancing for joy.*] Now all will be well; a little while and his hand shall touch the dear hand of his lord; and then—ah! "the weight of an ox rests on his tongue," but if the house had a voice it could tell a tale! [*Exit to bring tidings to the queen.*] {39}

#### PARODE, OR CHORUS-ENTRY

*As if roused by the Watchman's shout, enter the Chorus: Twelve Elders of Argos: in the usual processional order, combining music, chanting and gesture-dance, to a rhythm conventionally associated with marching. They enter on the right (as if from the city), and the Processional Chant takes them gradually round the Orchestra towards the Thymele, or Altar of Dionysus, in the centre.*

*The Chorus in their Processional Chant open the general state of affairs, especially bringing out the doubled-sidedness of the situation [which is the key-note of the whole Drama]: the expected triumph over Troy, which cannot be far distant now, combined with misgivings as to misfortunes sure to come as nemesis for the dark deeds connected with the setting out of the expedition. They open thus:*

Lo! the tenth year now is passing {40}  
Since, of Priam great avengers,  
Menelaos, Agamemnon,  
Double-throned and double-sceptred,  
Power from sovran Zeus deriving—  
Mighty pair of the Atreidae—  
Raised a fleet of thousand vessels  
Of the Argives from our country,  
Potent helpers in their warfare,  
Shouting cry of Ares fiercely;  
E'en as vultures shriek who hover,  
Wheeling, whirling o'er their eyrie, {50}  
In wild sorrow for their nestlings,  
With their oars of stout wings rowing,  
Having lost the toil that bound them  
To their callow fledglings' couches.  
But on high One—or Apollo,  
Zeus, or Pan,—the shrill cry hearing,  
Cry of birds that are his clients,  
Sendeth forth on men transgressing

Erinnys, slow but sure avenger;  
So against young Alexandros  
Atreus' sons the Great King sendeth,  
Zeus, of host and guest protector: {60}  
He, for bride with many a lover,  
Will to Danai give and Troïans  
Many conflicts, men's limbs straining,  
When the knee in dust is crouching,  
And the spear-shaft in the onset  
Of the battle snaps asunder.  
But as things are now, so are they,  
So, as destined, shall the end be.  
Nor by tears nor yet libations  
Shall he soothe the wrath unbending {70}  
Caused by sacred rites left fireless.

They are going on to soliloquize how they themselves have been shut out of the glorious expedition, for, in matters of War, old age is but a return to boyhood; when {82}

*The Chorus-Procession having reached the Thymele, turn towards the Stage. Meanwhile the great Central Door of the Stage has opened, and a solemn Procession filed out on the Stage, consisting of the Queen and her Attendants, bearing torches and incense, and offerings for the Gods; they have during the Choral Procession silently advanced to the different Statues along the front of the Palace, made offerings and commenced the sacrificial rites. When the Chorus turn towards the Stage, the whole Scene is ablaze with fires and trembling with clouds of incense, rich unguents perfume the whole Theatre, while a solemn Religious ritual is being celebrated in dumb show.*

*The Chorus* break off their Processional Chant [*keeping the same rhythm*] to enquire what is the meaning of these solemn rites, and whether the Queen can solve their doubt, which wavers between hope and foreboding:

*The Queen* signifying, by a gesture, that the Ritual must not be interrupted by speech, the Chorus proceed to take their regular position round the Thymele, and address themselves to their {104}

#### **PRELUDE**

*the Music, Poetry, and Gesture-dance changing from a March to a highly Lyrical rhythm; the evolutions of the Dance taking Right and Left hand directions, but without the Chorus quitting their position round the Altar.[1]*

*Strophe: during which the evolutions take a Right Hand direction.*

*The Chorus* resume: though shut out from War their old age has still suasive power of song, and they can tell of the famous omen seen by the two kings and the whole army as they waited to embark: two eagles on the left devouring a pregnant hare:

Sing a strain of woe  
But may the good prevail! {120}

*Antistrophe: the same rhythm line for line as the Strophe, but the evolutions taking Left Hand direction.*

and the Prophet Calchas interpreted; they shall lay Troy low, only beware lest the Victors suffer from the wrath of some God, Artemis who hates the eagle:

Sing a strain of woe,  
But may the good prevail! {137}

*Epode: a different rhythm, and the evolutions without any special direction.*

May some Healer, Calchas added, avert her wrath, lest she send delays upon the impatient host and irritate them to some dread deed, some sacrifice of children to haunt the house for ever! So he prophesied in piercing strains.

Sing a strain of woe,  
But may the good prevail {154}

#### **ENTRY-ODE**

*With a change of rhythm, the Chorus pass into their first regular Choral Ode; Strophes and Antistrophes as in the Prelude, but the Evolutions now leading them from the central Altar to the extreme Right and Left of the Orchestra.*

*Strophe I: Evolutions leading Chorus from Thymele to extreme Right of Orchestra.*

It must be Zeus—no other God will suffice—Zeus alone who shall lift from my[2] mind this cloud of anxiety;

*Antistrophe I: Evolutions the same, rhythm for rhythm, as the Strophe, but leading the Chorus back from the Right of Orchestra to the central Altar.*

For on Zeus, before whom all the elder Gods gave way, they must rely who are bent on getting all the wisdom of the wise. {168}

*Strophe II: a change of rhythm: evolutions leading Chorus from the central Altar to the extreme Left of Orchestra.*

Yes: Zeus leads men to wisdom by his fixed law that pain is gain; by instilling secret care in the heart, it may be in sleep, he forces the unwilling to yield to wiser thoughts: no doubt this anxiety is a gift of the Gods, whose might is irresistible. {176}

*Antistrophe II: same rhythm, but evolutions leading back from Left of Orchestra to central Altar.*

When Agamemnon, not repining, but tempering himself to the fate which smote him, waited amidst adverse winds and failing stores: {184}

*Strophe III: fresh change of rhythm, Chorus moving to Right of Orchestra.*

and the contrary winds kept sweeping down from the Strymon, and the host was being worn out with delays, and the prophet began to speak of 'one more charm against the wrath of Artemis, though a bitter one to the Chiefs,' {195}

*Antistrophe III: same rhythm, movement back from Right of Orchestra to Altar.*

at last the King spoke: great woe to disobey the prophet, great woe to slay my child! how shed a maiden's blood? yet how lose my expedition, my allies? May all be well in the end! {210}

*Strophe IV: change of rhythm; movements to the left of Orchestra.*

So when he himself had harnessed  
To the yoke of Fate unbending,  
With a blast of strange new feeling  
Sweeping o'er his heart and spirit,  
Aweless, godless and unholy,  
He his thoughts and purpose altered  
To full measure of all daring,  
(Still base counsel's fatal frenzy,  
Wretched primal source of evils,  
Gives to mortal hearts strange boldness,)  
And at last his heart be hardened  
His own child to slay as victim,  
Help in war that they were waging  
To avenge a woman's frailty,  
Victim for the good ship's safety. {219}

*Antistrophe IV: back to Altar.*

All her prayers and eager callings  
On the tender name of Father,  
All her young and maiden freshness,  
They but set at naught, those rulers,  
In their passion for the battle.  
And her father gave commandment  
To the servants of the Goddess,  
When the prayer was o'er, to lift her,  
Like a kid, above the altar,  
In her garments wrapt, face downwards,—  
Yea, to seize with all their courage,

And that o'er her lips of beauty  
Should be set a watch to hinder  
Words of curse against the houses,  
With the gag's strength silence-working.

*Strophe V: Altar to Sight of Orchestra.*

And she upon the ground  
Pouring rich folds of veil in saffron dyed,  
Cast at each one of those who sacrificed  
A piteous glance that pierced  
Fair as a pictured form,  
And wishing,—all in vain,—  
To speak; for oftentimes  
In those her father's hospitable halls  
She sang, a maiden pure with chastest song,  
And her dear father's life  
That poured its threefold cup of praise to God,  
Crowned with all choicest good,  
She with a daughter's love  
Was wont to celebrate. {238}

*Antistrophe V: Back to Altar.*

What then ensued mine eyes  
Saw not, nor may I tell, but Calchas' arts  
Were found not fruitless. Justice turns the scale  
For those to whom through pain  
At last comes wisdom's gain.  
But for our future fate,  
Since help for it is none,  
Good-bye to it before it comes, and this  
Has the same end as wailing premature;  
For with to-morrow's dawn  
It will come clear; may good luck crown our fate!  
So prays the one true guard,  
Nearest and dearest found,  
Of this our Apian land. {248}

## EPISODE I

*The Ritual on the Stage being now concluded, Clytaemnestra advances to the front. At the same moment the Choral Ode is finished and the Chorus take up their usual position during the Episodes, drawn up in two lilies in front of the Altar facing the Stage. They speak only by their Foreman (or Coryphiceus), and use the ordinary Iambic Metre (equivalent to our Blank Verse).*

*The Foreman of the Chorus repeats his enquiries of Clytaemnestra as to the meaning of this sudden rejoicing, guardedly adding that it is his duty to pay respect to his lord's wife in his absence—Clytaemnestra announces that Troy has been taken this last night—rapid interchange of stichomuthic dialogue, the Chorus expressing their amazement as to how the news could travel so fast.*

*Cho.* What herald could arrive with speed like this?

*Clytaem.* Hephistos flashing forth bright flames from Ida:

Beacon to beacon from that courier-fire  
Sent on its tidings; Ida to the rock  
Hermaean named, in Lemnos: from the isle  
The height of Athos, dear to Zeus, received  
A third great torch of flame, and lifted up,  
So as on high to skim the broad sea's back,  
The stalwart fire rejoicing went its way;  
The pine wood, like a sun, sent forth its light  
Of golden radiance to Makistos' watch;  
And he, with no delay, nor unawares  
Conquered by sleep, performed his courier's part.  
Far off the torch-light to Euripos' straits  
Advancing, tells it to Messapion's guard:

They, in their turn, lit up and passed it on,  
 Kindling a pile of dry and aged heath.  
 Still strong and fresh the torch, not yet grown dim,  
 Leaping across Asôpos' plain in guise  
 Like a bright moon, towards Kithaeron's rock,  
 Roused the next station of the courier flame.  
 And that far-travelled light the sentries there  
 Refused not, burning more than all yet named:  
 And then the light swooped o'er Gorgôpis' lake,  
 And passing on to Aegiplanctos' mount,  
 Bade the bright fire's due order tarry not;  
 And they, enkindling boundless store, send on  
 A mighty beard of flame, and then it passed  
 The headland e'en that looks on Saron's gulf  
 Still blazing. On it swept, until it came  
 To Arachnaean heights, the watch-tower near;  
 Then here on the Atreidae's roof it swoops,  
 This light, of Ida's fire no doubtful heir.  
 Such is the order of my torch-race games;  
 One from another taking up the course,  
 But here the winner is both first and last;  
 And this sure proof and token now I tell thee,  
 Seeing that my lord hath sent it me from Troia. {307}

While the *Chorus* are still overcome with amazement, *Clytaemnestra* triumphs over the condition of Troy that morning: like a vessel containing oil and vinegar, the conquered, bewailing their first day of captivity over the corpses of husbands and sons, the victors enjoying their first rest free from the chill dews of night and the sentry's call—and all will be well, *if* they remember the rights of the Gods in their sack of the city: ah! may they not in their exultation commit some sacrilegious deed of plunder, forgetting that they have only reached the goal, and have the return to make! If they should, the curse of those who have perished might still awake against them [*Cl.* thus darkly harping upon her secret hope that vengeance may still overtake them for the sacrifice of her daughter.] {345}

*Exit Clytaemnestra, with Attendants.*

After a few words of triumph (*in marching rhythm*), that Zeus, protector of host and guest, has visited the proud Trojans, and brought them into a net of bondage that neither young nor full-grown can overleap, the *Chorus* proceed to a more formal expression of their feelings in {357}

#### CHORAL INTERLUDE I

*breaking, as regularly in the Choral Odes, into highly Lyrical rhythms accompanied with Music and Gesture-dance, the evolutions of which lead them alternately to Right and Left of Orchestra and back to Altar.*

*Strophe I: evolutions from Altar to Right.*

Yes: it is the hand of Zeus we may trace in all this! Now what will they say who contend that the Gods care not when mortal men trample under foot the inviolable? Troy knows better now, that once relied on its abounding wealth: ah! moderate fortune is best for the seeker after Wisdom; Wealth is no bulwark to those who in wantonness have spurned the altar of the Right and Just. {375}

*Antistrophe I: evolutions front Right back to Altar, rhythm as in Strophe.*

Such a man is urged on by Impulse, offspring of Infatuation, till his mischief stands out clear, as worthless bronze stripped of its varnish. So Paris sees now his light-hearted crime has brought his city low. He came to the house of the Sons of Atreus, and stole a Queen away, leaving Shame where he had sat as Guest. {392}

*Strophe II: change of rhythm, evolutions from Altar to Left.*

She, leaving to her countrymen at home  
 Wild din of spear and shield and ships of war,  
 And bringing, as her dower,  
 To Ilion doom of death,  
 Passed very swiftly through the palace gates,  
 Daring what none should dare;



And many a wailing cry  
 They raised, the minstrel prophets of the house,  
 "Woe for that kingly home!  
 Woe for that kingly home and for its chiefs!  
 Woe for the marriage-bed and traces left  
 Of wife who loved her lord!"  
 There stands he silent; foully wronged and yet  
 Uttering no word of scorn,  
 In deepest woe perceiving she is gone;  
 And in his yearning love  
 For one beyond the sea,  
 A ghost shall seem to queen it o'er the house;  
 The grace of sculptured forms  
 Is loathed by her lord,  
 And in the penury of life's bright eyes  
 All Aphrodite's charm  
 To utter wreck has gone. {409}

*Antistrophe II: back to Altar.*

And phantom shades that hover round in dreams  
 Come full of sorrow, bringing vain delight;  
 For vain it is, when one  
 Sees seeming shows of good,  
 And gliding through his hands the dream is gone,  
 After a moment's space,  
 On wings that follow still  
 Upon the path where sleep goes to and fro.  
 Such are the woes at home  
 Upon the altar hearth, and worse than these.  
 But on a wider scale for those who went  
 From Hellas' ancient shore,  
 A sore distress that causeth pain of heart  
 Is seen in every house.  
 Yea, many things there are that touch the quick:  
 For those whom each did send  
 He knoweth; but, instead  
 Of living men, there come to each man's home  
 Funereal urns alone,  
 And ashes of the dead. {425}

*Strophe III: change of rhythm, evolutions from Altar to Right.*

War is a trafficker; in the rush of battle he holds scales, and for the golden coin you spend on him he sends you back lifeless shapes of men; they sent out men, the loving friends receive back well-smoothed ashes from the funeral pyre. They sing the heroic fall of some—all for another's wife; and some murmur discontent against the sons of Atreus, and some have won a grave in the land they had conquered. {441}

*Antistrophe III: evolutions repeated, but from Right back to Altar.*

So sullen discontent has been doing the work of a people's curse: therefore it is that I am awaiting with dim forebodings the full news. The Gods do not forget those who have shed much blood, and sooner or later the dark-robed Deities of the Curse consign the evil-doer to impassable, hopeless gloom. Away with the dazzling success that attracts the thunderbolt! be mine the moderate lot that neither causes nor suffers captivity. {458}

*Epode: change of rhythm and Chorus not moving from the Altar.*

The courier flame has brought good news—but who knows whether it be true?—Yet it is childish when the heart is all aglow with the message of the flame to be turned round by everchanging rumour.—Yet it is the nature of a woman to believe too soon. [Observe how the Chorus, setting out on an ode of triumph, have come back to their persistent forebodings.] {471}

*Suddenly at the Side-door on the extreme Left of the Stage (signifying distance) appears a Herald, covered with dust, crowned with olive in token of victory. The Chorus immediately fall into their Episode position to receive him, the Foreman expressing their anticipations as the Herald traverses the long stage to the point opposite the Chorus.*

## EPISODE II

*Foreman of Chorus.* Now we shall have a clearer message than that of the beacon-fires: all is well or . . . but I cannot put the other alternative. *The Herald (arrived opposite the Chorus)* solemnly salutes the land of Argos he had never hoped to see again, salutes the several Gods whose statues are now bright with the morning sun, especially Apollo who has proved himself a Healer, and Hermes, patron of Heralds; and then announces Agamemnon is close at hand, victorious over Troy and having sent Paris to his merited punishment.—Observe how in the parallel dialogue that follows the foreboding tone creeps in again in the midst of the news of triumph. {520}

*Chor.* Joy, joy, thou herald of the Achaean host!

*Her.* All joy is mine: I shrink from death no more.

*Chor.* Did love for this thy fatherland so try thee?

*Her.* So that mine eyes weep tears for very joy.

*Chor.* Disease full sweet then this ye suffered from . . .

*Her.* How so? When taught, I shall thy meaning master.

*Chor.* Ye longed for us who yearned for you in turn.

*Her.* Say'st thou this land its yearning host yearned o'er?

*Chor.* Yea, so that oft I groaned in gloom of heart.

*Her.* Whence came these bodings that an army hates?

*Chor.* Silence I've held long since a charm for ill.

*Her.* How, when your lords were absent, feared ye any?

*Chor.* To use thy words, death now would welcome be. {533}

The Herald, not understanding the source of the Chorus' misgiving, goes on to say of course their success is mixed: so fare all but the Gods. They have had their tossings on the sea, their exposure to the night dews till their hair is shaggy as beasts'; but why remember these now? our toil is past—so he suddenly recollects is that of the dead they have left behind—but he will shake off these feelings: Troy is captured. The *Chorus* feel youthful with such happy tidings. {569}

*Enter Clytaemnestra from the Palace.*

*Clyt.* Now they will believe me, who were saying just now that women believed too soon. What joy for a wife equal to that of a husband's return? and I have kept my trust as stainless as bronze. [*Exit into Palace.*] The Foreman goes on to enquire as to Menelaus: the Herald would fain not answer, and brings out the Greek dread of mingling bad news with good—at last he is forced to acknowledge Menelaus has disappeared, his ship sundered from the fleet by a terrible storm in which

They a compact swore who erst were foes,  
Ocean and Fire, {634}

and the sea 'blossomed with wrecks of ships and dead Achaeans:' the fleet itself barely escaped. [Thus: foreboding indirectly assisted by its appearing that one of the two sons of Atreus has already been overtaken by Nemesis.] {663}

## CHORAL INTERLUDE II

[*Positions, etc., as before.*]

*Strophe I: to the Right.*

Who could foresee so well and give her the name *Helen*—a *Hel*[3] to men and ships and towers? She came out of bowers of gorgeous curtains, she sailed with breezes soft as Zephyrs yet strong as Titans, and unseen reached the leafy banks of the Simois; but bloodshed was in her train, and on her track followed hosts of hunters that carried shields. {680}

*Antistrophe I: back to Altar.*

So there is a wrath that works vengeance after long waiting: to the *Ilion* that received her she was a dear bride: then there was a shout of 'Paris, Paris,' in the Bridal Song: now his city has celebrated a Wedding of Death, and called on Paris' name in other tones. {695}

*Strophe II: Altar to Left.*

So once a lion's cub,  
A mischief in his house,

As foster child one reared,  
While still it loved the teats;  
In life's preluding dawn  
Tame, by the children loved,  
And fondled by the old,  
Oft in his arms 'twas held,  
Like infant newly born,  
With eyes that brightened to the hand that stroked,  
And fawning at the hest of hunger keen. {704}

*Antistrophe II: back to Altar.*

But when full-grown, it showed  
The nature of its sires;  
For it unbidden made  
A feast in recompense  
Of all their fostering care,  
By banquet of slain sheep;  
With blood the house was stained,  
A curse no slaves could check,  
Great mischief murderous:  
By God's decree a priest of Ate thus  
Was reared, and grew within the man's own house. {715}

*Strophe III: Altar to Right.*

So I would tell that thus to Ilion came  
Mood as of calm when all the air is still,  
The gentle pride and joy of kingly state,  
A tender glance of eye,  
The full-blown blossom of a passionate love,  
Thrilling the very soul;  
And yet she turned aside,  
And wrought a bitter end of marriage feast,  
Coming to Priam's race,  
Ill sojourner, ill friend,  
Sent by great Zeus, the God of host and guest—  
Erinnys, for whom wives weep many tears. {726}

*Antistrophe III: back to Altar.*

The time-honored saying is that Prosperity grown big will not die childless, its offspring will be a Woe insatiable. I say no, it is not the Prosperity, it is an Impious deed that breeds Impious deeds like the parent stock. {737}

*Strophe IV: from Altar to Left.*

Recklessness begets Recklessness, this begets full-flushed Lust and  
Godforgetting Daring, two black curses to a household. {746}

*Antistrophe IV: back to Altar.*

Justice will dwell in houses blackened with smoke where life is ruled by law, but averts her eyes from gold-decked mansions conjoined with hands denied: and it is this Justice that is directing the course of things to its appointed goal. {755}

*At this point, a grand Procession of the returning Warriors from Troy enters Stage and Orchestra by the Left Side-Door (signifying distance): Agamemnon in his chariot, followed in another chariot by Cassandra as captive, but still in the garb of prophetess: then a train of Soldiers laden with trophies and leading a train of Troian captive women. The Chorus fall into their Episode position to receive them.*

**EPISODE III**

*Chorus (in marching rhythm as the Procession traverses the long Stage.)*

Son of Atreus, how are we to hit upon welcome that shall be fit for thee, not missing or overshooting the mark? In both condolence and congratulation men's faces often belie their hearts; thou who

knowest thine own sheep, should'st be able to tell kindness from flattery. We confess, when thou wentest forth on thy expedition, thou wast to us like a face limned by an unskilled artist, in the deed thou did'st to inspire false courage. Now, without a thought unfriendly, we say—all is well that ends well, and thou wilt soon hear who has deserved well of thee in thy absence. [Observe their guarded tone.] {782}

*Agamemnon* [*the metre now settling into ordinary 'Blank Verse'*]. First thanks to the Gods by whose help we have laid Troy low, the ruins of which are still sending up clouds of smoke as sweet incense to the Deities of Vengeance. And your sentiments, both then and now, I approve: prosperity too often misses true sympathy amidst the envy it excites; envy that has the double pang of missing its own and seeing another's good. Experience has taught me the difference between professing and true friends: my unwilling comrade Ulysses alone proved true to me. As to the state we will deliberate in full counsel as to what needs preserving, and where disease calls for surgery. At present I must give thanks at my own hearth for my safe return.

*Here the Central Door of the Stage is thrown open, and enter Clytaemnestra to welcome her lord, followed by attendants bearing rich draperies of purple and dazzling colors.* {827}

*Clyt.* Notwithstanding your presence, Senators of Argos, I must pour out my heart to my lord. Ah! a sad thing is a wife waiting at home for her absent husband! hearing of wounds, which if true would have made you a riddled net, of deaths enough for a three-lived Geryon: again and again I have been stopped with the noose already on my neck! This is the reason why you see not your son Orestes: wonder not, he is being brought up by an ally to whom I sent him, lest danger befall us. I cannot weep; my tears have run dry by my weepings and sleepless watchings for the beacon. Now at ease I hail my lord—

as watch-dog of the fold,  
The stay that saves the ship, of lofty roof {870}  
Main column-prop, a father's only child,  
Land that beyond all hope the sailor sees,  
Morn of great brightness following after storm,  
Clear-flowing fount to thirsty traveller.

The bare ground is not fit for the foot that has trampled on Iliion: strew (*to Attendants*) tapestry on the floor as the Conqueror steps from his car. The Attendants commence to lay down the draperies: *Agamemnon* (*hastening to stop them*) rebukes Clytaemnestra for the excessive tone of her welcome, and bids her not make him offensive to the Gods, by assuming an honor fit for the Gods alone, no man being safe in prosperity till he has died; fame, not foot-mats, and never to lose the path of Wisdom, are his glories. A contest ensues [the false Clytaemnestra anxious to entangle him in an act of Infatuation]; at last he yields, but removes the shoe from his foot, to avert the ill omen of such presumptuous display. He then commends the captive Cassandra to the Queen's kind treatment, and *Clyt.* renews her lofty expressions of joy: there is a store of purple in the palace, and many such robes would she bestow to welcome his return, the root of the household bringing warmth in winter and coolness in the dog-days. Ah! may Zeus work out for me "all that I wish for." [*So Exeunt: Ag. walking barefoot on the rich tapestry. Cassandra alone remains on the Stage in her chariot.*] {949}

### CHORAL INTERLUDE III

*Strophe I: to the Right.*

Why is it that forebodings haunt the gate of our hearts, and we lack steadfast trust to fling them away as visions? It is not long since that fatal starting for Troy, {959}

*Antistrophe I: back to Altar*

and now we have seen with our own eyes the safe return: and yet our mind, self-taught, keeps chanting within itself a dirge of fate. These inner pulses cannot be in vain: heaven send they prove false oracles! {971}

*Strophe II: to the Left.*

When Wealth o'erflows, Restlessness, as a near neighbor with only a wall between, presses it on with perpetual desire for more, till Prosperity strikes suddenly on an unseen rock—yet even then, by sacrificing a portion of the cargo, the rest may be saved; so by plenteous harvests sent from Zeus, hunger and pestilence may be allayed: {986}

*Antistrophe II: back to Altar.*

but when blood has once been poured upon the ground, what charm can bring it back? Zeus struck dead the Healer who found how to restore life. I would give my misgiving relief in pouring out words of warning: but I know that fate is certain and can never be escaped; so I am plunged in gloom, with little hope ever to unravel my soul that burns with its hot thoughts. {1001}

## EXODUS, OR FINALE

*Re-enter Clytaemnestra to fetch Cassandra. Clyt.* addresses Cassandra in moderate tone, bidding her adapt herself to her new life and yield to those who wish to soften her captivity. [*Cassandra pays no attention and seems gazing into vacancy.*] The Chorus endorses Clytaemnestra's advice. At length it occurs to Clytaemnestra that Cassandra cannot speak Greek, and she bids her give some sign. [*No sign, but a shudder convulses her frame.*] Thinking she is obstinate Clytaemnestra will wait no longer [*exit Clyt. into Palace to the sacrifice*]. The Chorus renew their advice to Cassandra: *She at length leaves the chariot and suddenly bursts into a cry of horror.* {1038}

Then follows, marking the crisis of the drama, a burst of lyrical excitement. The dialogue between Chorus and Cassandra falls into lyrical strophes and antistrophes: Cassandra, by her prophetic gift, can see all that is going on and about to be consummated within the Palace. Her wailings reproach her patron and lover Apollo, who has conducted her to a house of blood; she sees the past murders that have stained the house, she sees the preparations for the present deed, the bath, the net, the axe; then her wailings wax yet wilder as she sees that she herself is to be included in the sacrifice. Meantime her excitement gradually passes over to the Chorus: at first they have mistaken her cries for the ordinary lamentations of captives (and borne their part in the dialogue in the ordinary 'blank verse'); then their emotions are roused (and their speech falls into lyrics) as they recognize the old woes of the family history and remember Cassandra's prophetic fame; as she passes to the deed going on at the moment they feel a thrill of horror, but only half understand and take her words for prophecy of *distant* events, which they connect with their own forebodings; thus in her struggles to get her words believed Cassandra becomes more and more graphic in her notices of the scene her mental eye is seeing, and the excitement crescendoes until: {1148}

As if the crisis were now determined the dialogue settles down into 'blank verse' again. *Cassandra ascends from Orchestra to Stage.* She will no longer speak veiled prophecy: it shall flow clear as wave against the sunlight. She begins with the Furies that never quit the house since that primal woe that defiled it—as she describes this the *Chorus* wonder an alien can know the house's history so well—*Cassandra* lets them know of her amour with Apollo, and how she gained the gift of prophecy and then deceived the God and was doomed to have her prophecies scorned.—Continuing her vision she points to the phantom children, 'their palms filled full with meat of their own flesh,' sitting on the house: in revenge for that deed another crime is this moment about to stain further the polluted dwelling, a brave hero falling at the hands of a coward, and by a plot his monster of a wife has contrived.—The *Chorus* still perplexed, *Cassandra* NAMES Agamemnon, the Chorus essaying vainly to stop the ill-fated utterance.—Then *Cassandra* goes on to describe how she herself must be sacrificed with her new lord, a victim to the jealous murderess; bitterly reproaching Apollo, she strips from her the symbols and garb of her prophetic art, which the god has made so bitter to her, and moves to the 'butcher's block,' foretelling how the Son shall come as his father's avenger and hers.—The *Chorus* ask, why go to meet your fate instead of escaping? *Cassandra* knows Fate is inevitable.—Again and again she shrinks back from the door, 'tainted with the scent of death;' then gazing for the last time on the loved rays of the Sun, and invoking him as witness and avenger, she abandons herself to her doom.

Ah, life of man! when most it prospereth, {1298}  
It is but limned in outline; and when brought  
To low estate, then doth the sponge, full soaked,  
Wipe out the picture with its frequent touch.

[*Passes through the Central Door into Palace.*]

*The Chorus (in lyrical rhythm).* It is true good fortune can never be fended from the visitation of evil, which no strong palace can bar out. What will it avail Agamemnon to have taken Troy and come in honor home, if it be really his destiny to pay the penalty of that old deed of bloodguiltiness? {1313}

(*Here a loud cry is heard from within the Palace.*)

The Chorus recognize the voice of the King, and fear the deed is accomplished. In extreme excitement the Chorus break up, and each member, one after another, suggests what is to be done; at last they compose their ranks to learn what has actually occurred. {1342}

*Suddenly, by the machinery of the Roller-stage [Eccyclema], the interior of the Palace is moved to the*

front of the Stage, and discovers Clytaemnestra in blood-stained robes, standing with attendants by the corpses of Agamemnon and Cassandra, the former lying in a silvered bath covered with a net.

*Clytaemnestra*, in an elaborate speech, glories in her deed. Deceit was necessary in dealing with foes: now standing where she did the deed, she glories in it: glories in the net in which she entangled and rendered him powerless, in the blows, one, two, three, like a libation, which she struck, glories in the gush of death-blood which has bespattered her. A late triumph: he had come home to drain the goblet of curses his old deed had been long heaping up. After an interruption of astonishment from the *Foreman*, she repeats: it is the handiwork of my artist hand. After the *Chorus* have recovered from their astonishment they (*in a lyrical burst*) denounce her: her confession is the incense on the Victim's head, she shall feel the people's strong hate, and have an exile's doom.—*Clyt.* (*calmly in Blank Verse*): they denounced no such exile against Agamemnon when he sacrificed her daughter, the first of her travail pangs. Besides, are they sure they are the stronger? Perchance, though old, they may yet have to learn.—*Chorus* (*in a similar lyrical burst*): she is now maddened with the spirit of vengeance, but she will one day find a nemesis, blow for blow. *Clyt.* solemnly (*in Blank Verse*) swears by the deed she has done, and the curse for which she did it, she has no fear of Nemesis, as lone as Aegisthus is her shield. Meanwhile, there they lie: the wife-wronger and his mistress. {1377}

Then follows an elaborate lyrical scene: the *Chorus* giving vent to their excitement in *Strophes and Antistrophes irregularly succeeding one another*, *Clytaemnestra* occasionally joining in. O for death, sudden and without lingering, now that our beloved Protector is gone! Ah! Helen! one more deed of woe to your account!—*Clyt.* No need to wish for death or upbraid Helen.—*Cho.* (*interrupting*) O dread Power that dost attack this household, working even through women deeds of dread!—*Clyt.* Now thou art right: it is the Evil Genius of the House that feeds in their hearts the lust of blood; bringing fresh blood-guilt ere the old is healed.—*Cho.* Yes, there is a Power wrathful to the House; but it must be through Zeus he works; what amongst mortal men is wrought apart from Zeus?

Ah me! Ah me! {1467}  
My king, my king, how shall I weep for thee?  
What shall I speak from heart that truly loves?  
And now thou liest there, breathing out thy life,  
    In impious deed of death,  
    In this fell spider's web!  
Yes woe is me! woe, woe!  
Woe for this couch of thine unhonorable!  
    Slain by a subtle death  
With sword two-edged, which her right hand did wield.

*Clyt.* You speak of me as the doer: it was the Avenger of the seed of Atreus who did the deed in the semblance of this dead man's wife.—*Cho.* None will hold thee guiltless of the deed; yet, perchance, thou mayest have had as helper the avenging Fiend of that ancestral time; he presses on this rush of murders of near kin.

Ah me! Ah me!  
My king, my king, how shall I weep for thee?  
What shall I speak from heart that truly loves?  
And now thou liest there, breathing out thy life,  
    In impious deed of death,  
    In this fell spider's web!  
Yes woe is me! woe, woe!  
Woe for this couch of thine unhonorable!  
    Slain by a subtle death  
With sword two-edged, which her right hand did wield.

*Clyt.* This deed brings no dishonor to me: he slew my daughter and his own, wept over with many a tear; now slain in recompense he is gone to Hell with nothing to boast over.—*Cho.* Whither escape from this House? No longer drops, but fierce pelting storm of blood shakes it to its basement.—*Cho.* Oh that earth had received me ere I saw this sad sight! Who will perform funeral rites and chant the dirge? Wilt thou who hast slain dare to mourn him?—*Clyt.* It is no care of thine: we will give him burial; and for mourning—perhaps Iphigenia will greet him kindly by the dark streams below.—*Cho.* Hard it is to judge; the hand of Zeus is in all this; ever throughout this household we see the fixed law, the spoiler still is spoiled. Who will drive out from this royal house this brood of curses dark?—*Clyt.* Thou art right; but here let the demon rest content; suffice it for me that my hand has freed the house from the madness that sets each man's hand against each. [Observe: in this last infatuated confidence and throughout *Clytaemnestra's* exultation in the deed the dramatist is laying the foundation for the second play of the Trilogy.] {1534}

*Enter Aegisthus by one of the two Inferior doors in front of the scene [representing the inferior parts of the Palace in which he has been concealed since the return of Agamemnon].*

*Aegisthus salutes the happy day of vengeance which shows him Agamemnon paying penalty for the deeds of his father: he relates the quarrel between this father Atreus and his own father Thyestes, how when the one brother came as suppliant to the other Atreus spread before him the horrid banquet of his own child's flesh, at the knowledge of which he died. Aegisthus himself had suffered banishment at the hands of Atreus while yet a child, and now has returned full grown to work vengeance on the son of his wronger, to see the long contrived nemesis brought to full conclusion.—Chorus note that he confesses the deed, and he shall not escape the righteous curse a people hurls with stones.—Aeg. Know your place: you are oarsmen, we command the ship; prison and fasting are admirable devices for helping old people to keep their tempers within bounds. Defiances are interchanged: the Chorus taunting him that he had to get a woman to do the deed he dared not do himself,—Aeg. contemptuously says the working out of the fraud was the proper province of a woman, especially as he was a known foe.—The Chorus threaten vengeance and suggest the name ORESTES as avenger: At this Clytaemnestra starts, Aegisthus enraged gives the signal at which {1626}*

*Bodyguard of Aegisthus pour in through both the Inferior doors on either side of the Central door of the Palace, and fill the stage [thus producing one of the Scenic Tableaux of which Aeschylus was fond]. The Chorus, though of course outnumbered, are nothing daunted, as representing the legitimate authority of the State now Agamemnon is dead, and therefore sure to be backed by the City; they make as if to ascend the stage.*

Contest in blows between Chorus and Bodyguard of Aegisthus appears inevitable, but Clytaemnestra throws herself between them, urges that enough ill has already been done, and after further defiances, forces Aegisthus away and play abruptly terminates: *the Chorus returning to the Right into the City, and the Bodyguard into the Palace.*

[1] This is a mere guess: we have no information as to how the evolutions of a Proem differed from those of a regular Choral Ode.

[2] The Chorus generally speak of themselves in the Singular.

[3] This is simply an English pun substituted for a Greek one: the name Helen resembles a Greek root which signifies captivity.

## **SECOND PLAY: MIDDAY:**

### **THE SEPULCHRAL RITES**

**(CHOEPHOR)**

#### **PROLOGUE**

*The Permanent Scene, as before, represents the Palace of Agamemnon at Argos. The only difference is that the place of the Thymele in the centre of the Orchestra is taken up by Agamemnon's Sepulchre. Enter by the Left Side-door (signifying distance) Orestes and Pylades, and descending the Orchestra-staircase advance to the Sepulchre.*

*Orestes, invoking the Conductor of the Dead, lays locks of hair and fragments of garments as offerings on his Father's tomb, cut off as he had been by exile from being present at the actual Funeral-rites:*

*He is interrupted by the opening of one of the Inferior Doors of the Palace, out of which comes Electra, and a train of Trojan Captive-maidens bearing urns of libations, all with dishevelled hair and the well-known gestures proper to Sepulchral rites. They descend (with the exception of Electra) the Orchestra-staircase, and perform a Choral Ode with funeral rhythm and gestures. Orestes and Pylades, recognizing them, stand aside. {19}*

#### **SEPULCHRAL ODE AS CHORUS-ENTRY**

*in three Strophes, Antistrophes, and an Epode,*

describes in words the tearings of cheeks, rending of garments, and groans, which are actually the gestures of their dance, and are proper to a Sepulchral rite such as they have been sent to perform by their Queen, terrified as she has been by a dream the night before, a dream signifying how the Dead were wroth with those that slew them. But the Chorus like not this graceless deed of grace: what ransom can be found for the overthrow of the lord of a house? with him Awe has been overthrown, and Fear takes its place, or yet more Success is God. {53}

Yet stroke of Vengeance swift  
Smites some in life's clear day;  
For some who tarry long their sorrows wait  
In twilight dim, on darkness' borderland;  
And some an endless night  
Of nothingness holds fast.

Yes: for blood once spilt, for the marriage tie defiled, there is no remedy—yet the Chorus must, as part of their bitter captive lot, perform the rite they have no heart in. {75}

*Through this Ode Electra, who ought to have taken the lead, has stood on the stage irresolute: she now addresses the Chorus, who at her word fall into their Episode positions.*

#### EPISODE I

*Electra puts to the Chorus the same difficulty they have been feeling:*

What shall I say as these funereal gifts  
I pour? How shall I speak acceptably?  
How to my father pray? What? shall I say  
"I bring from loving wife to husband loved  
Gifts"—from my mother? No, I am not bold  
Enough for that, nor know I what to speak,  
Pouring this chrism on my father's tomb:  
Or shall I say this prayer, as men are wont,  
"Good recompense make thou to those who bring  
These garlands," yea, a gift full well deserved  
By deeds of ill? Or, dumb with ignominy  
Like that with which he perished, shall I pour  
Libations on the earth, and like a man  
That flings away the lustral filth, shall I  
Throw down the urn and walk with eyes not turned? {97}

The *Chorus-Leader* breaking ranks to lay her hand on the Sepulchre as sign of fidelity, advises to throw off all disguise and pray boldly for friend and against foe. Electra in this sense offers the Prayer: setting forth the wrongs of the house and praying for Orestes and Vengeance: then calling on the Chorus for a Sepulchral Song she descends to the tomb. {144}

*Sepulchral Paean of short Strophe and Antistrophe:* for these libations' sake may the curse be averted—yet who strong enough to come as Averter: *while Electra is pouring the libations on the tomb.* {157}

*Electra returns to Stage, her whole manner changed:* as if the prayer had already begun to be fulfilled, she has found the mysterious locks which, she bit by bit lets out, must be those of Orestes—the Chorus, like sailors in a storm, can only invoke the gods: if the day has come, from a small seed a mighty trunk may grow—Electra then discovers foot-prints [*as if leading from the Side Stage-door to the Orchestra-staircase*] of two travellers; one foot-print agrees with her brother's: {203}

*Orestes and Pylades* come forward: recognition and joy, Electra hardly believing. She addresses him by four-fold name: as father dear,

The love I owe my mother turns to thee,  
My sister's too that ruthlessly was slain,  
And thou wast ever faithful brother found.

Orestes compares his family to an eagle's brood orphaned by the spoiler. Electra catching at the omen of eagle, dear bird of Zeus who will avenge his own—*Chorus* are afraid that their noisy joy may be overheard and ruin all—Orestes has no fear of ruin after the strong oracles of Apollo that bade him come under terrible penalties if he disobeyed: {261}



Leprous sores that creep  
 All o'er the flesh, and as with cruel jaws  
 Eat out its ancient nature, and white hairs  
 On that foul ill to supervene: and still  
 He spake of other onsets of the Erinnyes,  
 As brought to issue from a father's blood;  
 For the dark weapon of the Gods below  
 Winged by our kindred that lie low in death,  
 And beg for vengeance, yea, and madness too,  
 And vague, dim fears at night disturb and haunt me,  
 Seeing full clearly, though I move my brow  
 In the thick darkness . . . . and that then my frame  
 Thus tortured should be driven from the city  
 With brass-knobbed scourge: and that for such as I  
 It was not given to share the wine-cup's taste,  
 Nor votive stream in pure libation poured;  
 And that my father's wrath invisible  
 Would drive me from all altars, and that none  
 Should take me in or lodge with me: at last,  
 That loathed of all and friendless I should die,  
 A wretched mummy, all my strength consumed.  
 Must I not trust such oracles as these? {297}

*The Chorus, breaking into lyrics, feel that Justice has at last taken their side: then follows an elaborate*

#### **KOMMOS, OR LYRIC CONCERTO**

*by Orestes, Electra and Chorus, in highly intricate and interwoven Strophes and Antistrophes, with funereal gesture. The jaws of flame do not reduce the corpse to senselessness; they can hear below this our Rite and will send answer—what a fate was Agamemnon's, not that of the warrior who dies leaving high fame at home and laying strong and sure his children's paths in life, but to be struck down by his own kin! But there is a sense of Vengeance being at hand, Erinnyes and the Curses of the slain; they make the heart quiver: the Dirge crescendoes till it breaks into the 'Arian rhythm,' a foreign funeral rhythm with violent gestures (proper to the Chorus as Asiatics); and so as a climax breaks up into two semi-choruses: one sings of woe, the other of vengeance, and then the formal Dirge terminates and the Blank Verse recommences. {469}*

In a composed frame (and in Blank Verse) *Orestes and Electra* repeat the distinct prayer for Vengeance and the death of Aegisthus and then address themselves to the means. *Orestes* enquires as to the meaning of the Sepulchral rites, and the dream is narrated, which he interprets as good omen.

*Orest.* And have ye learnt the dream, to tell it right? {517}

*Chor.* As she doth say, she thought she bare a snake.

*Orest.* How ends the tale, and what its outcome then?

*Chor.* She nursed it, like a child, in swaddling clothes.

*Orest.* What food did the young monster crave for then?

*Chor.* She in her dream her bosom gave to it.

*Orest.* How 'scaped her breast by that dread beast unhurt?

*Chor.* Nay, with the milk it sucked out clots of blood.

*Orest.* Ah, not in vain comes this dream from her lord.

*Chor.* She, roused from sleep, cries out all terrified,  
 And many torches that were quenched in gloom  
 Blazed for our Mistress' sake within the house.  
 Then these libations for the dead she sends,  
 Hoping they'll prove good medicine of ills.

*Orest.* Now to earth here, and my sire's tomb I pray,  
 They leave not this strange vision unfulfilled.  
 So I expound it that it all coheres;  
 For if, the self-same spot that I left leaving,  
 The snake was then wrapt in my swaddling clothes,  
 And sucked the very breast that nourished me,  
 And mixed the sweet milk with a clot of blood,  
 And she in terror wailed the strange event,  
 So must she, as that monster dread she nourished,

Die cruel death: and I, thus serpentised,  
Am here to slay her, as this dream portends;  
I take thee as my dream-interpreter.

They rapidly arrange their plan to appear as foreigners, and get admission to the Palace, or, if Aegisthus come out, strike him down at once—with a prayer to Apollo *exeunt Electra, Orestes, and Pylades by the Distance Sidedoor.* {575}

#### CHORAL INTERLUDE I

*in four Strophes and Antistrophes.*

Monsters and woes are many, but most terrible of all is a passion-driven woman: Thestias, who burnt out the mystic brand that measured her son's life; Scylla, who robbed her father of his life-charm; another—but the woman who slew her warrior-chief it is meet for me to pass over in silence. Then there is the great Lemnian Crime, foremost of all crimes; yet this might well be compared to it; and as that race perished, so is judgment at hand here; the anvil-block of Vengeance firm is set, and Fate is swordsmith hammering; in due time the debt of guilt is paid. {639}

#### EPISODE II

*Enter by the Distance Side-door Orestes, Pylades, and attendants, and advance to the Central Door.*

*Orestes* calls loudly for admission, telling the slave who opens that he is a traveller, and must do his message to those within ere night falls; to a lady if a lady rules, though a lord is seemlier. *Enter Clytaemnestra*, who gives a formal offer of hospitality (having noticed his irreverent tone), and to whom he bluffly gives a message from a fellow traveller, who learning he was bound for Argos, begged him to seek out *Orestes'* kinsmen and give the news of his death. *Clytaemnestra* affects a burst of grief; the curse has taken another victim as he was disentangling himself from the net. *Orestes* regrets he cannot hope for the welcome of those who bear good news. *Clytaemnestra* (with a dim feeling of suspicion) assures him he shall want for nothing 'that is fitting', orders *Orestes* to be led one way, and the rest another, and goes to call Aegisthus 'and friends.' *Exeunt Clytaemnestra by Left Inferior Door to the Women's Quarters, Orestes and Porter through Central and Pylades, etc., through Right Inferior Door. Chorus, in marching rhythm,* catch the touch of suspense, and invoke Hermes and the Spirit of Persuasion for *Orestes*. {720}

*Enter from Women's Quarters, Cilissa, Orestes' Nurse, bidden to seek Aegisthus, as the stranger looks like one meaning to cook some ill. She is in tears at the death of her boy, and details all the petty cares she had over his helpless infancy, and how they are now all profitless.*

*Chor.* And how equipped then doth she bid him come? {753}

*Nurse* How? Speak again that I may better learn.

*Chor.* By spearmen followed, or himself alone?

*Nurse* She bids him bring his guards with lances armed.

*Chor.* Nay, say not that to him thy lord doth hate,

But bid him 'come alone,' (that so he hear

Without alarm), 'full speed, with joyous mind,'

Since 'secret speech with messenger goes best.'

*Nurse* And art thou of good cheer at this my tale?

*Chor.* But what if Zeus will turn the tide of ill?

*Nurse* How so? *Orestes*, our One hope is gone.

*Chor.* Not yet; a sorry seer might know thus much.

*Nurse* What say'st thou? Know'st thou aught besides my tale?

*Chor.* Go tell thy message; do thine errand well:

The Gods for what they care for, care enough.

*Nurse* I then will go, complying with thy words:

May all, by God's gift, end most happily! {769}

*Exit Nurse by Right Side-Door, signifying neighborhood.*

#### CHORAL INTERLUDE II

*in four interwoven Strophes and Antistrophes, with Mesode,*

invokes the Gods the house had worshipped. Zeus, father of the Gods, the twin-brothers, Apollo in his glorious shrine at Delphi, Hermes who is the conductor of enterprises: the dear son of the house is harnessed to the car of calamity, moderate its pace—and may Murder cease to breed new Murder. But

the Avenger, like Perseus, must not look on the deed as he does it; as she calls the name Mother let him hurl back the cry of Father. {820}

### EPISODE III

*Aegisthus entering from the Right Side-Door (of Neighborhood) speaks of this summons; it may after all be women's fears 'that leap up high and die away to nought.'* The *Chorus* say there is nothing like asking. *Aeg.* will do so: they cannot cheat a man with his eyes open. *Exit through Central Door.* {839}

*Chorus, in short lyric burst, mark critical moment that decides success or failure.* {853}

Then *cries from within, and Porter rushes from Central Door to Door of Women's Quarters (Left Inferior), loudly summoning Clytaemnestra, and when she appears informs her 'the dead are slaying the living.'* She sees in a moment the truth, and is looking hurriedly for aid, *when enter, from Central Door, Orestes, joined at once by Pylades and Attendants, from Right Inferior.*

*Orest.* 'Tis thee I seek: he there has had enough. {878}

*Clytaem.* Ah me! my loved Aegisthus! Art thou dead?

*Orest.* Lov'st the man? Then in the self-same tomb  
Shalt thou now lie, nor in his death desert him.

*Clytaem.* [baring her bosom]  
Hold, boy! Respect this breast of mine, my son,  
Whence thou full oft, asleep, with toothless gums,  
Hast sucked the milk that sweetly fed thy life.

*Orest.* What shall I do, my Pylades? Shall I  
Through this respect forbear to slay my mother?

*Pyl.* Where, then, are Loxias' other oracles,  
The Pythian counsels, and the fast-sworn vows?  
Have all men hostile rather than the gods.

*Orest.* My judgment goes with thine; thou speakest well.  
[*To Clytaemnestra.*] Follow: I mean  
to slay thee where he lies,  
For while he lived thou held'st him far above  
My father. Sleep thou with him in thy death,  
Since thou lov'st him, and whom thou should'st love hatest.

*Clytaem.* I reared thee, and would fain grow old with thee.

*Orest.* What! Thou live with me, who did'st slay my father?

*Clytaem.* Fate, O my son, must share the blame of that.

*Orest.* This fatal doom, then, it is Fate that sends.

*Clytaem.* Dost thou not fear a parent's curse, my son?

*Orest.* Thou, though my mother, did'st to ill chance cast me.

*Clytaem.* No outcast thou so sent to house allied.

*Orest.* I was sold doubly, though of free sire born.

*Clytaem.* Where is the price, then, that I got for thee?

*Orest.* I shrink for shame from pressing that charge home.

*Clytaem.* Nay, tell thy father's wantonness as well.

*Orest.* Blame not the man that toils when thou'rt at ease.

*Clytaem.* 'Tis hard, my son, for wives to miss their husband.

*Orest.* The husband's toil keeps her that sits at home.

*Clytaem.* Thou seem'st, my son, about to slay thy mother.

*Orest.* It is not I that slay thee, but thyself.

*Clytaem.* Take heed, beware a mother's vengeful hounds.

*Orest.* How, slighting this, shall I escape my father's?

*Clytaem.* I seem in life to wail as to a tomb.

*Orest.* My father's fate ordains this doom for thee.

*Clytaem.* Ah me! The snake is here I bare and nursed.

*Orest.* An o'er-true prophet was that dread dream-born.  
Thou slewest one thou never should'st have slain,  
Now suffer fate should never have been thine. {916}

*Exeunt Orestes and Pylades, forcing Clytaemnestra through the Central Door, their attendants remaining to guard the door. Chorus, after a word of pity for even this 'twain mischance,' break into*

### CHORAL INTERLUDE III

*in three interwoven Strophes and Antistrophes.*

Late came vengeance on Troy, late now has it blest this heaven-sent exile, and our Master's house is freed. On a lover of the war of guile has Revenge come subtle-souled, Vengeance who

Is guileful without guile,  
Halting of foot and tarrying over-long;  
The will of Gods is strangely over-ruled,  
It may not help the vile.

At last we see the light. All-working Time with cleansing rites will purify the house; Fortune's throws shall fall with gladsome cast: at last we see the light. {959}

#### EXODUS, OR FINALE

*Enter from Main Door Orestes and Pylades, their Attendants bearing the Corpses, and the net in which Agamemnon had been murdered.*

*Orestes* solemnly declares that they have perished as murderers; they swore to live and die together and they have kept the oath. He bids the Attendants stretch out in full light of the Sun, the great Purifier, the fatal net, as pledge that he did his dread deed only as deed of necessary vengeance—he dwells on the cruel device—but *Chorus* seeing side by side the net and the slaughter by which it has been avenged, can think of nothing but the woe which its avenger by his deed of vengeance must bring on himself. *Orestes* reiterates the crime of which this deed is the reminder. The *Chorus* cannot help repeating the unhappy omen. {1009}

At this very moment *Orestes* changes and begins to feel the oncoming madness—while reason yet stays with him he repeats his innocence and puts on the suppliant's fillet, with which he will go to Delphi, and challenge the God who sent him on the errand to free him from its dire consequences. Madness increases, and he can see the Furies in bodily shape dark-robed, and all their long tresses entwined with serpents. In rapid dialogue the *Chorus* bid him cling to the idea of Apollo, and he *bursts away through Distance-Door on Left* to commence his long career of wanderings. The *Chorus* conclude:

Here, then, upon this palace of our kings  
A third storm blows again;  
The blast that haunts the race has run its course.  
First came the wretched meal of children's flesh;  
Next what befel our king:  
Slain in the bath was he who ruled our host,  
Of all the Achaeans lord;  
And now a third has come, we know not whence,  
To save . . . or shall I say,  
To work a doom of death?  
Where will it end? Where will it cease at last,  
The mighty Atè dread,  
Lulled into slumber deep?

## THIRD PLAY: AFTERNOON:

#### THE GENTLE GODDESSES

#### EUMENIDES[1]

*The Scene represents the Oracle of Delphi: the Central Doors being the Gate of the 'Adytum,' or Innermost shrine. From the left Inferior Door enter the Priestess of the Oracle, who stands in front of the Central Gate, to offer the Morning Prayer.*

#### PROLOGUE

The *Priestess's* Prayer enumerates the Deities who have connection with the Ancient Oracle, how Apollo is its main guardian, after it has passed through many hands; other Deities have a share in it, even Zeus the Supreme Accomplisher. Praying that her divinations that day may excel even her past, she calls on the Pilgrims to come as the lot permits. {28}

*Exit through the Main Gate into the Inner Shrine. In a moment she returns, pale and disordered, flinging open the Central Gates, through which can dimly be discerned dreadful forms in the Inner Shrine.*

She can hardly stand for the terror of the sight she has seen; the sacred shrine polluted by the presence of a man in suppliant garb, bunch of olives and tufts of wool, his sword yet reeking with a recent murder; and sitting round about him yet more dreaded beings.

A troop {46}

Of women strange to look at sleepeth there  
Before this wanderer, seated on their stools;  
Not women they, but Gorgons I must call them;  
Nor yet can I to Gorgon forms compare them;  
I have seen painted shapes that bear away  
The feast of Phineus. Wingless, though, are these,  
And swarth, and every way abominable.  
They snort with breath that none may dare approach,  
And from their eyes a loathsome humour pours,  
And such their garb as neither to the shrine  
Of Gods is meet to bring, nor mortal roof.  
Ne'er have I seen a race that owns this tribe,  
Nor is there land can boast it rears such brood,  
Unhurt and free from sorrow for its pains.  
Henceforth, be it the lot of Loxias,  
Our mighty lord, himself to deal with them:  
True prophet-healer he, and portent-seer,  
And for all others cleanser of their homes. {63}

*At her word, in the entrance of the Inner Shrine appears Apollo with Hermes, and they lead Orestes out.*

*Apollo will never fail his suppliant; it is he who has sent sleep on these loathly Beings, born out of evils, with whom neither Gods nor men hold intercourse. They will still pursue, but he must fly to the ancient City of Pallas and clasp her statue; there 'judges of these things' and 'a means' will be found to rid him of his evils. Orestes expresses confidence in Apollo's justice, who reiterates his pledge in the name of Zeus and commits the wanderer to the charge of his own brother Hermes, the Escort-God, to take him safe to Athens. {93}*

*Apollo disappears into his shrine, and Hermes and Orestes leave by the Left side or Distance-door. The stage being thus left vacant, the machinery of the roller-stage brings the interior of the cave to the front, showing the sleeping Furies scattered over the floor. The Ghost of Clytaemnestra rises in front of the entrance to the Inner Shrine.*

*Clytaem.* What ho! Sleep on! What need of sleepers now?

And I am put by you to foul disgrace  
Among the other dead, nor fails reproach  
Among the shades that I a murderess am;  
And so in shame I wander, and I tell you  
That at their hands I bear worst forms of blame.  
And much as I have borne from nearest kin, {100}  
Yet not one god is stirred to wrath for me,  
Though done to death by matricidal hands.  
See ye these heart-wounds, whence and how they came?  
Yea, when it sleeps, the mind is bright with eyes;  
But in the day it is man's lot to lack  
All true discernment. Many a gift of mine  
Have ye lapped up, libations pure from wine,  
And soothing rites that shut out drunken mirth;  
And I dread banquets of the night would offer  
On altar-hearth, at hour no god might share.  
And lo! all this is trampled under foot.  
He is escaped, and flees, like fawn, away,  
And even from the midst of all your toils  
Has nimbly slipped, and draws wide mouth at you.  
Hear ye; for I have spoken for my life;  
Give heed, ye dark, earth-dwelling goddesses,

I, Clytaemnestra's phantom, call on you.

[*The Erinyes moan in their sleep.*]

Moan on, the man is gone, and flees far off;

My kindred find protectors; I find none.

[*Moan as before.*]

Too sleep-oppressed art thou, nor pitiest me:

Orestes, murderer of his mother, 'scapes.

[*Noises repeated.*]

Dost snort? Dost drowse? Wilt thou not rise and speed?

What have ye ever done but work out ill?

[*Noises as before.*]

Yea, sleep and toil, supreme conspirators,

Have withered up the dreaded dragon's strength.

*Chorus of Furies, starting up suddenly with a yell.*

Seize him, {125}

Seize, seize, yea, seize: look well to it.

*Clytaem.* Thou, phantom-like, dost hunt thy prey and criest,

Like hound that never rests from care of toil.

What dost thou? (*To one Erinnys.*) Rise and let

not toil o'ercome thee,

Nor, lulled to sleep, lose all thy sense of loss.

Let thy soul (to another) feel the pain of just reproach:

The wise of heart find that their goad and spur.

And thou (to a third) breathe on him with thy

blood-flecked breath,

And with thy vapour, thy maw's fire, consume him;

Chase him, and wither with a fresh pursuit.

*Leader of the Chor.* Wake, wake, I say; wake her, as I wake thee.

Dost slumber? Rise, I say, and shake off sleep.

Let's see if this our prelude be in vain. {134}

*The Furies start up and (still on the roller-stage) perform a Fury Dance for Prelude in three short Strophes and Antistrophes.*

Our prey is gone! Apollo, ever known as a robber-god, has now delivered a matricide from his due doom. Even in my dreams a feeling of reproach stung me as a whip. Such are the doings of these 'younger gods.' See Earth's Central Shrine is stained with blood, and Apollo has taken sides with a mortal against a god; but though the god may vex them, the culprit shall not escape. {169}

*Apollo, re-appearing from the Inner Shrine, threatens the Furies with his bow.* He bids them leave his sacred precincts and seek scenes more fitted to them.

There where heads upon the scaffold lie,

And eyes are gouged and throats of men are cut,

Where men are maimed and stoned to death, and groan

With bitter wailing 'neath the spine impaled.

A stichomuthic contest ensues; the Furies reproach Apollo with taking the part of a matricide. He urges she had first slain her husband—they retort that husband is not kin, to which Apollo pleads the sanctity of the marriage tie; this authorized by the great example of Zeus and Hera, with its special patroness Cypris, this "assigned by Fate and guided by the Right is more than any oath." Neither party will give way; Apollo appeals to Pallas as Umpire, the Furies declare they will never desist from the pursuit. {225}

#### CHANGE OF SCENE

*By the turning of the periacti and other mechanical changes the scene is shifted to the familiar Acropolis of Athens itself, the open Central Doors being arranged to represent the Porch of the Temple of 'Athene, Guardian of the City.'* Enter by Distance side-door Orestes, who advances to the Centre and clasps the Statue of Pallas. {226}

Orestes has come as suppliant, but no longer with the stain of blood on his hands; that during his long wanderings has been by due rites washed away.

*Suddenly by the same door the Furies enter upon the Stage, their faces to the ground and tracking Orestes' steps. {235}*

*Chorus of Furies:* they have been long off the track, at last the 'dumb informer' is clear again, already they catch the loved scent of blood.—There he is clasping in confidence the statue of the Goddess, but watch, he escapes not: no trial, as he hopes, for the matricide; his own blood they must suck from his living members, and when they have had their fill of this drink undrinkable they will drag him down alive to bear the fate of a matricide. *Orestes not yet perceiving them continues his prayer:* long experience has taught him the various cleansing rites, and they have all been paid; he has dwelt amongst men and no impurity has been brought on them; this and all-cleansing Time show that the stain of matricide is removed, and with pure hands he can clasp Athene, queen of this land, and pledge the Argive alliance for her City [*one of the political hits of the piece*] if she will befriend him. *The Furies suddenly spring up:* Not Apollo nor Athene can save thee from thy doom! *Orestes clings convulsively to the Statue.* Thou resistest? then feel our spell! {296}

*Chanting in marching rhythm they rapidly descend the Orchestra staircase, form about the Altar and then proceed to*

**CHORAL SPELL (FOR ENTRY ODE)**

*in four Strophes and Antistrophes.*

*Strophe I*

O Mother who didst bear me, mother Night,  
A terror of the living and the dead,  
Hear me, oh hear!  
The son of Leto puts me to disgrace  
And robs me of my spoil,  
This crouching victim for a Mother's blood:  
And over him as slain,  
We raise this chant of madness, frenzy-working,  
The hymn the Erinnyes love,  
A spell upon the soul, a lyreless strain  
That withers up men's strength.

*Antistrophe I*

This lot the all-pervading destiny  
Hath spun to hold its ground for evermore,  
That we should still attend  
On him on whom there rests the guilt of blood  
Of kin, shed causelessly,  
Till earth lie o'er him; nor shall death set free.  
And over him as slain,  
We raise this chant of madness, frenzy-working,  
The hymn the Erinnyes love,  
A spell upon the soul, a lyreless strain,  
That withers up men's strength. {328}

*Strophe II*

Such lot was then assigned us at our birth:  
From us the Undying Ones must hold aloof:  
Nor is there one who shares  
The banquet-meal with us;  
In garments white I have nor part nor lot;  
My choice was made for overthrow of homes,  
Where home-bred slaughter works a loved one's death:  
Ha! hunting after him,  
Strong though he be, 'tis ours  
To wear the newness of his young blood down.

*Antistrophe II*

Since 'tis our work another's task to take,  
The Gods indeed may bar the force of prayers

Men offer unto me,  
But may not clash in strife;  
For Zeus doth cast us from his fellowship,  
"Blood-dropping, worthy of his utmost hate."  
For leaping down as from the topmost height,  
I on my victim bring  
The crushing force of feet,  
Limbs that o'erthrow e'en those that swiftly run,  
An Atè hard to bear. {350}

*Strophe III*

And fame of men, though very lofty now  
Beneath the clear, bright sky,  
Below the earth grows dim and fades away  
Before the attack of us, the black-robed ones,  
And these our dancings wild,  
Which all men loathe and hate.

*Antistrophe III*

Falling in frenzied guilt, he knows it not;  
So thick the blinding cloud  
That o'er him floats; and Rumour widely spread  
With many a sigh reports the dreary doom,  
A mist that o'er the house  
In gathering darkness broods. {358}

*Strophe IV*

Fixed is the law, no lack of means find we;  
We work out all our will,  
We, the dread Powers, the registrars of crime,  
Whom mortals fail to soothe,  
Fulfilling tasks dishonoured, unrevered,  
Apart from all the Gods,  
In foul and sunless gloom,  
Driving o'er rough steep road both those that see,  
And those whose eyes are dark.

*Antistrophe IV*

What mortal man then doth not bow in awe  
And fear before all this,  
Hearing from me the destined ordinance  
Assigned me by the Gods?  
This task of mine is one of ancient days;  
Nor meet I here with scorn,  
Though 'neath the earth I dwell,  
And live there in the darkness thick and dense,  
Where never sunbeam falls. {374}

**EPISODE I**

*Enter in her Chariot [along the balcony of the permanent scene] Athene.*

*Athene* has heard far off *Orestes'* cry, and has come in her swift chariot. What is this strange presence in her own city, and who is this suppliant? The *Chorus*, in parallel dialogue, explain who they are, and seek to enlist *Athene* against the matricide; but *Athene* answers she has only heard one side. *Chorus* rejoin that the adversary dares not rest his case on oath for oath [*political allusion to procedure of ordinary Athenian Courts*]; *Athene* thinks that a poor way of getting at truth, and as *Chorus* express confidence in her judgment she calls on *Orestes*; he details again all the rites of purification he has gone through, and how *Apollo* bade him do the deed. *Athene* pauses: Murder stirred by wrath [*i.e., homicide as distinguished from murder, the special province of the Court of Areopagus*] is too much for mortal or even herself to decide; but she hereby appoints jurors on oath [*the special distinction of the Areopagus*] as a perpetual institution for dealing with such cases. Let the parties prepare, she will return soon with the best of her citizens [*observe, the Court was an Aristocratic Court*] as Jurors. {467}



## CHORAL INTERLUDE

*in four Strophes and Antistrophes.*

Unless the right cause gains here there will be an outbreak of new laws, general recklessness, and woes of slain kindred with no Furies to avenge. Awe is good as watchman of the soul, and calm Wisdom gained by sorrow; it is not the lawless life that is to be praised, but from the soul's true health comes the fair fortune, loved of all mankind and aim of many a prayer. He who reveres not the High Altar of Justice, but dareth and transgresseth all, will, perforce, as time wears on, have to take in sail,

When trouble makes him hers, and each yard-arm  
Is shivered by the blast,

and in vain he struggles mid the whirling waves, ever failing to weather round the perilous promontory till he is wrecked on the reefs of Vengeance. {535}

## CHANGE OF SCENE

*to Mars' Hill. Enter Athene, followed by Herald and Twelve Citizens.*

## EXODUS, OR FINALE

*Athene* bids the Herald sound a summons, for the whole city is to learn the laws she makes for all time to come. *Apollo enters above.* The Chorus challenging his right, *Apollo* declares himself Witness and Advocate for *Orestes*. {551}

*The Proceedings from this part are exactly modelled on those of the Court of the Areopagus.* The *Chorus* called on to open, cross-examine *Orestes* in stichomuthic dialogue, who admits the deed, and pleads justification that she slew his father.—*Cho.* rejoin she has been paid by death, *Orestes* still lives. Why, then, *Orestes* enquires, did they not pursue her while alive? *Chorus* rest on plea that hers was not kindred blood. On this *Orestes* joins issue and appeals to *Apollo*. He answers: Though the Jurors are on oath, yet Zeus gave the oracle, and he is mightier than an oath.—*Cho.* What, Zeus take a matricide's part?—*Apollo* details the base manner of *Agamemnon's* murder.—*Cho.* taunt *Apollo* that Zeus himself rose by imprisoning his father.—*Apollo* rejoins that imprisonment is remediable, but blood once spilt can never be brought back.—*Cho.* appeal to impossibility of restoring such a criminal to the house he has polluted.—Then *Apollo* puts forth the essence of his case (in a subtle plea which would delight the litigious Athenians): the mother is only the nurse, the father is the true parent; as proof here is *Pallas* sprung from a Father without any Mother; none can be shown born without Father. {650}

Both parties join issue, and then (*amidst intense political excitement*) *Athene* delivers the Inauguration Address of the Court of the Areopagus.

*Athene.* Hear ye my order, O ye Attic people,  
In act to judge your first great murder-cause.  
And henceforth shall the host of *Aegeus'* race  
For ever own this council-hall of judges:  
And for this *Ares'* hill, the *Amazons'* seat  
And camp when they, enraged with *Theseus*, came  
In hostile march, and built as counterwork  
This citadel high-reared, a city new,  
And sacrificed to *Ares*, whence 'tis named  
As *Ares'* hill and fortress: in this, I say,  
The reverent awe its citizens shall own,  
And fear, awe's kindred, shall restrain from wrong  
By day, nor less by night, so long as they,  
The burghers, alter not themselves their laws:  
But if with drain of filth and tainted soil  
Clear river thou pollute, no drink thou'lt find.  
I give my counsel to you, citizens,  
To reverence and guard well that form of State  
Which is nor lawless, nor tyrannical,  
And not to cast all fear from out the city;  
For what man lives devoid of fear and just?  
But rightly shrinking, owning awe like this,  
Ye then would have a bulwark of your land,  
A safeguard for your city, such as none  
Boast or in *Skythia's* or in *Pelops'* clime.

This council I establish pure from bribe,  
Reverend, and keen to act, for those that sleep  
An ever-watchful sentry of the land. {676}

After a rapid stichomuthic interchange of promises and threats by the two parties the voting is proceeded with, *Athene* first giving her casting vote, in case of equality, to Orestes, as preferring the male cause. [*This was a political allusion to the 'vote of Athene' or custom of the Areopagite Court to give the casting vole to the accused.*] The votes are counted, found equal, and Athene declares Orestes acquitted.—*Orestes*, in a burst of gratitude, declares his Argive people shall always be firm friends with the people of Athens. [Political hit.] {747}

*The Chorus breaking into Strophic Lyrics* vow vengeance and long train of ills on the city for this, Athene (*in Blank Verse*) propitiating them, and pleading that the cause has been fairly tried. Moreover they would lose all the good things the city will do for them if friendly, offering them a house in its midst. Gradually the *Chorus* calm down, and having (*in parallel dialogue*) gained a repeated promise from Athene they change their tone and (*in Strophic Lyrics*) promise all good to the land, Athene making acknowledgment on behalf of the city (*in marching rhythm as signifying exultation*). Finally Athene offers to conduct them at once to their homes, the cave-chapels where the Eumenides were worshipped.

*Enter on the stage an array of Matrons and Girls in festal robes, as worn in the rites of the Furies, now called Eumenides or 'Gentle Goddesses' [thus spectacular effect with which Aeschylus loved to conclude]. They, with Athene, chanting the Ritual hymn, file down into the Orchestra, and so lead the Chorus out in the direction of the Shrines of the Eumenides.*

[1] Euphemism for the Furies, as the popular name 'Good Neighbours' for Mischievous Fairies.

## THE ELECTRA OF SOPHOCLES[1]

*Scene Mycenae; the Stage and Orchestra arranged to represent the Market Place, Portico of a Temple in the Centre; Inferior door on one side is the gate to Palace of Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra, that on the other leads to the tomb of Agamemnon; Side-scene on one side gives a view of Argos. Enter from Distance side-door Orestes, Pylades and Attendant.*

### PROLOGUE

The aged *Attendant* points out to Orestes Argos, the Grove of Io, the Temple and other details of the Scene; it was just here he received Orestes as a boy when his father was slain and bore him to a place of safety; now the long wished for day of vengeance is come. *Orestes* acknowledges his long fidelity; relates how Phoebus has sent him with this oracle:

That I myself unarmed with shield or host {36}  
Should subtly work the righteous deed of blood,

and details his plan: the *Attendant*, whose age will save him from recognition, shall announce the death of Orestes, while Orestes and Pylades shall perform the rites enjoined at his father's tomb; then, when the wrong-doers believe themselves secure, the avenger will easily gain admittance. [*At this moment a woman's wail is heard within.*] Orestes wonders if it may be his own Electra and would stop, the *Attendant* hurries him away to do the God's behest. {85}

*Exeunt Orestes and Pylades on left to Tomb of Agamemnon; Attendant back through the Distance side-door. Enter from Palace Electra moaning and weeping.*

### MONODY

*Electra in Lyric Monody.* The light, the air, the loathed house and bed she sleeps on, all are witnesses of her ceaseless misery and woe, orphaned as she is of a father foully slain. She calls on the Curses, the Furies and other dread Powers who watch over evil slaughter to send Orestes, she can no longer bear up with sorrow's great burden cast into the balance. {120}

**LYRIC CONCERTO (FOR PARODE)**

*Cho.* Why mourn for ever the guileful slaughter of thy Father, accursed deed?—*Electra.* I know your kind and tender friendship, yet will never be dissuaded.—*Cho.* Yet what groans and prayers can raise thy sire from the doomed pool of Hades? you go from woes bearable to woes beyond bearing.—*Elec.* It is weak to forget parents so lost; rather for me the nightingale that ever wails 'Itys,' or Niobe weeping in stone.—*Cho.* Thou art not the only one who feels sorrow: there are thy sisters, and another now mourning in a youth obscure, but who will one day return to save.—*Elec.* Ah! him I yearn for, but he mocks my messages, and promises yet never comes.—*Cho.* Take heart: Time is a calm and patient deity; trusting in Zeus you will find neither Orestes nor the God of Acheron forgetful.—*Elec.* Yet meanwhile the larger portion of my life is gone; orphaned, un-wed, an alien stranger I serve in the house where I was wont to reign.—*Cho.* Ah! that sad day! Guile devised the blow and lust struck it!—*Elec.* Oh, most horrible day, most horrible night! the foul banquet! the dread forms of death he met with at their accursed hands, he who was my life!—*Cho.* But take care: excess of grief makes you utter what may bring you into trouble.—*Elec.* I know, but will never cease from uttering woe on woe: leave me, I am beyond soothing, and will never pause to count my tears.—*Cho.* It is with pure good will, as if a mother, I beg you not to heap ills on ills.—*Elec.* Is misery limited? is it noble to neglect the dead? if they escape without penalty fear of the Gods will be swept from the earth. {250}

**EPISODE I**

*Chorus now changing to Blank Verse.* We meant well, but do as you will, we will follow you.—*Elec.* I am indeed ashamed; but remember the trouble I am in: to be hated by my mother, house-mate with my father's murderers; with Aegisthus sitting on my father's throne by day and pouring libations on the hearth he violated; my mother not living in fear of the Erinnys, but making a red-letter day of the day my father died: I, alas! keep his birth day in solitary feast. I am bitterly chidden when caught weeping, and threatened when news comes of Orestes: all hope is far.—Aegisthus is from home, or she dared not have indulged her grief even thus far. {327}

*Enter her sister, Chrysothemis, bearing funeral offerings.* She remonstrates with Electra for uselessly wailing, instead of adapting herself to her fate.—*Elec.* retorts that she has learned her lesson by rote. She advises to hate when there is strength to back hatred, yet she will not join in working revenge.—*Electra* covets not her choice of ease and wealth, and to be called her mother's child, while it is open to her to be her father's!—*Cho.* moderates: each may learn something from the other.—*Chrysoth.* is accustomed to Electra's want of charity and would not now have accosted her except to warn her of new evils: they mean to get her out of the country and shut up in a dungeon where she shall never see the light of day.—A rapid stichomuthic dialogue follows as to temporizing and resisting, and then *Chrys.* is going to do her errand.—*Elec.* enquires what this is, and learns that Clytaemnestra, disturbed by a dream, is sending propitiatory libations.

A rumor ran {417}

That she had seen our father's presence come  
(Yes, thine and mine) a second time to light,  
And then that he upon the hearth stood up,  
And took the sceptre which he bore of old,  
Which now Aegisthus bears, and fixed it there,  
And from it sprang a sucker fresh and strong,  
And all Mycenae rested in its shade.  
This tale I heard from some one who was near  
When she declared her vision to the Sun;  
But more than this I heard not, save that she  
Now sends me hither through that fright of hers.

Electra catching a gleam of hope, adjures her to disobey, and in place of Clytaemnestra's offerings to put on the tomb their own: Electra's own withered lock and untrimmed girdle; and instead of propitiatory prayer pray to send Orestes.—*Cho.* approves and *Chrysothemis* catches the spirit and *exit.* {471}

**CHORAL INTERLUDE I**

*in Strophe, Antistrophe and Epode.*

If my mind misleads me not, Vengeance is coming with hands that bear the might of Righteousness; a new courage springs through my veins at these propitious dreams, that Agamemnon will not forget for

aye, nor the axe that slew him. She too is coming, Erinnyes shod with brass, dread form with many a foot and many a hand: never will the boding sign come falsely to those who did the deed, or men will find no prophecies in dreams.—Ah dreadful chariot race of Pelops, foundation of all the ills which have never since left the house. {315}

## EPISODE II

*Enter from Palace Clytaemnestra and Attendant.*—*Clyt.* It is Aegisthus' absence that makes you bold enough to appear outside the Palace and disgrace us. I know your reproaches: but it was Justice, not I, that slew your father; what right had he to slay *my* child, born of my travails, and not some other Argive children, Menelaus's for example, whose the quarrel was? Had Hades a special lust to feed on my children?—*Elec.* This time at least it is not I who begin. I could reply if permitted.—*Clyt.* permits.—*Elec.* You admit the monstrous admission, that you slew your husband—for justice sake? or for the 'coward base' who is your paramour? You well know that the offence for which Artemis demanded the sacrifice was Agamemnon's slaughter of the Sacred Stag, and from his seed therefore the atonement must come which so unwillingly he made. And if not, is your plea blood for blood? then you will be the first to suffer. How can you plead thus while living in open guilt with him who slew your husband? It is a cruel mistress, not a mother, I revile: you charge me with rearing Orestes as minister of vengeance, I would indeed if I had strength! So proclaim me a monster, that will make me a fitting daughter of my mother.—*Cho.* Here is passion rather than care to speak right.—*Clyt.* Thus to show scorn for her mother! she will go all lengths and feel no shame.—*Elec.* Shame I do feel, but the deeds which beget the shame are yours.—*Clyt.* By Artemis, you shall pay for this when Aegisthus comes!—*Elec.* I thought I had leave to speak.—*Clyt.* Will you not be silent and let me perform my rites without disorder?—*Elec.* Now I am silent (*Retires*).—*Clyt.* then proceeds to offer her gifts to Phoebus, with prayer to avert the ill omen of the past night: as her prayer "is not amongst friends," she can allude but darkly to all she means, but He is a God and will understand all she leaves unsaid. {659}

*Enter by the Distance-door Attendant of Orestes.*

Enquiring of Chorus he finds he is arrived before the people he is seeking, and announces to Clytaemnestra that Orestes is dead. *Electra* utters a wail of agony, while *Clyt.* asks for particulars. Then follows the regular 'Messenger's Speech,' a detailed and graphic account of a chariot race, in which he was thrown and killed.—*Clyt.* trembles between joy at deliverance from her suspense, and a touch of motherly feeling; still she triumphs over the now hopeless *Electra*: for him, what is is well.

*Elec.* Hear this, thou Power avenging him who died! *Clyt.* Right well she heard, and what she heard hath wrought.

The Messenger is taken into the Palace, *Electra* left to wail without, with attempt of Chorus to condole (*lyric concerto*). {870}

*Enter from Tomb of Agamemnon Chrysothemis jubilant and bearing a lock of hair of Orestes.*

She eagerly insists that Orestes is come; shows the lock and describes the libations that no other would pour on that tomb. Bit by bit *Electra* checks her joy, and informs her of the news. They mourn together, till *Electra* breaks out with proposal, that since their friends are snatched from them, and they two are left alone, they shall themselves work their revenge; that will be the safest and will bring glory: 'the sisters twain who saved their father's house.'—*Chor.* This requires consideration.—*Chry.* Will you never learn that you are a woman and not a man? *Elec.* then declares she will do it herself, and after a stichomuthic contest *exit Chrysothemis*. {1057}

## CHORAL INTERLUDE II

*In two Strophes and Antistrophes.*

The storks show a pattern of filial piety: why do not men follow it? By Zeus and Themis there is a punishment for the unfilial; may the voice crying for vengeance reach the sons of Atreus below! Their house is full of woe; *Electra*, alone faithful, is ready to face death if only she may destroy the twin furies. The great and good will purchase glory with life; so may'st thou prevail and gain the name of the best of daughters. {1096}

## EPISODE III

*Enter from Distance-door Orestes, Pylades and Attendants.*

Orestes informs the Chorus, and *Electra* as one of the household, that they bear the urn containing the ashes of Orestes, whose death they had sent forward a messenger to announce. *Electra* begs to

clasp the urn and pours over it a flood of grief; here is nothingness to represent the dear boy she sent out in bloom of youth; and all her forethought has perished! And he died amid strangers without her to take part in the funeral rites! All her sweet toil in nursing him with more than mother's love is gone! All is gone—father, mother, brother! She would go too; they ever shared an equal lot; now let her go to him, ashes to ashes! {1170}

*Chor.* Thou, O Electra, take good heed, wast born Of mortal father; mortal, too, Orestes, Yield not too much to sorrow. *Ores.* [Trembling.] Woe is me. What shall I say? Ah, whither find my way, In words that have no issue? for I fail In strength to curb my speech. *Elec.* What sorrow now Disturbs thee? Wherefore art thou speaking thus? *Ores.* Is this Electra's noble form I see? *Elec.* That self-same form indeed, in piteous case. *Ores.* Alas, alas, for this sad lot of thine. *Elec.* Surely thou dost not wail, O friend, for me! *Ores.* O form most basely, godlessly misused. *Elec.* Thy words, ill-omened, fall, O friend, on none But me alone. *Ores.* Alas, for this thy state, Unwedded, hopeless. *Elec.* Why, O friend, on me With such fixed glance still gazing dost thou groan? *Ores.* How little knew I of my fortune's ills! *Elec.* What have I said to throw such light on them? *Ores.* Now that I see thee thus, with many woes Clothed as a garment. *Elec.* Yet thou dost but see A few of all my evils. *Ores.* What could be More sad than these to look on? *Elec.* This, to live And sit at meat with murderers. *Ores.* With whose? What evil dost thou indicate by this? *Elec.* My father's; 'tis to them, against my will I live in bondage. *Ores.* Who constrains thee, then? *Elec.* My mother she is called; and yet in nought Is she what mother should be. *Ores.* In what acts? By blows and stripes, or this unseemly life? *Elec.* Both blows, unseemly life, and all vile deeds. *Ores.* And is there none to help? Not one to check? *Elec.* No, none. Who was . . . thou buryest him as dust. *Ores.* O sad one! How I pitied thee long since. *Elec.* Know, then, thou art the only pitying one. {1200} *Ores.* For I alone am hurt by these thy woes. *Elec.* Surely thou dost not come by line of blood Connected with us. *Ores.* I could tell thee all, Were these thy friends. *Elec.* Most friendly are they; speak As unto faithful hearers. *Ores.* Put away That urn awhile that thou may'st hear the whole. *Elec.* Ah! By the Gods, O stranger, ask not that. *Ores.* Do what I bid thee, and thou shalt not err. *Elec.* Now, by thy beard, deprive me not of that I hold most dear. *Ores.* I say it cannot be. *Elec.* Ah me, Orestes, wretched shall I be, Bereaved of this thy tomb. *Ores.* Hush, hush such words; Thou has no cause for wailing. *Elec.* Have no cause! Do I not wail my brother, who is dead? *Ores.* Thou hast no call to utter speech like this. *Elec.* And am I so dishonoured by the dead? *Ores.* By none art thou dishonoured. But this thing Is nought to thee. *Elec.* And yet it needs must be, If 'tis Orestes' body that I bear. *Ores.* Except in show of speech it is not his. *Elec.* Where, then, is that poor exile's sepulchre? *Ores.* Of those that live there is no sepulchre. {1219} *Elec.* What say'st thou, boy? *Ores.* No falsehood what I say. *Elec.* And does he live? *Ores.* He lives, if I have life. *Elec.* What, art thou he? *Ores.* Look thou upon this seal, My father's once, and learn if I speak truth. *Elec.* O blessed day! *Ores.* Most blessed, I too own. *Elec.* O voice! And art thou come? *Ores.* No longer learn That news from others. *Elec.* And I have thee here, Here in my grasp! *Ores.* So may'st thou always have me. *Elec.* O dearest friends, my fellow-citizens, Look here on this Orestes, dead indeed In feigned craft, and by that feigning saved. *Chor.* We see it, daughter; and at what has chanced A tear of gladness trickles from our eyes. {1231}

A passionate dialogue (*in mixed verse: Electra, speaking lyrics, Orestes Blank Verse*) of exultation and weeping succeeds: until finally Orestes is calling back their thoughts to the plans of vengeance when *enter from Palace Attendant of Orestes*, who chides them for their loud joy, which he has barely been able to prevent from reaching the ears of Clytaemnestra. Electra is informed who this attendant is, and joyfully recognizes him and calls him father for his faithfulness. He cuts conversation short and hurries Orestes and Pylades within. *Electra* with a prayer retires. {1383}

### CHORAL INTERLUDE III

Short expression of the sense of a critical moment: *Strophe*, Ares and the Avengers are on their way—*Antistrophe*, they have passed beneath the roof-tree. {1397}

### EXODUS, OR FINALE

*Electra* rushes out to stand on guard against Aegisthus while vengeance is being done on Clytaemnestra.—Cries from within; *Electra* and *Chorus* perceive that the deed is done.—Enter *Orestes* and *Pylades* from the Palace red-handed; they are about to triumph when *Electra* thrusts them back, for Aegisthus is at hand.—Enter *Aegisthus* enquiring for the strangers of Electra. {1442}

*Aegis.* Where are the strangers, then? Tell this to me.

*Elec.* Within; for they have found a loving hostess.

*Aegis.* And did they say distinctly he was dead?

*Elec.* Ah no! they showed it, not in words alone.

*Aegis.* And is it here, that we may see it plain?

*Elec.* 'Tis here, a sight most pitiful to see.

*Aegis.* Against thy wont thou giv'st me cause for joy.

*Elec.* Thou may'st rejoice, if this be ground of joy.

*Aegis.* I hid you hush, and open wide the gates  
That all of Argos and Mycenae see,  
So if there be that once were lifted up  
With hopes they had, vain hopes they fixed on him,  
Now seeing him dead, they may receive my curb,  
And finding me their master, sense may gain  
Without coercion.

*Elec.* And that end is reached  
By me; for I by time have wisdom gained,  
To yield to those more mighty.

*The doors are thrown open, and disclose Orestes and Pylades standing by the dead body of Clytaemnestra, which is covered with a sheet and a veil over the face.*

*Aegis.* Lo, I see,  
O Zeus, a sight that comes right well for me.  
(Without offence I say it; should it move  
The wrath divine, I wish it all unsaid.)  
Withdraw the veil which hides the face, that I  
To kindred blood may pay the meed of tears.

*Ores.* Do thou uplift it. 'Tis thy task not mine,  
To look on this, and kindly words to speak.

*Aegis.* Thou giv'st good counsel, and I list to thee,  
And thou, if yet she tarries in the house,  
Call Clytaemnestra.

*Ores.* (*as Aegisthus lifts the veil*) Here she lies before thee,  
Seek her not elsewhere, {1474}

*Aegis.* Oh what sight is this!

*Ores.* Whom fearest thou? Who is't thou dost not know?

*Aegis.* Into whose snares, whose closely-tangled mesh  
Have I, poor victim, fallen?

*Ores.* Saw'st thou not  
Long since that thou didst speak to them that live  
As they were dead?

*Aegis.* Ah me! I catch thy words.  
It needs must be that he who speaks to me  
Is named Orestes.

*Ores.* Wert thou then deceived,  
Thou excellent diviner?

*Aegis.* Woe is me!  
I perish, yet permit me first to speak  
One little word.

*Elec.* Give him no leave to speak,  
By all the gods, my brother, nor to spin  
His long discourse. When men are plunged in ills  
What gain can one who stands condemned to die  
Reap from delay? No, slay him out of hand;  
And, having slain him, cast him forth, to find  
Fit burial at their hands from whom 'tis meet  
That he should have it, far away from view.  
Thus only shall I gain a remedy  
For all the evils of the years gone by.

*Ores.* [To *Aegisthus.*] Go thou within, and quickly.  
Now our strife  
Is not of words, but for thy life itself.

*Aegis.* Why dost thou force me in? If this be right,  
What need of darkness? Why not slay at once?

*Ores.* Give thou no orders, but where thou did'st slay  
My father go, that thou too there may'st die.

*Aegis.* Truly the doom is fixed, this house should see  
The ills that on the house of Pelops fall,  
Or present, or to come.

*Ores.* Yes, those that fall  
 On thee: of these I am a prophet true.

*Aegis.* Thou boastest of a skill which he had not—  
 Thy father.

*Ores.* Still thou bandiest many words,  
 And length'nest out the way. Move on.

*Aegis.* Lead thou.

*Ores.* Not so, thou must go first.

*Aegis.* Dost think I'll flee?

*Ores.* Thou must not die the death thou would'st desire.  
 I needs must make it utter. Doom like this  
 Should fall on all who dare transgress the laws,  
 The doom of death. Then wickedness no more  
 Would multiply its strength.

*Chor.* O seed of Atreus, after many woes,  
 Thou hast come forth, thy freedom hardly won,  
 By this emprise made perfect!

[1] The quotations of Sophocles are (mostly) from Plumptre's translation.

## THE ELECTRA OF EURIPIDES[1]

### PROLOGUE

*The Scene is in front of a Peasant's Cottage: the Centre is the door of the Cottage, the scene on the two sides of it represents the ways to fields and to the river. Time: early Morning, the stars still shining.*

*Enter from the Cottage the Peasant on his way to his day's work.* In the form of a Morning Prayer to the stream Inachus, he makes known the situation of affairs, the murder of Agamemnon, etc.—and in particular how Aegisthus, fearing lest some nobleman might marry Electra and be her avenger, had forced her into wedlock with himself, a peasant, honest but in the lowest poverty. But he is too good a friend to his master's house and to the absent Orestes to wrong Electra; he has been a husband only in name, to give her the shelter of his humble roof. *Enter Electra from the Cottage with a watering pot:* not seeing the Peasant she in a similar soliloquy announces that she is on her way to the river to prosecute her unnatural toil.

*Peas.* Why will thou thus, unhappy lady, toil  
 For my sake bearing labours, nor desist  
 At my desire? Not thus hast thou been train'd.

*Elec.* Thee equal to the gods I deem my friend,  
 For in my ills thou hast not treated me  
 With insult. In misfortunes thus to find  
 What I have found in thee, a gentle pow'r,  
 Lenient of grief, must be a mighty source  
 Of consolations. It behoves me then,  
 Far as my pow'r avails, to ease thy toils,  
 That lighter thou may'st feel them, and to share  
 Thy labour, though unbidden; in the fields  
 Thou hast enough of work; be it my task  
 Within to order well. The lab'rer tired  
 Abroad, with pleasure to his house returns.  
 Accustom'd all things grateful there to find.

*Peas.* Go then, since such thy will; nor distant far  
 The fountain from the house. At the first dawn  
 My bullocks yoked I to the field will drive,  
 And sow my furrows; for no idle wretch  
 With the gods always in the mouth can gain  
 Without due labour the support of life. {95}

*Stage vacant a moment. Then enter by Distance-door Orestes and Pylades.*

*Orestes* in conversation with his friend makes known he is come by divine command to avenge his father's death: he has fulfilled the god's first charge to present offerings on his father's tomb; the second is that he must not enter the walls of the city; thus he wishes to find his sister—now, as he hears, wedded to a peasant!—and consult—they step aside as they see one whom 'female slave her tresses show' approaching. {127}

*Re-enter Electra with her water-pot filled:* and in a *Monody* (*strophe, antistrophe and epode*) laments her situation: laments for her lost father, her brother afar off, in servitude it may be: and adjures her father's spirit to send vengeance. {187}

#### PARODE JOINING ON TO EPISODE I

*Enter the Orchestra Chorus of Maidens of Mycenae, and in dialogue (two Strophes and Antistrophes)* beg *Electra* to join them in an approaching festival, as she had been wont in happier days.—*Electra* declares she is fit for tears and rags, not for festivities.—As for rags they will find her the festal robes; and vows, instead of tears may gain the goddess's help.—No god, says *Electra*, has an ear for the wretched, and in wretched toil and obscure retreat her life is wasting away.—*A sob from the concealed Orestes startles them, and they are about to flee, when Orestes and Pylades discover themselves and reassure them.* With difficulty he restrains his emotions throughout a long conversation, personating a messenger from himself to *Electra*.

*Ores.* Bearing thy brother's words to thee I come. {251} *Elec.* Most welcome: breathes he yet this vital air? *Ores.* He lives: I first would speak what brings thee joy. *Elec.* Oh be thou blest for these most grateful words! *Ores.* To both in common this I give to share. *Elec.* Where is th' unhappy outcast wand'ring now? *Ores.* He wastes his life not subject to one state. *Elec.* Finds he with toil what life each day requires? *Ores.* Not so; but mean the wand'ring exile's state. *Elec.* But with what message art thou from him charg'd? *Ores.* T' inquire, if living, where thou bear'st thy griefs. *Elec.* First then observe my thin and wasted state. *Ores.* Wasted with grief, so that I pity thee. *Elec.* Behold my head, its crisped honours shorn. *Ores.* Mourning thy brother, or thy father dead? *Elec.* What can be dearer to my soul than these? *Ores.* Alas! What deem'st thou are thy brother's thoughts? *Elec.* He, though far distant, is most dear to me. *Ores.* Why here thy dwelling from the city far? *Elec.* O, stranger, in base nuptials I am join'd— *Ores.* I feel thy brother's grief!— To one of rank? *Elec.* Not as my father once to place me hop'd— *Ores.* That hearing I may tell thy brother, speak. *Elec.* This is his house: in this I dwell remote. *Ores.* This house some digger or some herdsman suits. *Elec.* Generous, though poor, in reverence me he holds. *Ores.* To thee what reverence doth thy husband pay? *Elec.* He never hath presumed t' approach my bed.

The conversation is prolonged, bringing out for the benefit of the Strangers and the Chorus the whole of *Electra's* troubles, and how her father's blood is crying for vengeance.

*Elec.* The monarch's tomb

Unhonoured, nor libations hath receiv'd,  
Nor myrtle bough, no hallow'd ornament  
Hath dignified the pyre. Inflamed with wine,  
My mother's husband, the illustrious lord,  
For so they call him, trampled on the earth  
Insultingly where Agamemnon lies,  
And hurling 'gainst his monument a stone,  
Thus taunts us with proud scorn, "Where is thy son,  
"Orestes where? right noble is thy tomb  
"Protected by his presence." Thus he mocks  
The absent; but, O stranger, tell him this  
Suppliant I beg thee. {371}

*Enter unexpectedly the Peasant.* On hearing that these strangers are messengers from *Orestes*, he instantly calls for refreshments to be brought, and begs the stranger to delay no longer to enter the cottage: poverty must be no excuse for not offering what hospitality he has.—A burst of admiration is drawn from *Orestes*. {400}

*Ores.* Nature hath giv'n no outward mark to note  
The generous mind; the qualities of men  
To sense are indistinct. I oft have seen  
One of no worth a noble father shame,  
And from vile parents worthy children spring,



Meanness oft grov'ling in the rich man's mind,  
 And oft exalted spirits in the poor.  
 How then discerning shall we judge aright?  
 By riches? ill would they abide the test.  
 By poverty? on poverty awaits  
 This ill, through want it prompts to sordid deeds.  
 Shall we pronounce by arms? but who can judge  
 By looking on the spear the dauntless heart?  
 Such judgment is fallacious; for this man,  
 Nor great among the Argives, nor elate  
 With the proud honours of his house, his rank  
 Plebeian, hath approv'd his liberal heart.  
 Will you not then learn wisdom, you whose minds  
 Error with false presentments leads astray?  
 Will you not learn by manners and by deeds  
 To judge the noble? Such discharge their trust  
 With honour to the state and to their house.  
 Mere flesh without a spirit is no more  
 Than statues in the forum; nor in war  
 Doth the strong arm the dang'rous shock abide  
 More than the weak; on nature this depends  
 And an intrepid mind. But we accept  
 Thy hospitable kindness; for the son  
 Of Agamemnon, for whose sake we come,  
 Present or not is worthy to this house.  
 Go, my attendants, I must enter it;  
 This man, though poor, more cheerful than the rich  
 Receives me; to his kindness thanks are due.  
 More would it joy me if thy brother, blest  
 Himself, could lead me to his prosperous house:  
 Yet haply he may come; th' oracular voice  
 Of Phoebus firmly will be ratified:  
 Lightly of human prophecies I deem. {438}

[*Orestes and his attendants enter the house.*]

*Electra* is in a quandary at the idea of people of such rank being invited into her humble cottage.

*Peas.* Why not? If they are noble, as their port Denotes them, will they not alike enjoy Contentment, be their viands mean or rich?

The only device *Electra* can think of is to send to an old servant of her father's house—the same who, as Tutor, preserved the child *Orestes* on the fatal night—now an aged herdsman forced to hide himself in obscurity, and ask him to help them in this emergency. *Exit Peasant to the fields to find the old Tutor; Electra into the cottage.* {474}

#### CHORAL INTERLUDE I

apostrophises the array of ships that went to the Trojan war, the great chiefs who commanded, especially Achilles, whose shield they have seen, with its Gorgons, and Sphinxes, and Hermes in flight, and other wondrous figures—suddenly at the end connects itself with the subject of the play by the thought: it was the Prince who commanded heroes like these that a wicked wife dared to slay! {530}

#### EPISODE II

*Enter from the fields the Aged Tutor, tottering under the weight of a kid and other viands, clad in rags, and in tears. Electra* wonders why he weeps: to mourn for Agamemnon or *Orestes* is surely now to mourn in vain.

*Tut.* In vain; but this my soul could not support; {553}  
 For to his tomb as on the way I came,  
 I turned aside, and falling on the ground,  
 Alone and unobserved, indulg'd my tears;  
 Then of the wine, brought for thy stranger guests,  
 Made a libation, and around the tomb  
 Plac'd myrtle branches; on the pyre I saw

A sable ewe, yet fresh the victim's blood,  
And clust'ring auburn locks shorn from some head;  
I marvell'd, O my child, what man had dar'd  
Approach the tomb, for this no Argive dares.  
Perchance with secret step thy brother came  
And paid these honors to his father's tomb.  
But view these locks, compare them with thine own,  
Whether like thine their color; nature loves  
In those who from one father draw their blood  
In many points a likeness to preserve.

*Elec.* Unworthy of a wise man are thy words,  
If thou canst think that to Mycenae's realms  
My brother e'er with secret step will come,  
Fearing Aegisthus. Then between our locks  
What can th' agreement be? To manly toils  
He in the rough Palaestra hath been train'd,  
Mine by the comb are soften'd; so that hence  
Nothing may be inferr'd. Besides, old man,  
Tresses like-color'd often may'st thou find  
Where not one drop of kindred blood is shar'd.

*Tut.* Trace but his footsteps, mark th' impression, see  
If of the same dimensions with thy feet.

*Elec.* How can th' impression of his foot be left  
On hard and rocky ground? But were it so,  
Brother and sister never can have foot  
Of like dimensions: larger is the man's.

*Tut.* But hath thy brother, should he come, no vest  
Which thou wouldst know, the texture of thy hands,  
In which when snatch'd from death he was array'd?

*Elec.* Know'st thou not, when my brother from this land  
Was saved, I was but young? But were his vests  
Wrought by my hands, then infant as he was,  
How could he now in his maturer age  
Be in the same array'd, unless his vests  
Grew with his person's growth? No, at the tomb  
Some stranger, touch'd with pity, sheared his locks,  
Or native, by the tyrant's spies unmark'd.

*Tut.* Where are these strangers? I would see them: much  
Touching thy brother wish I to inquire.

*Elec.* See, from the house with hast'ning step they come. {599}

*Re-enter Orestes and Pylades:* Conversation in which the aged Tutor eyes him curiously all over, and declares he is Orestes—general recognition and burst of joy.—Then they turn to vengeance, and in stichomuthic dialogue lay their plans. Aegisthus, the Tutor says, is to come to a neighboring field to celebrate a sacrifice; they lay a plan for Orestes and Pylades to gain admission as travellers and kill him in the moment of sacrifice. As to Clytaemnestra: a report is prevalent in the palace that Electra has given birth to a child; they conspire to give currency to the report and invite Clytaemnestra to perform the ten days' rite: once in the house, Orestes will do the dreadful deed; they tremble at their horrid tasks, but their father must be avenged.—*Exeunt Orestes and, his Attendants to the fields; and Electra to the Cottage* begging the Chorus, who are privy to all this as confidential friends, to keep watch and summon her if news comes. {763}

## CHORAL INTERLUDE II

*Strophe 1.* The Argive mountains round,  
'Mongst tales of ancient days  
From age to age recorded this remains:  
Tuned to mellifluous lays,  
Pan taught his pipe to sound,  
And as he breath'd the sprightly-swelling strains,  
The beauteous ram, with fleece of gold,  
God of shepherds, on he drove.  
The herald from the rock above  
Proclaims, "Your monarch's wonders to behold,  
"Wonders to sight, from which no terrors flow,

"Go, Mycenaeans, to th' assembly go."  
With reverence they obey the call,  
And fill th' Atridae's spacious hall.

*Antis.* Its gates with gold o'erlaid,  
Wide oped each Argive shrine,  
And from the altar hallow'd flames arise;  
Amidst the rites divine,  
Joying the Muse to aid,  
Breath'd the brisk pipe its sweet notes to the skies;  
Accordant to the tuneful strain  
Swell'd the loud acclaiming voice,  
Now with Thyestes to rejoice:  
He, all on fire the glorious prize to gain,  
With secret love the wife of Atreus won,  
And thus the shining wonder made his own;  
Then to the assembly vaunting cried,  
"Mine is the rich Ram's golden pride."

*Strophe 2.* Then, oh then, indignant Jove  
Bade the bright sun backward move,  
And the golden orb of day,  
And the morning's orient ray;  
Glaring o'er the Western sky  
Hurl'd his ruddy lightnings fly;  
Clouds, no more to fall in rain,  
Northward roll their deep'ning train;  
Libyan Ammon's thirsty seat,  
Wither'd with the scorching heat,  
Feels nor show'rs nor heavenly dews  
Grateful moisture round diffuse.

*Antis. 2.* Fame hath said (but light I hold  
What the voice of fame hath told)  
That the sun, retiring far,  
Backward roll'd his golden car;  
And his vital heat withdraw,  
Sick'ning man's bold crimes to view.  
Mortals, when such tales they hear,  
Tremble with an holy fear,  
And th' offended gods adore;  
She, this noble pair who bore,  
Dar'd to murder, deed abhorr'd!  
This forgot, her royal lord. {815}

### EPISODE III

*As the Ode is concluding, shouts are heard from the direction of the field where the sacrifice is: Chorus summon Electra.*

After a brief conversation, a Messenger arrives breathless, and after rapidly giving the news that Aegisthus has fallen, is encouraged to tell the scene at length, which he does in the regular 'Messenger's Speech.'

*Mess.* Departing from this house, the level road {845}  
We enter'd soon, mark'd by the chariot wheel  
On either side. Mycenae's noble king  
Was there, amidst his gardens with fresh streams  
Irrigous walking, and the tender boughs  
Of myrtles, for a wreath to bind his head,  
He cropt; he saw us, he address'd us thus  
Aloud: "Hail, strangers; who are ye, and whence  
Come, from what country?" Then Orestes said,  
"Thessalians; victims to Olympian Jove  
We at the stream of Alpheus go to slay."  
The King replied, "Be now my guests, and share

The feast with me; a bullock to the Nymphs  
I sacrifice; at morn's first dawn arise,  
Then shall you go; but enter now my house."  
Thus as he spoke, he took us by the hand  
And led us, nothing loth: beneath his roof  
Soon as we came, he bade his slaves prepare  
Baths for the strangers, that, the altars nigh,  
Beside the lustral ewers they might stand.  
Orestes then, "With lavers from the pure  
And living stream we lately have been cleansed:  
But with thy citizens these rites to share,  
If strangers are permitted, we, O King,  
Are ready to thy hospitable feast,  
Nothing averse." The converse here had end.  
Their spears, with which they guard the king, aside  
Th' attendants laid, and to their office all  
Applied their hands; some led the victim, some  
The baskets bore, some rais'd the flames and plac'd  
The cauldrons on the hearth; the house resounds.  
Thy mother's husband on the altars cast  
The salted cakes, and thus address'd his vows;  
"Ye Nymphs that haunt the rocks, these hallow'd rites  
Oft let me pay, and of my royal spouse  
Now absent, both by fortune blest as now;  
And let our foes as now, in ruin lie;"  
Thee and Orestes naming. But my lord,  
Far other vows address'd, but gave his words  
No utterance, to regain his father's house.  
Aegisthus then the sacrificing sword  
Took from the basket, from the bullock's front  
To cut the hair, which on the hallow'd fire  
With his right hand he threw; and, as his slaves  
The victim held, beneath its shoulder plung'd  
The blade; then turning to thy brother spoke:  
"Among her noble arts Thessalia boasts  
To rein the fiery courser, and with skill  
The victim's limbs to sever; stranger, take  
The sharp-edg'd steel and show that fame reports  
Of the Thessalians truth." The Doric blade  
Of temper'd metal in his hand he grasp'd,  
And from his shoulders threw his graceful robe;  
Then to assist him in the toilsome task  
Chose Pylades, and bade the slaves retire:  
The victim's foot he held, and its white flesh,  
His hand extending, bared, and stript the hide  
E'er round the course the chariot twice could roll,  
And laid the entrails open. In his hands  
The fate-presaging parts Aegisthus took,  
Inspecting: in the entrails was no lobe;  
The valves and cells the gall containing show  
Dreadful events to him, that view'd them, near.  
Gloomy his visage darken'd; but my lord  
Ask'd whence his sadden'd aspect: He replied—  
"Stranger, some treachery from abroad I fear;  
Of mortal men Orestes most I hate,  
The son of Agamemnon; to my house  
He is a foe." "Wilt thou," replied my lord,  
"King of this state, an exile's treachery dread?  
But that, these omens leaving, we may feast,  
Give me a Phthian for this Doric blade,  
The breast asunder I will cleave." He took  
The steel and cut. Aegisthus, yet intent,  
Parted the entrails; and, as low he bow'd  
His head, thy brother, rising to the stroke,

Drove through his back the ponderous axe, and riv'd  
 The spinal joints: his heaving body writh'd  
 And quiver'd, struggling in the pangs of death.  
 The slaves beheld, and instant snatched their spears,  
 Many 'gainst two contesting; but my lord  
 And Pylades with dauntless courage stood  
 Oppos'd, and shook their spears. Orestes then  
 Thus spoke: "I come not to this state a foe,  
 Nor to my servants; but my father's death  
 I on his murderer have aveng'd; you see  
 Th' unfortunate Orestes: kill me not,  
 My father's old attendants." At these words  
 They all restrain'd their spears, and he was known  
 By one grown hoary in the royal house.  
 Crowns on thy brother's head they instant plac'd  
 With shouts of joy. He comes, and with him brings  
 Proof of his daring, not a Gorgon's head,  
 But whom thou hat'st, Aegisthus: blood for blood,  
 Bitter requital, on the dead has fall'n. {939}

General exultation (*in Lyric measures*) succeeds, which increases as *Orestes* and *Pylades re-enter bearing the corpse of Aegisthus*. After brief celebration of the deed the face of the corpse is uncovered, and Electra, gazing at it, gives vent to her scorn and hatred: how he had slain a hero, made her an orphan, lived in shame with her mother, enjoying and trusting in her father's wealth: but

Nature is firm, not riches: she remains  
 For ever, and triumphant lifts her head.  
 But unjust wealth, which sojourns with the base,  
 Glitters for some short space, then flies away.

His effeminate manners are more than maiden tongue may speak of; beauty graced his perfect form:

But be not mine a husband, whose fair face  
 In softness with a virgin's vies, but one  
 Of manly manners; for the sons of such  
 By martial toils are trained to glorious deeds;  
 The beauteous only the dance give grace.

Let the wicked in future learn they are not secure till the goal of life is reached. {1092}

Clytaemnestra is then seen approaching: they hurry Orestes in; his heart fails him at the thought of his mother; with difficulty Electra rouses him to his appointed vengeance. [*Exeunt all but Electra into the Cottage. Enter Clytaemnestra in a Chariot and splendid array.*] *The Chorus* welcome her, and she begs their aid to alight.—*Electra* thrusts herself forward clad in rags as she is, and begs that she too may assist.—*Clyt.* feels the impropriety of the scene, and falls into an apologetic tone; it was Electra's father who, by his injustice to Iphigenia, was the real cause of Electra's trouble. This leads to the usual judicial disputation: *Clyt.* pleading that this sacrifice of her daughter was done not for a good cause, but for the wanton Helen; this sacrifice she had avenged, and to avenge it must join an enemy, not a friend, of Agamemnon.—*Electra*, getting permission, replies: Helen was not the only wanton one of her family; if no motive but vengeance, why begin to adorn as soon as Agamemnon was out of the way, why rejoice whenever the Trojans prospered, why go on to persecute Orestes and herself, nay, why not slay Aegisthus for persecuting these her children? The sight of Electra's miserable condition makes even *Clyt.* feel compunction: she has been too harsh, she will be kinder now, and so shall Aegisthus—*Electra* replying to all that it is too late. At last *Clyt.* prepares to go within the house and perform the rite for Electra; then she will join her husband. *Exeunt Attendants with Chariot, and Electra ushers Clytaemnestra into the Cottage.*

Let my poor house receive thee: but take heed  
 Lest thy rich vests the blackening smoke denies.—  
 There shalt thou sacrifice, as to the gods  
 Behoves thee sacrifice: the basket there  
 Is for the rites prepared, and the keen blade  
 Which struck the bull; beside him shalt thou fall  
 By a like blow; in Pluto's courts his bride  
 He shall receive, with whom in heav'n's fair light  
 Thy couch was shared: to thee this grace I give,

Thou vengeance for my father shalt give me. {1274}

### CHORAL INTERLUDE III

The waves of mischief are flowing back, the gale of Violence is veering: Vengeance for the crime of old standing is come at last. {1298}

### EXODUS, OR FINALE

Cries are heard from within: the Chorus know that the deed is done.

*By the machinery of the roller-stage the interior of the Cottage is displayed, with Orestes and Electra standing over the corpse of Clytaemnestra.*

A revulsion of feeling has come over them; they did the deed in frenzy; now, instead of triumph, they have no thoughts but for the act they have done, and how they will carry a curse with them ever after, and all will shun them. With horror they recall the details of the scene:

*Ores.* Didst thou see her when she drew {1338}  
Her vests aside, and bared her breasts, and bow'd  
To earth her body whence I drew my birth,  
Whilst in her locks my furious hand I wreath'd?

*Elec.* With anguish'd mind, I know, thou didst proceed,  
When heard thy wailing mother's piteous cries.

*Ores.* These words, whilst with her hands she strok'd my cheeks,  
Burst forth, "Thy pity I implore, my son;"  
Soothing she spoke, as on my cheeks she hung,  
That bloodless from my hand the sword might fall.

*Chor.* Wretched Electra, how could'st thou sustain  
A sight like this? How bear thy mother's death,  
Seeing her thus before thine eyes expire?

*Ores.* Holding my robe before mine eyes, I rais'd  
The sword and plung'd it in my mother's breast.

*Elec.* I urged thee to it, I too touch'd the sword.

*Chor.* Of deeds most dreadful this which thou hast done.  
Cover thy mother's body; in her robes  
Decent compose her wounded limbs.—Thou gav'st  
Being to those who were to murder thee.

### DIVINE INTERVENTION

*Suddenly over the Permanent Scene two Supernatural Beings appear and move along, recognized by the Chorus as Castor and Pollux, the Family Deities.* {1364}

Hear, son of Agamemnon: for to thee  
Thy mother's brothers, twin-born sons of Jove  
Castor, and this my brother Pollux, speak.  
Late, having calmed the ocean waves, that swell'd  
The lab'ring vessel menacing, we came  
To Argos, where our sister we beheld,  
Thy mother, slain: with justice vengeance falls  
On her; in thee unholy is the deed.  
Yet Phoebus, Phoebus—but, my king is he;  
I will be silent: yet, though wise, he gave  
To thee response not wise; but I must praise  
Perforce these things. Thou now must do what Fate  
And Jove decree.

Electra is to marry Pylades, and Orestes to flee to Athens and be purified by the Court on the Hill of Mars: Apollo assisting. Orestes' future life is foretold [thus working out various details of the Orestes legends].—With awe Orestes, Electra, and Chorus enter into converse with the gods, and the word is confirmed. They failed to avert the trouble from their house on account of dire Fate and 'the voice

unwise of Phoebus from his shrine.' There has been a Demon hostile to Electra's parents.—Then the brother and sister's thoughts turn to the life-long separation, and the painful wandering, sorrows e'en to the gods mournful to hear. Farewell to Argos: the Gods hurry Orestes away for the Furies are already on his track, and conclude:

To the impious thro' the ethereal tract  
We no assistance bring: but those to whom  
Justice and sanctity of life is dear,  
We from their dangerous toils relieve and save.  
Let no one then unjustly will to act,  
Nor in one vessel with the perjured sail:  
A god to mortals this monition gives.

*Chor.* Oh, be you blest! And those, to whom is given  
Calmly the course of mortal life to pass,  
By no affliction sunk, pronounce we blest.

[1] The quotations of Euripides are from Potter's translation.

## THE ALCESTIS OF EURIPIDES[1]

### MEMORANDUM

*Of the Story as it would be traditionally familiar to the Audience before-hand.—Admetus was the splendid King of Pherae, so famous for the sacred rites of Hospitality that he had Sons of the Gods for Guests, and the God of Brightness, Apollo, himself while he sojourned on earth chose Admetus's household to dwell in. In the full tide of his greatness the time came for him to die: Apollo interposed for his chief votary, and won from the Fates that he might die by substitute. But none was found willing to be the victim, not even his aged parents: at last Alcestis his wife, young and bright as himself, gave herself for her husband and died. Then another Guest-Friend of Admetus came to the rescue, Jupiter's own son Hercules, and by main force wrested Alcestis from the grasp of Death, and restored her to her husband.*

### PROLOGUE

*Scene: Pherae in Thessaly. The early morning sunshine blazes full on the Royal Palace of the Glorious Admetus, and on the statues, conspicuous in front of it, of Jupiter Lord of Host and Guest, and Apollo: nevertheless the Courtyard is silent and deserted.—At last Apollo himself is seen, not aloft in the air as Gods were wont to appear, but on the threshold of the Central Gate.*

APOLLO meditates on his happy associations with the house he is quitting. How when there was trouble in heaven, and he himself, for resisting Jove's vengeance on the Healer Aesculapius, was doomed to a year's slavery amongst mortal men, he had bound himself as herdsman to Admetus, and Admetus exercised his lordship with all reverence:

A holy master o'er his holy slave. {13}

How again when trouble came to Admetus he had saved him from the day of death, on condition that another would die in his stead.

His friends, his father, e'en the aged dame {19}  
That gave him birth were asked in vain: not one  
Was found, his wife except.

The dreadful day has come, and Alcestis is at this moment breathing her last in the arms of her husband: and he himself must leave his loved friend, for Deity may not abide in the neighborhood of death's pollution. {27}

*Suddenly, the hideous Phantom of Death becomes visible, ascending the Steps of the Dead [from below the Orchestra on to the Stage]: his pace never flags, yet he cowers, like all things of darkness, before the Bow of Apollo.*

*Death* reproaches *Apollo* with haunting the dwellings of mortals, and with seeking by that Bow of his to defraud the Infernal Powers of their due. *Apollo* defends himself: he is but visiting friends he loves: he has no thought of using force. But would he could persuade *Death* to choose his victims according to the law of nature, and slay ripe lingering age instead of youth!

*Death*. Greater my glory when the youthful die! {58}

*Apollo* appeals to self-interest: more sumptuous obsequies await the aged dead.—That, answers *Death*, were to make laws in favor of the rich.—*Apollo* condescends to ask mercy for his friend as a favor; but favors, *Death* sneers, are not in keeping with his manners; and taunts *Apollo* with his helplessness to resist fate. The taunt rouses *Apollo* to a flash of prophecy (which is one of his attributes), giving (as the Greek stage loved to do) a glimpse into the end of the story.

*Apollo*. Yet, ruthless as thou art, soon wilt thou cease {67}  
This contest; such a man to Pherae's house  
Comes. . . . He, in this house  
A welcome guest to Admetus, will by force  
Take his wife from thee; and no thanks from me  
Will be thy due; yet what I now entreat  
Then thou wilt yield, and I shall hate thee still.

*Apollo* moves away and disappears in the distance [*by Left Side-door*], while *Death*, hurling defiance after him, waves his fatal sword and crosses the threshold. {81}

#### PARODE, OR CHORUS-ENTRY

*Enter the Orchestra [by the Right Archway, as from the neighborhood] the Chorus: Old Men of Pherae, come to enquire how it is with the Queen on the morning of this appointed day of her death. As usual in such Chorus-Entries their chanting is accompanied with music and gesture-dance to a rhythm traditionally associated with marching. But by a very unusual effect they enter in disordered ranks, moving in two loosely-formed bodies towards the Central Altar.* {82}

*1st Semichorus*. What a silence encloses the Palace!

What a hush in the house of Admetus!

*2nd Semichorus*. Not a soul is at hand of the household

To answer our friendly enquiry—

Is it over, all over but weeping?

Or sees she the light awhile longer,

Our Queen, brightest pattern of women

The wide world through,

Most devoted of wives, our Alcestis?

*Arriving at the Altar they fall for a time into compact order, and exchange their marching rhythm for the elaborate Choral ritual, the evolutions taking them to the Right of the Orchestra.* {89}

#### *Strophe*

*Full Chorus*. Listen for the heavy groan,

Smitten breast and piercing moan,

Ringling out that life is gone.

The house forgets its royal state,

And not a slave attends the gate.

Our sea of woe runs high:—ah, mid the waves

Appear, Great Healer, *Apollo*!

*They break again into loose order and marching rhythm, remaining on the Right of the Orchestra.*

*1st Semi*. Were she dead, could they keep such a silence? {94}

*2nd Semi*. May it be—she is gone from the Palace?

*1st Semi*. Never!

*2nd Semi*. Nay, why so confident answer?

*1st Semi*. To so precious a corpse could Admetus

Give burial bare of its honours?

*They reunite in Choral order and work back to the Altar.*

#### *Antistrophe*



*Full Chorus.* Lo, no bath the porch below, {99}  
Nor the cleansing fountain's flow,  
Gloomy rite for house of woe.  
The threshold lacks its locks of hair,  
Clipp'd for the dead in death's despair.  
Who hears the wailing voice and thud of hands,  
The seemly woe of the maidens?

*At the Altar they again break up and fall into marching rhythm.*

*2nd Semi.* Yet to-day is the dread day appointed— {105}

*1st Semi.* Speak not the word!

*2nd Semi.* The day she must pass into Hades—

*1st Semi.* I am cut to the heart!

I am cut to the soul!

*2nd Semi.* When the righteous endure tribulation,

Avails nought long-tried love

Nought is left to the friendly—but mourning!

*Accordingly they address themselves to a Full Choral Ode, the evolutions carrying them to the extreme Left of the Orchestra in the Strophe, and in the Antistrophe back to the Altar.*

#### CHORAL INTERLUDE I

##### *Strophe*

In vain—our pious vows are vain— {111}  
Make we the flying sail our care,  
The light bark bounding o'er the main;  
To what new realm shall we repair?  
To Lycia's hallow'd strand?  
Or where in solitary state,  
Mid thirsty deserts wild and wide  
That close him round on every side,  
Prophetic Ammon holds his awful seat?  
What charm, what potent hand  
Shall save her from the realms beneath?  
He comes, the ruthless tyrant Death:  
I have no priest, no altar more,  
Whose aid I may implore!

##### *Antistrophe*

O that the Son of Phoebus now {121}  
Lived to behold th' ethereal light!  
Then might she leave the seats below,  
Where Pluto reigns in cheerless night!  
The Sage's potent art,  
Till thund'ring Jove's avenging pow'r  
Hurl'd his red Thunders at his breast,  
Could, from the yawning gulf releast,  
To the sweet light of life the dead restore.  
Who now shall aid impart?  
To ev'ry god, at ev'ry shrine,  
The king hath paid the rites divine:  
But vain his vows, his pious care;  
And ours is dark despair!

#### EPISODE I

*At last they have been heard, and one of the Queen's Women comes weeping from the Palace [by one of the Inferior Doors]: the Chorus fall into their Episode position, in two ranks, between the Altar and the Stage, taking part by their Foreman in the dialogue.*

The Chorus eagerly enquire whether Alcestis yet lives. {138}

*Attend.* As living may I speak of her, and dead. *Cho.* Living and dead at once, how may that be?

*Attend.* E'en now she sinks in death and breathes her last.

They join in extolling her heroic devotion, and the Attendant tells of her bearing on this day of Death, which she celebrates as if a day of religious festival.

When she knew {160}  
The destin'd day was come, in fountain water  
She bath'd her lily-tinctured limbs, then took  
From her rich chests, of odorous cedar form'd,  
A splendid robe, and her most radiant dress;  
Thus gorgeously array'd she stood before  
The hallow'd flames, and thus address'd her pray'r:  
"O Queen, I go to the infernal shades!  
Yet, e'er I go, with reverence let me breathe  
My last request: Protect my orphan children,  
Make my son happy with the wife he loves, {170}  
And wed my daughter to a noble husband:  
Nor let them, like their mother, to the tomb  
Untimely sink, but in their native land  
Be blest through length'ned life to honour'd age."  
Then to each altar in the royal house  
She went, and crown'd it, and address'd her vows,  
Plucking the myrtle bough; nor tear, nor sigh  
Came from her, neither did the approaching ill  
Change the fresh beauties of her vermeil cheek.  
Her chamber then she visits, and her bed; {180}  
There her tears flow'd, and thus she spoke: "O bed  
To which my wedded lord, for whom I die,  
Led me a virgin bride, farewell; to thee  
No blame do I impute, for me alone  
Hast thou destroy'd; disdain to betray  
Thee and my lord, I die: to thee shall come  
Some other woman, not more chaste, perchance  
More happy"—as she lay, she kissed the couch,  
And bath'd it with a flood of tears; that pass'd,  
She left her chamber, then return'd, and oft {190}  
She left it, oft return'd, and on the couch  
Fondly, each time she enter'd, cast herself.  
Her children, as they hung upon her robes,  
Weeping, she rais'd, and clasp'd them to her breast  
Each after each, as now about to die.  
Each servant through the house burst into tears  
In pity of their mistress; she to each  
Stetch'd her right hand; nor was there one so mean  
To whom she spoke not, and admitted him  
To speak to her again. Within the house {200}  
So stands it with Admetus. Had he died,  
His woes were over: now he lives to bear  
A weight of pain no moment shall forget.

Alcestis is wasting away, and fading with swift disease, while her distracted husband holds her in his arms, entreating impossibilities. And now they are about to bring her out, for the dying Alcestis has a longing for one more sight of heaven and the radiant morning. The Chorus are plunged in despair: how will their king bear to live after the loss of such a wife!

The lamentations rise higher still *as the Central Gates open and the couch of Alcestis is borne out, Admetus holding her in his arms, and, her children clinging about her; the Stage fills with weeping friends and attendants. The whole dialogue falls into lyrical measures with strophic alternations just perceptible.* Alcestis commences to address the sunshine and fair scenery she has come out to view—when the scene changes to her dying eyes, and she can see nothing but the gloomy river the dead have to cross, with the boatman ready waiting, and the long dreary journey beyond. Dark night is creeping over her eyes, when Admetus, as he ever mingles his passionate prayers with her wanderings, conjures her for her children's sake as well as his own not to forsake them. A thought for her children's future rouses the mother from her stupor, and she rallies for a solemn last appeal [*the measure changing to blank verse to mark the change of tone*]. She begins to recite the sacrifice she is making for her lord:

I die for thee, though free {284}  
Not to have died, but from Thessalia's chiefs  
Preferring whom I pleas'd, in royal state  
To have lived happy here—I had no will  
To live bereft of thee with these poor orphans—  
I die without reluctance, though the gifts  
Of youth are mine to make life grateful to me. {290}  
Yet he that gave thee birth, and she that bore thee,  
Deserted thee, though well it had beseem'd them  
With honour to have died for thee, t' have saved  
Their son with honour, glorious in their death.  
They had no child but thee, they had no hope  
Of other offspring, should'st thou die; and I  
Might thus have lived, thou mightst have lived till age  
Crept slowly on, nor wouldst thou heave the sigh  
Thus of thy wife deprived, nor train alone  
Thy orphan children:—but some God appointed {300}  
It should be thus: thus be it.

All this is the basis for a requital she demands of her husband: that he shall let her children be lords in their own house, and not set over them the cruel guardianship of a step-mother.

My son that holds endearing converse with thee {315}  
Hath in his father a secure protection;  
But who, my daughter, shall with honour guide  
Thy virgin years? What woman shalt thou find  
New-wedded to thy father, whose vile arts  
Will not with slanderous falsehoods taint thy name,  
And blast thy nuptials in youth's freshest bloom?  
For never shall thy mother see thee led  
A bride, nor at thy throes speak comfort to thee,  
Then present when a mother's tenderness  
Is most alive: for I must die! {325}

The *Chorus* pledge their faith that the king will honour such a request as long as reason lasts. *Admetus* addresses a solemn vow to his dying wife, that her will shall be done:

Living thou wast mine, {334}  
And dead thou only shalt be called my wife.

It will be only too easy to keep such a pledge as that, for life henceforth will be one long mourning to him.

Hence I renounce  
The feast, the cheerful guest, the flow'ry wreath, {350}  
And song that used to echo through my house:  
For never will I touch the lyre again,  
Nor to the Libyan flute's sweet measures raise  
My voice: with thee all my delights are dead.  
Thy beauteous figure, by the artist's hand  
Skillfully wrought, shall in my bed be laid;  
By that reclining, I will clasp it to me,  
And call it by thy name, and think I hold  
My dear wife in my arms, and have her yet,  
Though now no more I have her: cold delight {360}  
I ween, yet thus th' affliction of my soul  
I shall relieve, and visiting my dreams  
Shalt thou delight me.

O for the power of Orpheus's lyre, that might rescue thee even from the realms of the dead!

But there await me till I die; prepare {374}  
A mansion for me, as again with me  
To dwell; for in thy tomb I will be laid,  
In the same cedar, by thy side composed:  
For e'en in death I will not be disjoin'd  
From thee who hast alone been faithful to me!

As the Chorus join in Admetus's sorrow the pledge is reiterated, and the dying mother is satisfied.

*Alc.* Thus pledging, from my hands receive thy children. {386}

*Adm.* A much-loved gift, and from a much-loved hand!

The strength Alcestis had summoned for her last effort now forsakes her: she sinks rapidly.

*Alc.* A heavy weight hangs on my darkened eye. {396} *Adm.* If thou forsake me I am lost indeed!

*Alc.* As one that is no more I now am nothing. *Adm.* Ah, raise thy face! forsake not thus thy children! *Alc.* It must be so perforce: farewell, my children. *Adm.* Look on them, but a look. *Alc.* I am no more. *Adm.* How dost thou? Wilt thou leave us so? *Alc.* Farewell. *Adm.* And what a wretch, what a lost wretch am I! *Cho.* She's gone! Thy wife, Admetus, is no more!

The little Son flings himself passionately on the corpse [*the metre breaking out into strophic alternations.*]

### *Strophe*

*Son.* O my unhappy fate! {405}

My mother sinks to the dark realms of night,  
Nor longer views this golden light;  
But to the ills of life exposed  
Leaves my poor orphan state!  
Her eyes, my father, see, her eyes are closed,  
And her hand nerveless falls.  
Yet hear me, O my mother, hear my cries!  
It is thy son who calls,  
Who prostrate on the earth breathes on thy lips his sighs.

*Adm.* On one that hears not, sees not! I and you  
Must bend beneath affliction's heaviest load.

### *Antistrophe*

*Son.* Ah! she hath left my youth— {417}

My mother, my loved mother is no more—  
Left me my sufferings to deplore,  
Left me a heritage of woe:  
Who shall my sorrows soothe?  
Thou too, my sister, thy full share shalt know  
Of grief, thy heart to rend.  
Vain, O my father, vain thy nuptial vows,  
Brought to this speedy end:  
For when my mother died in ruin sank our house! {425}

The Chorus [*in calm blank verse*] call on their king to command himself and bear what many have had to bear before.—*Admetus* knows he must: this calamity has not come without notice. He rouses himself to give orders as to the preparations for burial: the mourning rites shall last a whole year, and shall extend throughout the whole region of Thessaly: the very horses shall have their waving manes cut close, and no sound of flute or instrument of joy shall be heard in the city. {445}

*The corpse is slowly carried out, and at last the Stage is vacant. Then the Chorus address themselves to a Choral Ode in memory of the Spirit now passed beneath the earth: the evolutions as usual, carrying them with each Strophe to one end of the Orchestra, and with the Antistrophe back to the Altar.*

## CHORAL INTERLUDE II

### *Strophe I*

Immortal bliss be thine, {446}  
Daughter of Pelias, in the realms below,  
Immortal pleasures round thee flow,  
Though never there the sun's bright beams shall shine.  
Be the black-brow'd Pluto told,  
And the Stygian boatman old,  
Whose rude hands grasp the oar, the rudder guide,  
The dead conveying o'er the tide,—

Let him be told, so rich a freight before  
His light skiff never bore;  
Tell him that o'er the joyless lakes  
The noblest of her sex her dreary passage takes.

*Antistrophe I*

Thy praise the bards shall tell,  
When to their hymning voice the echo rings,  
Or when they sweep the solemn strings,  
And wake to rapture the seven-chorded shell:  
Or in Sparta's jocund bow'rs,  
Circling when the vernal hours  
Bring the Carnean Feast, whilst through the night  
Full-orb'd the high moon rolls her light;  
Or where rich Athens, proudly elevate,  
Shows her magnificent state:  
Their voice thy glorious death shall raise,  
And swell th' enraptured strain to celebrate thy praise.

*Strophe II*

O that I had the pow'r,  
Could I but bring thee from the shades of night,  
Again to view this golden light,  
To leave that boat, to leave that dreary shore,  
Where Cocytus, deep and wide,  
Rolls along his sullen tide!  
For thou, O best of women, thou alone  
For thy lord's life daredst give thy own.  
Light lie the earth upon thy gentle breast,  
And be thou ever blest!  
While, should he choose to wed again,  
Mine and his children's hearts would hold him in disdain.

*Antistrophe II*

When, to avert his doom,  
His mother in the earth refused to lie;  
Nor would his ancient father die  
To save his son from an untimely tomb;  
Though the hand of time had spread  
Hoar hairs o'er each aged head:  
In youth's fresh bloom, in beauty's radiant glow,  
The darksome way thou daredst to go,  
And for thy youthful lord's to give thy life.  
Be ours so true a wife!  
Though rare the lot, then should we prove  
Th' indissoluble bond of faithfulness and love.

**EPISODE II**

*Enter on the Stage through the distance-entrance [Left Side-door] the colossal figure of Hercules. Here is the turning-point of the play: which has the peculiarity of combining an element of the Satyric Drama (or Burlesque) with Tragedy, the combination anticipating the 'Action-Drama' (or 'Tragi-Comedy') of modern times. Accordingly the costume and mask of Hercules are compounded, of his conventional appearance in Tragedy, in which he is conceived as the perfection of physical strength toiling and suffering for mankind, and his conventional appearance in Satyric plays as the gigantic feeder, etc. The two are harmonized in the conception of conscious energy rejoicing in itself, and plunging with equal eagerness into duty and relaxation, while each lasts.*

*Hercules* hails the Chorus and enquires for Admetus. They reply that he is within the Palace, and [shrinking, like all Greeks, from being the first to tell evil tidings] turn the conversation by enquiring what brings the Demi-god to Pherae—in *stichomuthic dialogue* it is brought out that Hercules is on his way to one of his 'Labors'—that of the Thracian Steeds; and (so lightly does the thought of toil sit on him) it appears he has not troubled to enquire what the task meant: from the Chorus he learns for the

first time the many dangers before him, and how the Steeds are devourers of human flesh.

*Herc.* A toil you tell of that well fits my fate, {517} My life of hardship, ever struggling upward.

Admetus now appears, in mourning garb: after first salutations between the two friends, Hercules enquires what his trouble is, which gives scope for a favorite effect in Greek Drama—'dissimulation.'

*Herc.* Why are thy locks in sign of mourning shorn? {530} *Adm.* 'Tis for one dead, whom I to-day must bury. *Herc.* The Gods avert thy mourning for a child! *Adm.* My children, what I had, live in my house. *Herc.* Thy aged father, haply he is gone. *Adm.* My father lives, and she that bore me lives. *Herc.* Lies then thy wife Alcestis amongst the dead? *Adm.* Of her I have in double wise to speak. *Herc.* As of the living speakst thou, or the dead? *Adm.* She is, and is no more: this grief afflicts me. *Herc.* This gives no information: dark thy words. {540} *Adm.* Knowst thou not then the destiny assign'd her? *Herc.* I know that she submits to die for thee. *Adm.* To this assenting is she not no more? *Herc.* Lament her not too soon: await the time. *Adm.* She's dead: one soon to die is now no more. *Herc.* It differs wide to be, and not to be. *Adm.* Such are thy sentiments, far other mine. *Herc.* But wherefore are thy tears? What man is dead? *Adm.* A woman: of a woman I made mention. *Herc.* Of foreign birth, or one allied to thee? {550} *Adm.* Of foreign birth, but to my home most dear.

Hercules is moving away for the purpose of seeking hospitality elsewhere: Admetus will not hear of it, and, when Hercules loudly protests, puts aside his opposition with the air of one whose authority in matters of hospitable rites is not to be disputed. He orders attendants to conduct Hercules to a distant quarter of the Palace, to spread a sumptuous feast, and bar fast the doors, lest the voice of woe should affect the feasting guest. When Hercules is gone the *Chorus* are staggered by such a mastery of personal grief as this implies. But *Admetus* asks how could he let a guest depart from his house?

My affliction would not thus {575}  
Be less, but more unhostitable I.

But why, the *Chorus* ask, conceal the truth?—His friend, answers *Admetus*, would never have entered, had he known. Some may blame him, he continues, but his house simply knows not how to do dishonor to a guest.—Admetus returns into the Palace, to his funeral preparations: the *Chorus* are moved to enthusiasm by this forgetfulness of self in hospitable devotion; their enthusiasm breaks out in an Ode celebrating the glories of their king's hospitality in the past, and ending in a gleam of hope that it may yet do something for him in the future. {588}

### CHORAL INTERLUDE III

*Evolutions, etc., as usual.*

#### *Strophe I*

O liberal house! with princely state {589}  
To many a stranger, many a guest,  
Oft hast thou oped thy friendly gate,  
Oft spread the hospitable feast.  
Beneath thy roof Apollo deign'd to dwell,  
Here strung his silver-sounding shell,  
And, mixing with thy menial train,  
Deigned to be called the shepherd of the plain:  
And as he drove his flocks along,  
Whether the winding vale they rove,  
Or linger in the upland grove,  
He tuned the pastoral pipe, or rural song.

#### *Antistrophe I*

Delighted with his tuneful lay, {601}  
No more the savage thirsts for blood;  
Amidst the flocks, in harmless play,  
Wantons the lynx's spotted brood;  
Pleas'd from his lair on Othrys' rugged brow  
The lion seeks the vale below:  
Whilst to the lyre's melodious sound  
The dappled hinds in sportive measures bound;  
And as the vocal echo rings,

Lightly their nimble feet they ply,  
Leaving their pine-clad forests high,  
Charm'd by the sweet notes of his gladdening strings.

*Strophe II*

Hence is thy house, Admetus, graced  
With all that plenty's hand bestows;  
Near the sweet-streaming current placed,  
That from the lake of Boebia flows;  
Far towards the shades of night thy wide domain,  
Rich-pastured mead and cultured plain,  
Extends, to those Molossian meads  
Where the sun stations his unharnessed steeds;  
And stretching towards his eastern ray,  
Where Pelion, rising in his pride,  
Frowns o'er th' Aegean's portless tide:  
Reaches from sea to sea thy ample sway.

*Antistrophe II*

And thou wilt ope thy gate e'en now, {625}  
E'en now wilt thou receive this guest;  
Though from thine eye the warm tear flow,  
Though sorrow rend thy suffering breast,  
Sad tribute to thy wife, who, new in death,  
Lamented lies thy roof beneath!  
Nature in truth has thus decreed:  
The pure soul must bear fruit of reverent deed.  
Lo, all the pow'r of wisdom lies  
Fix'd in the righteous bosom: hence  
Rests in my soul this confidence—  
The good shall yet safe from their trials rise. {636}

**EPISODE III**

*The Central Gates open and the Funeral Procession slowly files out and begins to fill the Stage. Admetus beside the bier of Alcestis is calling on the Chorus (as representing the citizens of Pherae) to join in the invocations to the dead—when suddenly another Procession appears on the Stage [entering by the Right Side-door, as from the immediate neighborhood]: it is headed by the father and mother of Admetus, both of whom have reached the furthest verge of old age, and who with difficulty totter along, while attendants follow them bearing sumptuous drapery and other funeral gifts. The scene settles down into the 'Forensic Contest,' a fixed feature of every Greek Tragedy, in which the 'case' of the hero and the opposition to it are brought out with all the formality of a judicial process, the long rheses representing advocates' speeches, the stichomuthic dialogue suggesting cross-examination, and the Chorus interposing as moderators.*

*Pheres* in the tone of conventional consolation speaks of the virtues of the dead, and the special virtue of Alcestis's sacrifice, which has saved her husband's life, and himself from a childless old age; it is meet then that he should do honor to the corpse. *Attendants of Admetus advance to receive the presents: Admetus waves them back and stands coldly confronting his father. At last he speaks.* His father is an uninvited guest at this funeral feast, and unwelcome: the dead shall never be arrayed in his gifts. Then was the time for his father to show kindness when a life was demanded: and yet he could stand aloof and let a younger die! He will never believe himself the son of so mean and abject a soul.

At such an age, just trembling on the verge {677}  
Of life, thou would'st not, nay, thou dared'st not die  
For thine own son; but thou couldst suffer *her*,  
Though sprung from foreign blood: with justice then  
Her only as my father must I deem,  
Her only as my mother. Yet this course  
Mightst thou have run with glory, for thy son  
Daring to die; brief was the space of life  
That could remain to thee: I then had lived  
My destin'd time, she too had lived.

Yet Pheres had already had his share of all that makes life happy: a youth amid royal luxury, a prosperous reign, a son to inherit his state and who ever did him honor. But let him beget him new sons to cherish his age and attend him in death: Admetus's hand shall never do such offices for him. And this is all that comes of old age's longing for death: let death show itself, and the old complaints of life are all silenced!

*Cho.* Forbear! Enough the present weight of woe: {710} My son, exasperate not a father's mind.

To this long rhesis *Pheres* answers in a set speech of similar length. Is he a slave to be so rated by his own son? And for what? He has given his son birth and nurture, he has already handed over to him a kingdom and will bequeath him yet more wide lands; all that fathers owe to sons he gives. What new obligation is this for Greece to submit to, that a father should die for his son?

It is a joy to thee {730}  
To view the light of heaven, and dost thou think  
Thy father joys not in it? Long I deem  
Our time in death's dark regions: short the space  
Of life, yet sweet! So thought thy coward heart  
And struggled not to die: and thou dost live,  
Passing the bounds of life assign'd by fate,  
By killing *her*! My mean and abject spirit  
Dost thou rebuke, O timidest of all,  
Vanquish'd e'en by a woman, her who gave  
For thee, her young fair husband, her own life! {740}  
A fine device that thou mightst never die,  
Couldst thou persuade—who at the time might be  
Thy wife—to die for thee!

If such a man takes to heaping reproaches on his own kin he shall at least hear the truth told him to his face!

*Cho.* Too much of ill already hath been spoken: {750}  
Forbear, old man, nor thus revile thy son.

*Admetus* says if his father does not like to hear the truth he should not have done the wrong.

*Pher.* Had I died for thee, greater were the wrong.  
*Adm.* Is death alike then to the young and old?  
*Pher.* Man's due is one life, not to borrow more.  
*Adm.* Thine drag thou on and out-tire heaven's age!  
*Pher.* Darest thou to curse thy parents, nothing wrong'd?  
*Adm.* Parents in dotage lusting still to live! {760}  
*Pher.* And thou—what else but life with this corpse buyest?  
*Adm.* This corpse—the symbol of thy infamy!  
*Pher.* For us she died not; that thou canst not say!  
*Adm.* Ah! mayst thou some time come to need my aid!  
*Pher.* Wed many wives that more may die for thee!  
*Adm.* On thee rests this reproach—thou daredst not die!  
*Pher.* Sweet is this light of heav'n! sweet is this light!  
*Adm.* Base is thy thought, unworthy of a man!  
*Pher.* The triumph is not thine to entomb my age.  
*Adm.* Die when thou wilt, inglorious wilt thou die. {770}  
*Pher.* Thy ill report will not affect me dead.  
*Adm.* Alas, that age should outlive sense of shame!  
*Pher.* But lack of age's wisdom slew *her* youth.  
*Adm.* Begone, and suffer me to entomb my dead.  
*Pher.* I go: no fitter burier than thyself  
Her murderer! Look for reckoning from her friends:  
Acastus is no man, if his hand fails  
Dearly to avenge on thee his sister's blood.  
*Adm.* Why, get you gone, thou and thy worthy wife:  
Grow old in consort—that is now your lot—  
The childless parents of a living son:  
For never more under one common roof  
Come you and I together: had it needed,  
By herald I your hearth would have renounced.



*Pheres and his train withdraw along the Stage [to the Right Side-door]. The interrupted Funeral Procession is continued, filing amidst lamentations of the Chorus, down the steps from the Stage into the Orchestra: there the Chorus join it and the whole passes out [by the Right Archway] to the royal sepulchre in the neighbourhood.*

*Stage and Orchestra both vacant for a while.*

## STAGE EPISODE[2]

*Enter the Stage [by one of the Inferior Doors of the Palace] the Steward of Admetus: he has stolen away to get a moment's respite from the hateful hilarity of this strange visitor—some ruffian or robber he supposes—on whom his office has condemned him to wait, and thereby to miss paying the last offices to a mistress who has been more like a mother to him. The guest has been willing to enter, and though he saw the mourning of the household, he did not allow it to make any difference to his mirth:*

Grasping in his hands {804}  
A goblet wreath'd with ivy, fill'd it high  
With the grape's purple juice, and quaff'd it off  
Untemper'd, till the glowing wine inflamed him;  
Then binding round his head a myrtle wreath,  
Howls dismal discord:—two unpleasing strains  
We heard, his harsh notes who in nought revered  
Th' afflictions of Admetus, and the voice  
Of sorrow through the family that wept  
Our mistress. Yet our tearful eyes we showed not,  
Admetus so commanded, to the guest. {814}

He starts as he feels on his shoulder the huge hand of *Hercules*, who has followed him, and *now appears on the Stage goblet in hand, wreathed and attired like a reveller in full revel*. Hercules good-humouredly scolds him for letting a remote family bereavement hinder him from showing a sociable countenance to his lord's guest. He lectures him on the easy ethics of the banquet-hour:

Come hither, that thou mayst be wiser, friend: {832}  
Knowst thou the nature of all mortal things?  
Not thou, I ween: how shouldst thou? hear from me.  
By all of human race death is a debt  
That must be paid; and none of mortal men  
Knows whether till to-morrow life's short space  
Shall be extended: such the dark events  
Of fortune, never to be learn'd or traced  
By any skill. Instructed thus by me {840}  
Bid pleasure welcome, drink; the life allow'd  
From day to day esteem thine own; all else  
Fortune's.

The Steward receives his lecture with a bad grace: he knows all that—but there is a time for all things. His manner raises Hercules' suspicions that Admetus has been keeping something back:

*Herc.* Is it some sorrow which he told not me? {866} *Stew.* Go thou with joy: ours are our lord's afflictions. *Herc.* These are not words that speak a foreign loss. *Stew.* If such, thy revelry had not displeas'd me.

The secret is not long kept against the questioning of Hercules. When the truth comes out Hercules drops the goblet: he might have known all from so grief-worn a face! All the lightness of the reveller disappears, and the godlike bearing returns to Hercules' figure as he catches the full dignity of his friend's hospitable feat: he is fired to essay a rival deed of nobility.

Now, my firm heart, and thou, my daring soul, {894}  
Show what a son the daughter of Electryon,  
Alcmena of Tirynthia, bore to Jove!  
This lady, new in death, behoves me save,  
And, to Admetus rendering grateful service,  
Restore his lost Alcestis to his house.  
This sable-vested tyrant of the dead  
Mine eye shall watch, not without hope to find him  
Drinking th' oblations nigh the tomb. If once  
Seen from my secret stand I rush upon him,

These arms shall grasp him till his panting sides  
Labour for breath; and who shall force him from me  
Till he gives back this woman? {906}

If he fails to find Death elsewhere he will descend to the dark world of spirits itself, rather than fail in making a fit return to his friend:

Whose hospitable heart {913}  
Receiv'd me in his house, nor made excuse  
Though pierc'd with such a grief; this he conceal'd  
Through generous thought, and reverence to his friend.  
Who in Thessalia bears a warmer love  
To strangers? Who, through all the realms of Greece?  
It never shall be said this noble man  
Received in me a base and worthless wretch!

*Exit [through the Stage Right Side-door] in the direction of the tomb.*

*Stage and Orchestra vacant for a while.*

#### EPISODE V

*Return of the Funeral Procession, headed by the Chorus who remain in the Orchestra; the rest file up the steps onto the stage, Admetus last. The Episode is technically a 'Dirge' between Admetus, whose speeches fall into the rhythm of a Funeral March, and the Chorus, who speak in Strophes and Antistrophes of more elaborate lyric rhythm, often interrupted by the wails of Admetus.*

*Admetus reaching the top of the Steps from the Orchestra stands face to face with the splendid facade of his Palace. Hateful entrance, hateful aspect of a widowed home! How find rest there, in the heavy woes to which he is now doomed? It is with the dead that rest is found: his heart is in their dark houses, where he has placed a loved hostage torn from him by fate! {931}*

*Chorus [in Strophe]. Nevertheless he must go forward; he must hide him in the deepest recesses of his Palace with his grief, the helpless groans that yet will nothing aid her whom he will never see more! {938}*

*Admetus* cries that that is the deepest wound of all! Would he had never wedded! To mourn single is pain endurable; to see children wasting with disease, to see death invading the nuptial bed—that is the pang unbearable! {950}

*Chorus [in Antistrophe]. Fate is resistless: shall sorrow then have no bounds? Other men have known what it is to lose a wife: and in one or other of innumerable forms misery has found out every son of mortality. {956}*

*Admetus* begins to speak of the life-long mourning for the lost—but the thought is too much for him; why did they hold him back when he would have cast himself into the gaping tomb, and gone the last journey with his love? {963}

*The Chorus [in Strophe] think of one they knew who lost a son in the flower of his age, an only son and well worthy of tears: yet he bore his lonely burden like a man, and—courage! his hair is white and he is nearing the end. {969}*

*Admetus moves a few steps forward and the Procession, advances towards the portal: but the contrast catches his thought between this and another procession towards the same threshold, when, amidst blazing torches of Pelian pine and bridal dances, he led his new wife by the hand, and shouts wished their union happy. Now wails for shouts, black for glistening raiment, and before him the solitary chamber! {983}*

*Chorus [in Antistrophe]. Trouble has come upon their master all at once, in the midst of prosperity, and on one unschooled in misfortune. But if the wife is gone the love is left. Many have had Admetus's loss: but his gain let him remember: a rescued life. {988}*

As if this jarred upon his mind, *Admetus* turns round and addresses the Chorus, his whole tone changed [*the dirge measures giving place to blank verse*].

*Adm.* My friends, I deem the fortune of my wife  
Happier than mine, though otherwise it seems. {990}  
For nevermore shall sorrow touch her breast,

And she with glory rests from various ills.  
 But I, who ought not live, my destined hour  
 O'erpassing, shall drag on a mournful life,  
 Late taught what sorrow is. How shall I bear  
 To enter here? To whom shall I address  
 My speech? Whose greeting renders my return  
 Delightful? Which way shall I turn? Within  
 In lonely sorrow shall I waste away,  
 As, widowed of my wife, I see my couch, {1000}  
 The seats deserted where she sat, the rooms  
 Wanting her elegance. Around my knees  
 My children hang, and weep their mother lost:  
 The household servants for their mistress sigh.  
 This is the scene of misery in my home:  
 Abroad the nuptials of Thessalia's youth  
 And the bright circles of assembled dames  
 Will but augment my grief: how shall I bear  
 To see the lov'd companions of my wife!  
 And if one hates me, he will say: Behold {1010}  
 The man who basely lives, who dared not die,  
 But giving, through the meanness of his soul,  
 His wife, avoided death—yet would be deem'd  
 A man: he hates his parents, yet himself  
 Had not the spirit to die. These ill reports  
 Cleave to me: why then wish for longer life,  
 On evil tongues thus fallen, and evil days!

*Admetus sinks down on the threshold and buries his face in his robe. The Chorus gather up the feeling of the situation in a full Choral Ode, celebrating the natural topics of consolation; the stern laws of Necessity, the fair memory of the dead.*

#### CHORAL INTERLUDE IV

##### *Strophe I*

My venturous foot delights {1018}  
 To tread the Muses' arduous heights;  
 Their hallow'd haunts I love t' explore,  
 And listen to their lore:  
 Yet never could my searching mind  
 Aught, like Necessity, resistless find.  
 No herb of sovereign pow'r to save,  
 Whose virtues Orpheus joy'd to trace,  
 And wrote them in the rolls of Thrace;  
 Nor all that Phoebus gave,  
 Instructing the Asclepian train,  
 When various ills the human frame assail,  
 To heal the wound, to soothe the pain,  
 'Gainst Her stern force avail.

##### *Antistrophe I*

Of all the Pow'rs Divine {1032}  
 Alone none dares t' approach Her shrine;  
 To Her no hallow'd image stands,  
 No altar She commands.  
 In vain the victim's blood would flow,  
 She never deigns to hear the suppliant's vow.  
 Never to me mayst Thou appear,  
 Dread Goddess, with severer mien  
 Than oft in life's past tranquil scene  
 Thou hast been known to wear.  
 By Thee Jove works his stern behest:  
 Thy force subdues e'en Scythia's stubborn steel;  
 Nor ever does Thy rugged breast  
 The touch of pity feel.

## *Strophe II*

And now, with ruin pleas'd, {1046}  
On thee, O King, her hands have seiz'd,  
And bound thee in her iron chain:  
Yet her fell force sustain.  
For from the gloomy realms of night  
No tears recall the dead to life's sweet light.  
No virtue, though to heav'n allied,  
Saves from the inevitable doom:  
Heroes and sons of gods have died,  
And sunk into the tomb.  
Dear, whilst our eyes her presence blest,  
Dear, in the gloomy mansions of the dead:  
Most generous she, the noblest, best,  
Who graced thy nuptial bed.

## *Antistrophe II*

Thy wife's sepulchral mound {1060}  
Deem not as common, worthless ground  
That swells their breathless bodies o'er  
Who die, and no are more.  
No, be it honor'd as a shrine;  
Raised high, and hallow'd to some Pow'r Divine:  
The traveller, as he passes by,  
Shall thither bend his devious way,  
With reverence gaze, and with a sigh,  
Smite on his breast, and say:  
"She died of old to save her lord;  
Now blest among the blest; Hail, Pow'r revered,  
To us thy wonted grace afford!"  
Such vows shall be preferred.

## **EXODUS, OR FINALE**

### *Re-enter Hercules, leading a veiled woman*

*Herc.* I would speak freely to my friend, Admetus, Nor what I blame keep secret in my breast. I came to thee amidst thy ills, and thought I had been worthy to be proved thy friend. Thou told'st me not the obsequies prepared {1080} Were for thy wife; but in thy house receiv'dst me As if thou griev'dst for one of foreign birth. I bound my head with garlands, to the gods Pouring libations in thy house with grief Oppress'd. I blame this: yes, in such a state I blame this: yet I come not in thine ills To give thee pain; why I return in brief Will I unfold. This woman from my hands Receive to thy protection, till return'd I bring the Thracian steeds, having there slain {1090} The proud Bistorian tyrant; should I fail— Be that mischance not mine, for much I wish Safe to revisit thee— yet should I fail, I give her to the safeguard of thy house. For with much toil she came unto my hands. To such as dare contend some public games, Which well deserv'd my toil, I find propos'd; I bring her thence, she is the prize of conquest: For slight assays each victor led away A courser; but for those of harder proof {1100} The conqueror was rewarded from the herd, And with some female graced; victorious there, A prize so noble it were base to slight. Take her to thy protection, not by stealth Obtain'd, but the reward of many toils: The time, perchance, may come when thou will thank me. *Adm.* Not that I slight thy friendship, or esteem thee Other than noble, wished I to conceal My wife's unhappy fate; but to my grief It had been added grief, if thou had'st sought Elsewhere the rites of hospitality; Suffice it that I mourn ills which are mine. This woman, if it may be, give in charge, I beg thee, king, to some Thessalian else, That hath not cause like me to grieve; in Pherae Thou may'st find many friends; call not my woes Fresh to my memory; never in my house Could I behold her, but my tears would flow: To sorrow add not sorrow; now enough I sink beneath its weight. Where should her youth With me be guarded? for her gorgeous vests Proclaim her young; if mixing with the men She dwell beneath my roof, how shall her fame, Conversing with the youths, be kept unsullied? It is not easy to restrain the warmth Of that intemperate age; my care for thee Warns me of this. Or if from them remov'd I hide her in th' apartments late my wife's, How to my bed admit her? I should fear A double blame: my citizens would scorn me As light and faithless to the kindest wife That died for me, if to her bed I took Another blooming bride; and to the dead Behoves me pay the highest reverence Due to her merit. And thou, lady, know, Whoe'er thou art, that form, that shape, that air Resembles my Alcestis! By the Gods, Remove her from my

sight! it is too much, I cannot bear it; when I look on her, Methinks I see my wife; this wounds my heart And calls the tears fresh gushing from my eyes. This is the bitterness of grief indeed! *Chor.* I cannot praise thy fortune; but behoves thee To bear with firmness what the gods assign. *Herc.* O that from Jove I had the pow'r to bring Back from the mansions of the dead thy wife To heav'n's fair light, that grace achieving for thee! *Adm.* I know thy friendly will; but how can this Be done? The dead return not to this light. *Herc.* Check then thy swelling griefs; with reason rule them. *Adm.* How easy to advise, but hard to bear! *Herc.* What should it profit should'st thou always groan? *Adm.* I know it; but I am in love with grief. *Herc.* Love to the dead calls forth the ceaseless tear. *Adm.* O, I am wretched more than words can speak. *Herc.* A good wife hast thou lost, who can gainsay it? *Adm.* Never can life be pleasant to me more. *Herc.* Thy sorrow now is new; time will abate it. *Adm.* Time say'st thou? Yes, the time that brings me death. *Herc.* Some young and lovely bride will bid it cease. *Adm.* No more: What say'st thou? Never could I think— *Herc.* Will thou still lead a lonely widow'd life? *Adm.* Never shall other women share my bed. *Herc.* And think'st thou this will aught avail the dead? *Adm.* This honor is her due, where'er she be. *Herc.* This hath my praise, though near allied to frenzy. *Adm.* Praise me or not, I ne'er will wed again. *Herc.* I praise thee that thou'rt faithful to thy wife. *Adm.* Though dead, if I betray her, may I die! *Herc.* Well, take this noble lady to thy house. {1170} *Adm.* No, by thy father Jove, let me entreat thee. *Herc.* Not to do this would be the greatest wrong. *Adm.* To do it would with anguish rend my heart. *Herc.* Let me prevail; this grace may find its meed. *Adm.* O that thou never had'st receiv'd this prize! *Herc.* Yet in my victory thou art victor with me. *Adm.* 'Tis nobly said: yet let this woman go. *Herc.* If she must go, she shall! but must she go? *Adm.* She must, if I incur not thy displeasure. *Herc.* There is a cause that prompts my earnestness. {1180} *Adm.* Thou hast prevailed, but much against my will. *Herc.* The time will come when thou wilt thank me for it. *Adm.* Well, if I must receive her, lead her in. *Herc.* Charge servants with her! No, that must not be. *Adm.* Lead her thyself, then, if thy will incline thee. *Herc.* No, to thy hand alone will I commit her. *Adm.* I touch her not; but she hath leave to enter. *Herc.* I shall entrust her only to thy hand. *Adm.* Thou dost constrain me, king, against my will. *Herc.* Venture to stretch thy hand, and touch the stranger's. {1190} *Adm.* I touch her, as I would the headless Gorgon. *Herc.* Hast thou her hand? *Adm.* I have. *Herc.* (*lifting the veil*) Then hold her safe. Hereafter thou wilt say the son of Jove Hath been a generous guest; view now her face, See if she bears resemblance to thy wife, And thus made happy bid farewell to grief. *Adm.* O, Gods, what shall I say? 'Tis marvelous, Exceeding hope. See I my wife indeed? Or doth some god distract me with false joy? *Herc.* In very deed dost thou behold thy wife. {1200} *Adm.* See that it be no phantom from beneath. *Herc.* Make not thy friend one that evokes the shades. *Adm.* And do I see my wife, whom I entomb'd? *Herc.* I marvel not that thou art diffident. *Adm.* I touch her; may I speak to her as living? *Herc.* Speak to her: thou hast all thy heart could wish. *Adm.* Dearest of women, do I see again That face, that person? This exceeds all hope; I never thought that I should see thee more. *Herc.* Thou hast her; may no God be envious of thee. {1210} *Adm.* O be thou blest, thou generous son of Jove! Thy father's might protect thee! Thou alone Hast rais'd her to me; from the realms below How hast thou brought her to the light of life? *Herc.* I fought with him that lords it o'er the shades. *Adm.* Where with the gloomy tyrant didst thou fight? *Herc.* I lay in wait and seized him at the tomb. *Adm.* But wherefore doth my wife thus speechless stand? *Herc.* It is not yet permitted<sup>[3]</sup> that thou hear Her voice addressing thee, till from the Gods {1220} That rule beneath she be unsanctified With hallow'd rites, and the third morn return. But lead her in; and as thou'rt just in all Besides, Admetus, see thou reverence strangers. Farewell: I go t' achieve the destined toil For the imperial son of Sthenelus. *Adm.* Abide with us, and share my friendly hearth. *Herc.* That time will come again; this demands speed. *Adm.* Success attend thee: safe may'st thou return. Now to my citizens I give in charge, {1230} And to each chief, that for this blest event They institute the dance; let the steer bleed, And the rich altars, as they pay their vows, Breathe incense to the gods; for now I rise To better life, and grateful own the blessing.

#### THE CHORUS, RETIRING:

Our fates the Gods in various shapes dispose: {1236}  
 Heaven sets the crown on many a hopeless cause:  
     That which is looked for  
     Fails in the issue.  
     To goals unexpected  
     Heav'n points out a passage.  
 And this is the end of the matter.

[1] The quotations are from Potter's Translation, in Routledge's Universal Library, freely altered in parts for the purpose of bringing out changes of metre, etc., in the original. The References are to the numbering of the lines in Potter.

[2] That is, a scene carried on upon the Stage without the presence of the Chorus in the Orchestra,—a very rare effect in Greek Drama.

[3] The fact was that the *Alcestis* was represented in place of a 'Satyric Drama,' which only allowed two (speaking) personages on the Stage at the same time.

## THE CYCLOPS OF EURIPIDES

### A SPECIMEN OF THE SATYRIC DRAMA

*Scene:* Sicily, in front of cave of the Cyclops, Polyphemus.

*Prologue* by Silenus, the rural demi-god, who recounts his faithful service to Bacchus, and yet the ungrateful god has let himself and his children fall into this slavery to the horrid Cyclops Polyphemus, where, worst of their many woes, they are debarred from the wine they worship.

*Parode:* The Chorus of Satyrs driving their goats and lamenting how different this from the merry service of Bacchus.

*Episode I.* Silenus hurries back with the news that a ship is approaching to water in the island: fresh victims for the monster. *Enter Ulysses and crew:* mutual explanations, all couched in 'burlesque' tone. The mariners have had no food except flesh, and gladly partake milk and fruits of the Satyrs, affording in return to Silenus the long-lost luxury of wine: the scene then going on to paint [with the utmost coarseness] the oncoming of drunkenness.

Suddenly *enter Polyphemus:* Ulysses and the crew hide. After some rough bandying between the Monster and the Chorus, the strangers are discovered: and Silenus, to save himself, turns traitor, and tells Polyphemus how they have beaten him because he would not let them steal, also what dire woes they were going to work upon Polyphemus. In spite of their protests Silenus is believed: Ulysses promises, if set free, to erect shrines in Greece for the Cyclops, besides dwelling upon the impiety of attacking innocent strangers: Polyphemus replies that he does not care for shrines, and as for impiety he is independent of Zeus; which gives occasion for a glorification of the life of nature. They are driven into the cave to be fed on at leisure.

*Choral Ode:* General disgust at the monster.

*Episode II.* Ulysses [*apparently standing at the mouth of the cave*] describes Polyphemus gorging—then details his plan of deliverance by aid of the wine.

*Choral Ode:* Lyric delight of Chorus at prospect of deliverance.

*Episode III.* The Cyclops appears sated with his banquet, and settling down to this new treat of drinking—the effects of on-coming intoxication are painted again in Polyphemus, with the usual coarseness—a farcical climax being reached when the monster begins to be affectionate to his cup-bearer, old Silenus, in memory of Zeus and his famous cup-bearer, Ganymede.

*Choral Ode:* Anticipation of Revenge.

*Exodus.* The plan of Revenge, the boring out of the Cyclops's one eye while overpowered with drink, is carried out—various farcical effects by the way, e.g., the Chorus drawing back with excuses and leaving Ulysses to do the deed at the critical moment. The Drama ends with the Monster's rage and vain attempts to catch the culprit, Ulysses putting him off with his feigned name 'No man': thus all are delivered.

## THE BACCHANALS OF EURIPIDES[1]

### PROLOGUE

*The permanent scene covered by movable scenery representing a wide landscape—the valley of the Dirce. A pile of buildings occupies the middle, to which the central entrance is an approach: these are the Cadmeia and royal palaces. That on the left is the palace of Pentheus, and further to the left is the mystic scene of Bacchus's birth—a heap of ruins, still miraculously smouldering, and covered by trailing vines. On the right is the palace of Cadmus, and the scene extends to take in the Electron gate of Thebes, and (on the right turn-scene) the slopes of Cithaeron.*

DIONYSUS enters, in mortal guise, through the distance archway, and (in formal prologue) opens the situation. He brings out the points of the landscape before him, dear as the site of his miraculous birth and the sad end of his mortal mother. Then he details the Asiatic realms through which he has made triumphant progress, Lydia, Phrygia, sun-seared Persia, Bactria; the wild, wintry Median land; Araby the Blest, and the cities by the sea; everywhere his orgies accepted and his godhead received. Now for the first time he has reached an Hellenic city: and here—where least it should have been—his divinity is questioned by his own mother's sisters who make the story of his birth a false rumor, devised to cover Semele's shame, and avenged by the lightning flash which destroyed her. To punish his unnatural kin he has infected all their womenkind with his sacred phrensy, and maddened out of their quiet life, they are now on the revel under the pale pines of the mountain, unseemly mingled with the sons of Thebes: so shall the recusant city learn her guilt, and make atonement to him and his mother. Pentheus, it seems, is the main foe of his godhead, who reigns as king over Thebes, the aged Cadmus having yielded the sovereignty in his lifetime to his sister's son: he repels Bacchus from the sacred libations, nor names him in prayer. So he and Thebes must learn a dread lesson, and then away to make revelation in other lands. As to force, if attempt is made to drive the Maenads from the mountains, Bacchus himself will mingle in the war, and for this he has assumed mortal shape.

He calls upon his 'Thyasus of women,' fellow-pilgrims from the lands beyond the sea, to beat their Phrygian drums in noisy ritual about the palace of Pentheus till all Thebes shall flock to hear; he goes to join his worshippers on Cithaeron. {70}

#### **PARODE, OR CHORUS-ENTRY**

*The Chorus enter the orchestra, Asiatic women in wild attire of Bacchic rites, especially the motley (dappled fawnskin) always associated with abandon: they move with wild gestures and dances associated with Asiatic rituals.*

The wild ode resumes the joyous dance that has made their whole way from Asia one long sacred revel—

Toilless toil and labour sweet.

Blest above all men he who hallows his life in such mystic rites, and, purified with holiest waters, goes dancing with the worshippers of Bacchus, and of thee, mighty Mother Cybele, shaking his thyrsus, and all his locks crowned with ivy. Bacchus's birth is sung, and how from the flashing lightning Jove snatched him and preserved in his thigh, until at the fated hour he gave him to light, horned and crowned with serpents. Wherefore should Thebes, sacred scene of the miracle, be one blossom of revellers, clad in motley and waving the thyrsus, the whole land maddening with the dance. The Chorus think of the first origin of such noisy joys, when the wild ones of Crete beat their cymbals round the sunless caverns where the infant Jove was hidden, and these rites of Rhoëa soon mingled for the frantic Satyrs with the third year's dances to Bacchus. Then the ode recurs to the bliss of such holy rites, luxurious interchange of wild energy and delicious repose. They long for the climax of the dance, when, with luxuriant hair all floating, they can rage and madden to the clash of heavy cymbals and the shout *Evoë, Evoë*, frisking like colts to the soft breathing of the holy pipe, while the mountain echoes beneath their boundings. {178}

#### **EPISODE I**

The blind prophet Teiresias enters from Thebes, and is soon joined by Cadmus from the palace. Old as they are they have put on the livery of the god, and will join in the dance, for which supernatural strength will be given: they alone of the city are wise.

The ancestral faith, coeval with our race,  
No subtle reasoning, if it soar aloft  
Ev'n to the height of wisdom, can o'erthrow.

They are stopped by the entrance of Pentheus, as from a far journey. His opening words betray his anxiety as to the scandal in his realm—the young women of his family, even his mother Agave, all gone to join the impious revels.

In pretext, holy sacrificing Maenads,  
But serving Aphrodite more than Bacchus.

Some he has imprisoned, the rest he will hunt from the mountains, and put an end to the joyous movements of this fair stranger with golden locks, who has come to guide their maidens to soft inebriate rites. Suddenly he sees his hero ancestor and the prophet in Bacchic attire. Bitter reproaches follow; the scene soon settling down into the forensic contest. Teiresias elaborately puts the case for the god. Man has two primal needs: one is the solid food of the boon mother, the other has been discovered by the son of their Semele—the rich grape's juice: this beguiles the miserable of their sorrow, this gives all-healing sleep. The author of such blessings is recognized in heaven as a god: yet Pentheus puts scorn upon him by the story of the babe hidden in Jove's thigh. [This is explained away by a play upon words, as between *ho meeros*, thigh, and *homeeros*, a hostage: Jove hid the infant god in a cleft of air, a hostage from the wrath of Heré.] Prophecy is ascribed to the wine-god, for phrensy is prophetic; and he is an ally in war, sending panic on the foe ere lance crosses lance. He will soon be a god celebrated through all Greece and hold torchdance on the crags of Delphi. Let Thebes take her place among the worshippers, fearing nought for the purity of its daughters, who will be no less holy in the revel than at home.—The Chorus approve, and Cadmus follows on the same side, urging policy: a splendid falsehood making Semele the mother of a god will advance their household. Pentheus shakes off Cadmus's clasp in disgust: bids some of his servants go and overturn the prophet's place of divination, and others seek out the stranger who leads the rebels. Exit to the palace, while Teiresias and Cadmus depart, in horror at his impiety, in the direction of Cithaeron. {379}

#### CHORAL INTERLUDE I

Shocked at such defiance of heaven the Chorus invoke Sanctity, crowned as goddess in the nether world, to hear the awful words of Pentheus, uttered against the immortal son of Semele, first and best of gods, ruler of the flower-crowned feast, and the dance's jocund strife, and the laughter, and the sparkling wine-cup, and the sweet sleep that follows the festival. Sorrow closes the lot of such aweless, unbridled madness: stability is for the calmly reverent life, knitting whole houses in sweet domestic harmony. Clasp the present of brief life: no grasping after a bright future with far-fetched wisdom. Oh, for the lands where the graces and sweet desire have their haunts, and young loves soothe the heart with tender guile: fit regions for the Bacchanals, whose joy is Peace—wealth-giver to rich and poor. Away with stern austerity: hail the homely wisdom of the multitude. {439}

#### EPISODE II

An officer brings in Dionysus as prisoner; he has yielded himself without resistance, while as for the imprisoned worshippers their chains have fallen off spontaneous, and they are away to the revels on the mountains. In long-drawn parallel dialogue Pentheus questions the Stranger—struck with his beauty though he be. Dionysus calmly answers to every point, but allows the orgies are secret and must not be revealed to the uninitiated. The King threatens in vain.

*Pen.* First I will clip away those soft bright locks. *Dio.* My locks are holy, dedicate to my god. *Pen.* Next, give thou me that thyrsus in thy hand. *Dio.* Take it thyself; 'tis Dionysus' wand. *Pen.* I'll bind thy body in strong iron chains. *Dio.* My god himself will loose them when he will. *Pen.* When thou invok'st him 'mid thy Bacchanals. *Dio.* Even now he is present, he beholds me now. *Pen.* Where is he then? mine eyes perceive him not. *Dio.* Near me: the impious eyes may not discern him.

The king relies on his superior strength.

*Dio.* Thou knowest not where thou art or what thou art. *Pen.* Pentheus, Agave's son, my sire Echion. *Dio.* Thou hast a name whose very sound is woe.

Dionysus is removed a prisoner to the palace of Pentheus, while the latter retires to prepare measures against the Maenads.

#### CHORAL INTERLUDE II

The Chorus, addressing the landscape before them, expostulate with the sacred stream in which the infant god was dipped for not accepting the divinity whose mystic name is 'Twice-born.' They call upon Dionysus to see them from Olympus, his rapt prophets at strife with dark necessity, and, golden wand in hand, to come to their rescue against the threats of the proud dragon-brood. They are wondering what fair land of song may be holding their sacred leader, when cries from within put an end to the ode. {582}

#### EPISODE III



In wild lyric snatches shouts are interchanged between Dionysus within and groups of the disordered Chorus, bringing out the tumultuous scene—the earth rocking beneath them, sounds of crashing masonry, capitals of pillars hurled through the air; then *by the machinery of the hemicyclium the whole scene left of the center disappears and is replaced by a tableau representing Pentheus' palace in ruins, and the smouldering tomb of Semele surmounted by bright flame. From the ruins steps Dionysus, unharmed and free, the metre breaking into accelerated rhythm.* {613}

*Dio.* O, ye Barbarian women. Thus prostrate in dismay;  
Upon the earth ye've fallen! See ye not as ye may,  
How Bacchus Pentheus' palace In wrath hath shaken down?  
Rise up! rise up! take courage—Shake off that trembling swoon.

*Chor.* O light that goodliest shinest Over our mystic rite,  
In state forlorn we saw thee—Saw with what deep affright!

*Dio.* How to despair ye yielded As I boldly entered in  
To Pentheus, as if captured, into that fatal gin.

*Chor.* How could I less? Who guards us If thou shouldst come to woe?  
But how wast thou delivered From thy ungodly foe?

*Dio.* Myself myself delivered With ease and effort slight.

*Chor.* Thy hands had he not bound them In halters strong and tight?

*Dio.* 'Twas even then I mocked him: He thought me in his chain;  
He touched me not nor reached me; His idle thoughts were vain!  
In the stable stood a heifer Where he thought he had me bound;  
Round the beast's knees his cords And cloven hoofs he wound,  
Wrath-breathing, from his body The sweat fell like a flood,  
He bit his lips in fury, While I beside who stood  
Looked on in unmoved quiet.

As at that instant come,

Shook Bacchus the strong palace, And on his mother's tomb  
Flames kindled. When he saw it, on fire the palace deeming,  
Hither he rushed and thither. For 'Water, water,' screaming;  
And every slave 'gan labor, But labored all in vain,  
The toil he soon abandoned. As though I had fled amain  
He rushed into the palace: In his hand the dark sword gleamed.  
Then as it seemed, great Bromius—I say but, as it seemed—  
In the hall a bright light kindled. On that

he rushed, and there,

As slaying me in vengeance, Stood stabbing the thin air.  
But then the avenging Bacchus Wrought new calamities;  
From roof to base that palace In smouldering ruin lies.  
Bitter ruing our imprisonment, With toil forespent he threw  
On earth his useless weapon. Mortal, he had dared to do  
'Gainst a god unholy battle. But I, in quiet state,  
Unheeding Pentheus' anger, Came through the palace gate.  
It seems even now his sandal Is sounding on its way;  
Soon is he here before us, And what now will he say?  
With ease will I confront him, Ire-breathing though he stand.  
'Tis easy to a wise man To practice self-command. {651}

Blank verse is resumed as Pentheus enters, and meets his escaped prisoner who calmly confronts him. As Pentheus begins to threaten, Dionysus advises him first to hear the messenger even now entering from Cithaeron. An elaborate *Messenger's Speech* describes the miraculous life of the Maenads as they lie on the mountains, careless but not immodest. At the touch of their thyrsus the rock yields dew and the soil wine; their fingers lightly scraping the soil draw streams of exquisite milk, and honey distils from their ivied staffs. A city-bred agitator stirred up the herdsmen to confront them, but the phrensied women drove the men before them, and tore the herds to pieces; like a flock of birds they skimmed along the land, and all gave way before them.

And what they threw across their shoulders, clung  
Unfastened, nor fell down to the black ground,  
No brass, nor ponderous iron; on their locks  
Was fire that burned them not.

Then god-given fountains washed off the stains of their toil, and their serpents licked them clean. Even the Messenger advises submission to so mighty a god, dispensing such gifts.

Pentheus breathes nothing but defiance, and issues orders for the whole military force of Thebes to

assemble. He is bewildered by the stranger, who doing or suffering still holds his peace. In long-drawn parallel verses Dionysus gradually assumes the friend, and—still warning the king that he is on the side of the god—insinuates into the mind of Pentheus the idea of visiting the scene, disguised in the feminine robes of the revellers. As the king retires to prepare, Dionysus proclaims that he is fallen into the net, and vengeance shall first deprive him of sense and then destroy him. {868}

### CHORAL INTERLUDE III

As the crisis comes nearer the Chorus long for the moment of escape—the sensation of the hart that has leaped the net and with storm-wind haste escaped the hunter's pursuit and reached the silent shadow of the old hospitable wood. VICTORY IS THE JOY OF JOYS. Slow and true are the avenging deities, with printless foot hounding the impious along their winding path: for law is old as oldest time. VICTORY IS THE JOY OF JOYS. Happy the sailor in port, he whose race is o'er: hopes hover over thousands, but

Happiness alone is his  
That happy is to-day. {928}

### EPISODE IV

Pentheus appears from the palace of Cadmus in disguise as a Maenad. Infatuation has become a phrensy: he sees double, Dionysus seems a bull, his eyes penetrate into distance and perceive his mother and her comrades. Unconscious of the laughter of Dionysus he adjusts his feminine dress and practices the Maenad step. Irony is added:

*Dio.* Follow me! thy preserver goes before thee; Another takes thee hence. *Pen.* Mean'st thou my mother? *Dio.* Aloft shalt thou be borne— *Pen.* O the soft carriage! *Dio.* In thy mother's hands. *Pen.* Wilt make me thus luxurious? *Dio.* Strange luxury, indeed! *Pen.* 'Tis my desert.

Exclaiming in ambiguous phrase as to the awful end to which he is destined, Dionysus leads the king out towards Cithaeron. {986}

### CHORAL INTERLUDE IV

The crisis is come! Ho, to the mountains; where the Chorus picture the scene already being enacted, the hunter of the Bacchanals caught in the inexorable net of death. VENGEANCE ON THE LAWLESS SON OF ECHION is the recurrent burden of the ode. Its prayer is to hold fast the pious mind, the smooth painless life at peace with heaven and earth, instead of fighting with the invincible, aweless outcast from all law. {1036}

### EPISODE V

A *Messenger's Speech* describes the catastrophe. How Pentheus, arrived within sight of the orderly Maenads, was not satisfied, but desired a higher station from which to view their unseemly life. Then a wonder: the stranger bent down an ash tree, and seating Pentheus in a fork of it let the tree return to its position, holding the wretched king aloft, seen of all.

The stranger from our view had vanished quite.  
Then from the heavens a voice, as it should seem,  
Dionysus, shouted loud, "Behold, I bring,  
O maidens, him that you and me, our rites,  
Our orgies laughed to scorn; now take your vengeance."  
And as he spake, a light of holy fire  
Stood up, and blazed from earth straight up to heaven.  
Silent the air, silent the verdant grove  
Held its still leaves; no sound of living thing.  
They, as their ears just caught the half-heard voice,  
Stood up erect, and rolled their wandering eyes,  
Again he shouted. But when Cadmus' daughters  
Heard manifest the god's awakening voice,  
Forth rushed they, fleeter than the winged dove,  
Their nimble feet quick coursing up and down.

How then the Maenads set upon him and tore him to pieces, his own mother leading them on: in triumph dance they are bringing his head to the city. Adore the gods, is the moral. {1164}

### CHORAL INTERLUDE V

A short outburst of triumph from the Chorus: then the {1180}

## EXODUS

begins with the approach of the Maenads, Agave bearing her son's head on a thyrsus. In a brief *lyric concerto* between her and the mocking Chorus her phrensiad triumph is brought out, and how she takes the bleeding object to be head of a young lion. At that moment the trumpet sounds, and the army that had been summoned appears at the Electran gate. Agave turns to them, and (in blank verse) calls all Thebans to behold the quarry she has taken without the useless weapons of the hunter; it shall be nailed up a trophy before her father's house. *Shortly after enters on the right a melancholy procession of Cadmus and his servants bearing the fragments of Pentheus' body, with difficulty discovered and pieced together.* In extended parallel dialogue between Cadmus and Evadne the phrensy gradually passes away from her and she recognizes the deed she has done. Cadmus sums up the final situation: all the house enwrapped in one dread doom. The Chorus sympathize with Cadmus, but have no pity for Agave. She then follows with a rhapsody of woe, interrupted by {1365}

## DIVINE INTERVENTION

Dionysus appears aloft, in divine form. The MSS. are defective here: from what we have the god appears to be painting the future of Cadmus: life in a dragon form, victories at the head of barbarian hosts, finally the Isles of the Blest. Agave as stained with blood is banished the land, vainly imploring the god's mercy. With lamentations at the thought of exile, which is the lot of both, the play ends.

[1] The quotations are from Milman's translation in Routledge's Universal Library.

## PASSAGES

1

### *Evolution of human life*

*Prometheus.* List rather to the deeds

I did for mortals: how, being fools before  
I made them wise and true in aim of soul,  
And let me tell you—not as taunting men,  
But teaching you the intention of my gifts—  
How, first beholding, they beheld in vain,  
And hearing, heard not, but like shapes in dreams  
Mixed all things wildly down the tedious time;  
Nor knew to build a house against the sun  
With wicketed sides, nor any woodcraft knew,  
But lived, like silly ants, beneath the ground,  
In hollow caves unsunned. There came to them  
No steadfast sign of winter nor of spring,  
Flower perfumed, nor summer full of fruit;  
But blindly and lawlessly they did all things,  
Until I taught them how the stars do rise  
And set in mystery, and devised for them  
Number, the inducer of philosophies,  
The synthesis of letters, and, beside,  
The artificer of all things, Memory,  
That sweet Muse-Mother. I was first to yoke  
The servile beasts in couples, carrying  
An heirdom of man's burdens on their backs.  
I joined to chariots steeds that love the bit  
They clasp at—the chief pomp of golden ease.  
And none but I originated ships,  
The seaman's chariots wandering on the brine,  
With linen wings. And I—oh miserable!—

Who did devise for mortals all these arts,  
Have no device left now to save myself  
From the woe I suffer.

*Chorus.* Most unseemly woe

Thou sufferest, and dost stagger from the sense  
Bewildered! like a bad leech falling sick,  
Thou art faint at soul, and canst not find the drugs  
Required to save thyself.

*Prometheus.* Hearken the rest,

And marvel further, what more arts and means  
I did invent, this greatest: if a man  
Fell sick there was no cure, nor esculent,  
Nor chrism, nor liquid, but for lack of drugs  
Men pined and wasted, till I showed them all  
Those mixtures of emollient remedies,  
Whereby they might be rescued from disease,  
I fixed the various rules of mantic art,  
Discerned the vision from the common dream,  
Instructed them in vocal auguries,  
Hard to interpret, and defined as plain  
The wayside omens—flights of crook-clawed birds—  
Showed which are, by their nature, fortunate,  
And which not so, and what the food of each,  
And what the hates, affections, social needs,  
Of all to one another,—taught what sign  
Of visceral lightness, colored to a shade,  
May charm the genial gods, and what fair spots  
Commend the lung and liver. Burning so  
The limbs encased in fat, and the long chine,  
I led my mortals on to an art abstruse,  
And cleared their eyes to the image in the fire,  
Erst filmed in dark. Enough said now of this:  
For the other helps of man hid underground,  
The iron and the brass, silver and gold,  
Can any dare affirm he found them out  
Before me? None, I know, unless he choose  
To lie in his vault. In one word learn the whole:  
That all arts come to mortals from Prometheus.

Aeschylus: *Prometheus*. [Mrs. Browning's  
translation.]

2

*(For comparison with the preceding)*

Warmly this argument with others oft  
Have I disputed, who assert that ill  
To mortal man assign'd outweighs the good.  
Far otherwise I deem, that good is dealt  
To man in larger portions: were it not,  
We could not bear the light of life. That Power,  
Whatever god he be, that called us forth  
From foul and savage life, hath my best thanks.  
Inspiring reason first, he gave the tongue  
Articulate sounds, the intercourse of language:  
The fruits of earth he gave, and to that growth  
The heaven-descending rain, that from the earth,  
Cheer'd by its kindly dews, they might arise,  
And bear their life-sustaining food mature: to this  
The warm defense against th' inclement storm  
He taught to raise, and the umbrageous roof  
The fiery sun excluding: the tall bark  
He gave to bound o'er the wide sea, and bear  
From realm to realm in grateful interchange

The fruits each wants. Is aught obscure, aught hid?  
Doubts darkening on the mind the mounting blaze  
Removes; or from the entrail's panting fibres  
The seer divines, or from the flight of birds.  
Are we not then fastidious to repine  
At such a life so furnish'd by the gods?  
Euripides: *Suppliants* 214. [Potter.]

3

*Specimen of Accelerated Rhythm in the exact metre*

**AEGISTHUS**

How thy word and act shall issue thou shalt shortly understand.  
CHORUS

Up to action, O my comrades! for the fight is hard at hand,  
Swift, your right hands to the sword hilt! bare the weapon as for strife.

AEGISTHUS

Lo! I too am standing ready, hilt to hilt, for death, or life!

CHORUS

'Twas thy word and we accept it! onward to the chance of war!

CLYTEMNESTRA

Nay, enough, enough, my champion! we will smite and slay no more.  
Already we have heaped enough the harvest-field of guilt,  
Enough of wrong and murder, let no other blood be spilt!  
Peace, old men! and pass away into the homes by fate decreed,  
Lest ill valor meet our vengeance—'twas a necessary deed.  
But enough of toils and troubles—be the end, if ever, now,  
Ere the wrath of the Avenger deal another deadly blow.  
'Tis a woman's word of warning, and let who will list thereto.

AEGISTHUS

But that these should loose and lavish reckless blossoms of the tongue,  
And in hazard of their fortune cast upon me words of wrong,  
And forget the law of subjects, and to heed their ruler's word—

CHORUS

Ruler? but 'tis not for Argives, thus to own a dastard lord!

AEGISTHUS

I will follow to chastise thee in my coming days of sway.

CHORUS

Not if Fortune guide Orestes safely on his homeward way.

AEGISTHUS

Ah, well I know how exiles feed on hopes of their return!

CHORUS

Feed and batten on pollution of the right, while 'tis thy turn!

AEGISTHUS

Thou shalt pay, be well assured, heavy quittance for thy pride.

CHORUS

Crow and strut, with her beside thee, like a cock, his mate beside!

CLYTEMNESTRA

Heed not thou too highly of them—let the cur-pack growl and yell—  
I and thou will rule the palace and will order all things well?

Conclusion of *Agamemnon*. (Morshead.)

4

**CHORUS OF OLD MEN**

Horror!

Are we come to the self-same passion of fear,  
Old friends?—such a phantasm fronts me here  
Visible over the palace-roof!  
In flight, in flight, the laggard limb  
Bestir, and haste aloof  
From that on the roof there—grand and grim!  
O Paian, king!  
Be thou my safeguard from the woeful thing!

IRIS

Courage, old men! beholding here—Night's birth—  
Madness, and me the handmaid of the gods,  
Iris: since to your town we come no plague—  
Wage war against the house of but one man  
From Zeus and from Alkmene sprung, they say.  
Now, till he made an end of bitter toils  
Fate kept him safe, nor did his father Zeus  
Let us once hurt him, Heré nor myself.  
But since he has toiled through Eurustheus' task  
Heré desires to fix fresh blood on him—  
Slaying his children; I desire it too.

Up then, collecting the unsoftened heart,  
Unwedded virgin of black Night! Drive, drag,  
Frenzy upon the man here—whirls of brain  
Big with child-murder, while his feet leap gay.  
Let go the bloody cable its whole length!  
So that,—when o'er the Acherousian ford  
He has sent floating, by self-homicide,  
His beautiful boy-garland,—he may know  
First, Heré's anger, what it is to him,  
And then learn mine. The gods are vile indeed  
And mortal matters vast if he 'scape free.

MADNESS

Certes, from well-born sire and mother too  
Had I my birth, whose blood is Night's and Heaven's;  
But here's my glory,—not to grudge the good!  
Nor love I raids against the friends of man.  
I wish, then, to persuade, before I see  
You stumbling, you and Heré: trust my words!  
This man, the house of whom ye hound me to,  
Is not unfamed on earth, nor gods among;  
Since, having quelled waste land and savage sea,  
He alone raised again the falling rights  
Of gods—gone ruinous through impious men.  
Desire no mighty mischief, I advise!

IRIS

Give thou no thought to Heré's faulty schemes!

MADNESS

Changing her step from faulty to fault-free!

IRIS

Not to be wise, did Zeus' wife send thee here!

MADNESS

Sun, thee I cite to witness—doing what I loath to do!  
But since indeed to Heré and thyself I must subserve,

And follow you quick, with a whizz,  
as the hounds a-hunt with the huntsman,  
—Go I will! and neither the sea, as it groans  
with its waves so furiously,  
Nor earthquake, no, nor the bolt of thunder  
gasping out heaven's labor-throe,  
Shall cover the ground as I, at a bound,  
rush into the bosom of Herakles!  
And home I scatter and house I batter,  
Having first of all made the children fall,—  
And he who felled them is never to know  
He gave birth to each child that received the blow,  
Till the Madness I am have let him go!

Ha, behold, already he rocks his head—he is off  
from the starting place!  
Not a word, as he rolls his frightful orbs,  
from their sockets wrenched in the ghastly race!  
And the breathings of him he tempers and times no more  
than a bull in act to toss,  
And hideously he bellows invoking the Keres, daughters of Tartaros.  
Ay and I soon will dance thee madder, and pipe thee  
quite out of thy mind with fear!  
So, up with the famous foot, thou Iris,  
march to Olu[y?]mpus, leave me here!  
Me and mine, who now combine, in the dreadful shape no mortal sees,  
And now are about to pass, from without,  
inside of the home of Herakles!

#### CHORAL ODE

Otototoi,—groan: Away is mown  
Thy flower, Zeus' offspring, City!  
Unhappy Hellas, who dost cast (the pity!)  
Who worked thee all the good,  
Away from thee,—destroyest in a mood  
Of Madness him, to death whom pipings dance!  
There goes she, in her chariot,—groans, her brood  
And gives her team the goad, as though adrift  
For doom, Night's Gorgon, Madness, she whose glance  
Turns man to marble! with what hissings lift  
Their hundred heads the snakes, her head's inheritance!  
Quick has the God changed fortune: through their sire  
Quick will the children, that he saved, expire!  
O miserable me! O Zeus! thy child—  
Childless himself—soon vengeance, hunger-wild,  
Craving for punishment, will lay how low—  
Loaded with many a woe!  
O palace-roofs! your courts about,  
A measure begins all unrejoiced  
By the tympanies and the thyrsos hoist  
Of the Bromian revel-rout,  
O ye domes! and the measure proceeds  
For blood, not such as the cluster bleeds  
Of the Dionusian pouring-out!  
Break forth! fly, children! fatal this—  
Fatal the lay that is piped, I wis!  
Ay, for he hunts a children-chase—  
Never shall madness lead her revel  
And leave no trace in the dwelling-place!  
Ai, ai, because of the evil!  
Ai, ai, the old man—how I groan  
For the father, and not the father alone!  
She who was nurse of his children small,—small  
Her gain that they never were born at all!

See! see!  
A whirlwind shakes hither and thither  
The house—the roof falls in together!  
Ha, ha, what dost thou, son of Zeus?  
A trouble of Tartaros broke loose,  
Such as once Pallas on the Titan thundered,  
Thou sendest on thy domes, roof-shattered and wall-sundered.

Ideas of Deity

5

None of mortal men  
Escape unhurt by fortune, nor the gods,  
Unless the stories of the bards be false.  
Have they not formed connubial ties to which  
No law assents? Have they not gall'd with chains  
Their fathers through ambition? Yet they hold  
Their mansions on Olympus, and their wrongs  
With patience bear.

Euripides: *Hercules* 1414.

6

These are your works, ye gods! these changes fraught  
With horrible confusion, mingled thus  
That we through ignorance might worship you.

Euripides: *Hecuba* 943.

7

O supreme of heav'n,  
What shall we say? that thy firm providence  
Regards mankind? or vain the thoughts, which deem  
That the just gods are rulers in the sky,  
Since tyrant fortune lords it o'er the world?

Do. 470.

8

Mortal as I am  
In virtue I exceed thee, though a god  
Of mighty pow'r; for I have not betray'd  
The sons of Hercules: well did'st thou know  
To come by stealth unto my couch, t' invade  
A bed not thine, nor leave obtain'd; to save  
Thy friends thou dost not know; thou art a god  
In wisdom or in justice little vers'd.

Euripides: *Hercules* 385.

9

I deem not of the gods, as having form'd  
Connubial ties to which no law assents,  
Nor as oppressed with chains: disgraceful this  
I hold, nor ever will believe that one  
Lords it o'er others: of no foreign aid  
The god, who is indeed a god, hath need:  
These are the wretched fables of the bards.

Euripides: *Hercules* 1444.

10

O Jove, who rulest the rolling of the earth,  
And o'er it hast thy throne, whoe'er thou art,  
The ruling mind, or the necessity  
Of nature, I adore thee: dark thy ways,



And silent are thy steps; to mortal man  
Yet thou with justice all things dost ordain.  
Euripides: *Daughters of Troy* 955.

Was this then human, or divine?  
Did it a middle nature share?  
What mortal shall declare?  
Who shall the secret bounds define?  
When the gods work we see their pow'r;  
We see on their high bidding wait  
The prosperous gales, the storms of fate:  
But who their awful councils shall explore?  
Euripides: *Helena* 1235.

12

And those, the Ever-Virgin ones, I call,  
Erinnyes dread that see all human deeds,  
Swift-footed, that they mark how I am slain  
By you Atreidae; may they seize on them.  
Doers of evil, with all evil plagues  
And uttermost destruction.  
Sophocles: *Ajax* 937 [Plumptre].

Passing bits of Nature-Painting

13

Thou firmament of God, and swift-wing'd winds,  
Ye springs of rivers, and of ocean waves  
That smile innumerable! Mother of us all,  
O Earth, and Sun's all-seeing eye, behold,  
I pray, what I a God from Gods endure.  
Aeschylus: *Prometheus* 88 [Plumptre].

14

*A Sacred Spot*

This spot is holy, one may clearly tell,  
Full as it is of laurel, olive, vine.  
And many a nightingale within sings sweetly.  
Rest my limbs here upon this rough-hewn rock.  
Sophocles: *Oedipus at Colonus* 16.

15

*A Grove of the Furies*

Rush not on  
Through voiceless, grass-grown grove,  
Where blends with rivulet of honey'd stream  
The cup of water clear.  
Do. 156.

16

*A Meadow of Artemis*

Thee, goddess, to adorn I bring this crown  
Inwoven with the various flowers that deck  
The unshorn mead, where never shepherd dared  
To feed his flock, and the scythe never came,  
But o'er its vernal sweets unshorn the bee  
Ranges at will, and hush'd in reverence glides  
Th' irriguous streamlet: garish art hath there  
No place; of these the modest still may cull  
At pleasure, interdicted to th' impure.

17

*The Nile*

These are the streams of Nile, the joy of nymphs,  
Glowing with beauty's radiance; he his floods  
Swell'd with the melted snow o'er Egypt's plain  
Irrigulous pours, to fertilize her fields,  
Th' ethereal rain supplying.

Euripides: *Helena* 1.

18

*The Nightingale*

On thee, high-nested in the museful shade  
By close-inwoven branches made,  
Thee, sweetest bird, most musical  
Of all that warble their melodious song  
The charmed woods among,  
Thee, tearful nightingale, I call:  
O come, and from thy dark-plumed throat  
Swell sadly-sweet thy melancholy note.

Euripides: *Helena* 1191.

19

*Flight of Cranes*

O might we through the liquid sky  
Wing'd like the birds of Lybia fly;  
Birds, which the change of seasons know,  
And, left the wintry storms and snow,  
Their leader's well-known call obey.  
O'er many a desert dry and cultured plain  
He guides the marshall'd train,  
And cheers with jocund notes their way.  
Ye birds that through th' aerial height  
Your course with clouds light-sailing share,  
Your flight amidst the Pleiads hold,  
And where Orion nightly flames in gold;  
Then on Eurota's banks alight,  
And this glad message bear:  
"Your king from Troy shall reach once more,  
With conquest crown'd, his native shore."

Euripides: *Helena* 1603.

20

*A Storm*

So is it as a wave  
Of ocean's billowing surge  
(Where Thracian storm-winds rave,  
And floods of darkness from the depths emerge,)  
Rolls the black sand from out the lowest deep,  
And shores re-echoing wail, as rough blasts o'er them sweep.

Sophocles: *Antigone* 586 [Plumptre].

21

Steering their rough course o'er this boisterous main,  
Form'd in a ring beneath whose waves  
The Nereid train in high-arch'd caves  
Weave the light dance, and raise the sprightly song,  
Whilst whisp'ring in their swelling sails

Soft Zephyrs breathe, or southern gales  
Piping amidst their tackling play,  
As their bark ploughs its wat'ry way  
Those hoary cliffs, the haunts of birds, among,  
To that wild strand, the rapid race  
Where once Achilles deigned to grace.

Euripides: *Iphigenia among the Tauri* 492.

(Specimens of Gnostic Verses)

22

Amongst barbarians all are slaves, save one. *Helena* 311.

23

He is no lover who not always loves. *Daughters of Troy* 1148.

24

What our necessities demand, becomes  
Of greater moment than to conquer Troy.  
*Andromache* 427.

25

'Tis not the counsel, but the speaker's worth,  
That gives persuasion to his eloquence.  
*Hecuba* 266.

26

Skilful leech  
Mutters no spell o'er sore that needs the knife.  
*Ajax* 581.

27

It is through God that man or laughs or mourns. *Ajax* 385.

28

No mortal man  
May therefore be call'd happy, till you see  
The last of all his days, and how, that pass'd,  
He to the realms of Pluto shall descend.  
*Andromache* 114.

29

All human things  
A day lays low, a day lifts up again;  
But still the gods love those of order'd soul.  
*Ajax* 130.

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