

**AESCHYLUS , PLUMPTRE E. H.**

**ÆSCHYLOS  
TRAGEDIES AND  
FRAGMENTS**

Aeschylus

**Æschylos Tragedies and Fragments**

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# Æschylos Tragedies and Fragments

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

*The reception accorded to the pocket edition of Dean Plumptre's "Dante" has encouraged the publishers to issue in the same format the Dean's masterly translation of the Tragedies of Æschylos.*

*In preparing the present issue they have followed the carefully revised text of the second edition, and have included the scholarly and suggestive annotations with which the Dean invariably delighted to enrich his work as a translator.*

*The seven Plays, which are all that remain of the seventy or eighty with which Æschylos is credited, are presented in their chronological order. Passages in which the reading or the rendering is more or less conjectural, and in which, accordingly, the aid of the commentator is advisable, are marked by an asterisk; and passages which are regarded as spurious by editors of authority have been placed in brackets.*

*In translating the Choral Odes the Dean used such unrhymed metres – observing the strophic and antistrophic arrangement – as seemed to him most analogous in their general rhythmical effect to those of the original. He added in an appendix, however, for the sake of those who preferred the rhymed form with which they were familiar, a rhymed version of the chief Odes of the Oresteian trilogy. Those in the other dramas did not appear to him to be of equal interest, or to lend themselves with equal facility to a like attempt. The Greek text on which the translation is based is, for the most part, that of Mr. Paley's edition of 1861.*

*A translation was also given of the Fragments which have survived the wreck of the lost plays, so that the work contains all that has been left to us associated with the name of Æschylos.*

*In the present edition a chronological outline has been substituted for the biographical sketch of the poet, who from his daring enlargement of the scope of the drama, the magnificence of his spectacular effects and the splendour of his genius, was rightly honoured as "the Father of Tragedy."*

## CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF THE LIFE OF ÆSCHYLOS

B.C.	
527	Peisistratos died.
525	Birth at Eleusis, in Attica, of Æschylos, son of Euphorion.
510	Expulsion of the Peisistratidæ. Democratic constitution of Cleisthenes.
	Approximate date of incident in the legend that Æschylos was set to watch grapes as they were ripening for the vintage, and fell asleep; and lo! as he slept Dionysos appeared to him and bade him give himself to write tragedies for the great festival of the god. And when he awoke, he found himself invested with new powers of thought and utterance, and the work was as easy to him as if he had been trained to it for many years (Pausan., <i>Att.</i> i. 21, § 3). <sup>1</sup>
500	Birth of Anaxagoras.
499	Æschylos exhibited his first tragedy, in unsuccessful competition with Pratinas and Choerilos.
	The wooden scaffolding broke beneath the crowd of spectators, and the accident led the Athenians to build their first stone theatre for the Dionysiac festivals.
	Partly out of annoyance at his defeat, it is said, and partly in a spirit of adventure, Æschylos sailed for Sicily.
497	Death of Pythagoras (?).
495	Birth of Sophocles at Colonus.
491	Æschylos at Athens.
490	The Battle of Marathon. Æschylos and his brothers, Kynægeiros and Ameinias, so distinguished themselves, that the Athenians ordered their heroic deeds to be commemorated in a picture.
	Death of Theognis (?).
488	Prize awarded to Simonides for an elegy on Marathon. Æschylos, piqued, it is said, at his failure in the competition, again departed to Sicily.
485	Xerxes succeeded Dareios.
484	Æschylos won, in a dramatic contest with Pratinas, Choerilos, and Phrynichos, the first of a series of thirteen successes.
	Birth of Herodotos.
480	Athens burnt by Xerxes.
	Æschylos fought at Artemisium and Salamis. At Salamis his brother Ameinias lost his hand, and was awarded the prize of valour.
	Sophocles led the Chorus of Victory.
	Birth of Euripides.
479	Æschylos at the Battle of Platea.
477	Commencement of Athenian supremacy.
473	Æschylos carried off the first prize with <i>The Persians</i> (the first of the extant plays), which belonged to a tetralogy that included two tragedies, <i>Phineus</i> and <i>Glaukos</i> , and a satyric drama, <i>Prometheus the Fire-stealer</i> .
	<i>The Persians</i> has the interest of being a contemporary record of the great sea-fight at Salamis by an eye-witness.
471	Æschylos appears to have produced this year his next tetralogy, of which <i>The Seven against Thebes</i> survives.
	The play was directed against the policy of aiming at the supremacy of Athens by attacking other Greek States, and, in brief, maintained the policy of Aristides as against that of Themistocles.
	Birth of Thucydides.
468	Sophocles gained his first victory in tragedy with his <i>Triptolemos</i> ; Æschylos defeated.
	Æschylos charged with impiety, on the ground that he had profaned the Mysteries by introducing on the stage rites known only to the initiated; tried and acquitted; departure for Syracuse.
467	Æschylos at the court of Hieron at Syracuse, where he is said to have composed dramas on local legends, such as <i>The Women of Ætna</i> .
	Death of Simonides.
461	Ostracism of Kimon; ascendancy of Pericles.
460-59	Probable date of <i>The Suppliants</i> , if the play be connected with the alliance between Argos and Athens (B.C. 461), and the war with the Persian forces in Egypt, upon which the Athenians had entered as allies of the Libyan Prince Inaros. (B.C. 460.)
	The date of <i>Prometheus Bound</i> has been referred to B.C. 470 on the strength of a description of Ætna (vv. 370-380), which is supposed to be a reference to the eruption of B.C. 477. Internal evidence, however, seems to warrant the view that <i>The Suppliants</i> and the <i>Prometheus Bound</i> were separated by only a brief interval of time.
458	Æschylos in Athens. He found new men and new methods; institutions, held most sacred as the safeguard of Athenian religion, were being criticised and attacked; the Court of Areiopagos was threatened with abolition under pretence of reform.
	Production of the Oresteian Trilogy (or, rather, tetralogy, as in addition to the <i>Agamemnon</i> , the <i>Libation-pourers</i> , and the <i>Eumenides</i> , there was a satyric drama, <i>Proteus</i> ).
	This trilogy was a conservative protest, religious, social, and political, which culminated in the assertion of the divine authority of the Areiopagos.
	Popular feeling was once more excited against the poet, who left Athens never to return, and settled at Gela, in Sicily, under the patronage of Hieron.
456	Death of Æschylos, aged 69.
	An oracle foretold that he was to die by a blow from heaven, and according to the legend, an eagle, mistaking the poet's head for a stone as he sat writing, dropped a tortoise on it to break the shell.
	He was buried at Gela, and his epitaph, ascribed to himself, ran: "Beneath this stone lies Æschylos, son of Euphorion. At fertile Gela he died. Marathon can tell of his tested manhood, and the Persians who there felt his mettle."
	He is said to have produced between seventy and eighty plays, of which only seven survive.

## Примечание 1<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf., the legend of Caedmon, “the Father of English Song.”

## THE PERSIANS <sup>2</sup>

### DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Atossa  
*Ghost of Dareios*  
*Messenger*  
Xerxes  
*Chorus of Persian Elders*

*ARGUMENT.* – When Xerxes came to the throne of Persia, remembering how his father Dareios had sought to subdue the land of the Hellenes, and seeking to avenge the defeat of Datis and Artaphernes on the field of Marathon, he gathered together a mighty host of all nations under his dominion, and led them against Hellas. And at first he prospered and prevailed, crossed the Hellespont, and defeated the Spartans at Thermopylæ, and took the city of Athens, from which the greater part of its citizens had fled. But at last he and his armament met with utter overthrow at Salamis. Meanwhile Atossa, the mother of Xerxes, with her handmaids and the elders of the Persians, waited anxiously at Susa, where was the palace of the great king, for tidings of her son.

### THE PERSIANS

**Scene.** – Susa, in front of the palace of Xerxes, the tomb

*of Dareios occupying the position of the thymele*

*Enter Chorus of Persian Elders*

We the title bear of Faithful,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Note.*— Within two years after the battle of Salamis, the feeling of natural exultation was met by Phrynichos in a tragedy bearing the title of *The Phænikians*, and having for its subject the defeat of Xerxes. As he had come under the displeasure of the Athenian *demos* for having brought on the stage the sufferings of their Ionian kinsmen in his *Capture of Miletos*, he was apparently anxious to regain his popularity by a “sensation” drama of another kind; and his success seems to have prompted Æschylos to a like attempt five years later, B.C. 473. The Tetralogy to which the play belonged, and which gained the first prize on its representation, included the two tragedies (unconnected in subject) of *Phineus* and *Glaucos*, and the satyric drama of *Prometheus the Fire-stealer*. The play has, therefore, the interest of being strictly a contemporary narrative of the battle of Salamis and its immediate consequences, by one who may himself have been present at it, and whose brother Ameinias (Herod, viii. 93) distinguished himself in it by a special act of heroism. As such, making all allowance for the influence of dramatic exigencies, and the tendency to colour history so as to meet the tastes of patriotic Athenians, it may claim, where it differs from the story told by Herodotos, to be a more trustworthy record. And it has, we must remember, the interest of being the only extant drama of its class, the only tragedy the subject of which is not taken from the cycle of heroic myths, but from the national history of the time. Far below the Oresteian Trilogy as it may seem to us as a work of art, having more the character of a spectacle than a poem, it was, we may well believe, unusually successful at the time, and it is said to have been chosen by Hiero for reproduction in Syracuse after Æschylos had settled there under his patronage.

<sup>3</sup> “The Faithful,” or “trusty,” seems to have been a special title of honour given to the veteran councillors of the king (Xenoph. *Anab.* i. 15), just as that of the “Immortals” was chosen for his body-guard (Herod, vii. 83).



Friends of Persians gone to Hellas,  
Watchers left of treasure city,<sup>4</sup>  
Gold-abounding, whom, as oldest,  
Xerxes hath himself appointed,  
He, the offspring of Dareios,  
As the warders of his country.  
And about our king's returning,  
And our army's, gold-abounding,  
Over-much, and boding evil,  
Does my mind within me shudder  
(For our whole force, Asia's offspring,  
Now is gone), and for our young chief  
Sorely frets: nor courier cometh,  
Nor any horseman, bringing tidings  
To the city of the Persians.  
From Ecbatana departing,  
Susa, or the Kissian fortress,<sup>5</sup>  
Forth they sped upon their journey,  
Some in ships, and some on horses,  
Some on foot, still onward marching,  
In their close array presenting  
Squadrons duly armed for battle:  
Then Armistres, Artaphernes,  
Megabazes, and Astaspes,  
Mighty leaders of the Persians,  
Kings, and of the great King servants,<sup>6</sup>  
March, the chiefs of mighty army.  
Archers they and mounted horsemen.  
Dread to look on, fierce in battle,  
Artembares proud, on horseback,  
And Masistres, and Imæos,  
Archer famed, and Pharandakes,  
And the charioteer Sosthanes.  
Neilos mighty and prolific  
Sent forth others, Susikanes,  
Pegastagon, Egypt's offspring,  
And the chief of sacred Memphis;  
Great Arsames, Ariomardos,  
Ruler of primeval Thebæ,  
And the marsh-men,<sup>7</sup> and the rowers,

---

<sup>4</sup> Susa was pre-eminently the treasury of the Persian kings (Herod., v. 49; Strabo, xv. p. 731), their favourite residence in spring, as Ecbatana in Media was in summer and Babylon in winter.

<sup>5</sup> Kissia was properly the name of the district in which Susa stood; but here, and in v. 123, it is treated as if it belonged to a separate city. Throughout the play there is, indeed, a lavish use of Persian barbaric names of persons and places, without a very minute regard to historical accuracy.

<sup>6</sup> Here, as in Herodotus and Greek writers generally, the title, "the King," or "the great King," was enough. It could be understood only of the Persian. The latter name had been borne by the kings of Assyria (2 Kings xviii. 28). A little later it passed into the fuller, more boastful form of "The King of kings."

<sup>7</sup> The inhabitants of the Delta of the Nile, especially those of the marshy districts near the Heracleotic mouth, were famed as supplying the best and bravest soldiers of any part of Egypt. – Comp. Thucyd. i. 110.

Dread, and in their number countless.  
And there follow crowds of Lydians,  
Very delicate and stately,<sup>8</sup>  
Who the people of the mainland  
Rule throughout – whom Mitragathes  
And brave Arkteus, kingly chieftains,  
Led, from Sardis, gold-abounding,  
Riding on their many chariots,  
Three or four a-breast their horses,  
Sight to look upon all dreadful.  
And the men of sacred Tmôlos<sup>9</sup>  
Rush to place the yoke of bondage  
On the neck of conquered Hellas.  
Mardon, Tharabis, spear-anvils,<sup>10</sup>  
And the Mysians, javelin-darting,<sup>11</sup>  
Babylôn too, gold-abounding,  
Sends a mingled cloud, swept onward,  
Both the troops who man the vessels,  
And the skilled and trustful bowmen;  
And the race the sword that beareth,  
Follows from each clime of Asia,  
At the great King's dread commandment.  
These, the bloom of Persia's greatness,  
Now are gone forth to the battle;  
And for these, their mother country,  
Asia, mourns with mighty yearning;  
Wives and mothers faint with trembling  
Through the hours that slowly linger,  
Counting each day as it passes.

### Strophe I

The king's great host, destroying cities mighty,  
Hath to the land beyond the sea passed over,  
Crossing the straits of Athamantid Helle,<sup>12</sup>  
On raft by ropes secured,

---

<sup>8</sup> The epithet was applied probably by Æschylos to the Lydians properly so called, the barbaric race with whom the Hellenes had little or nothing in common. They, in dress, diet, mode of life, their distaste for the contests of the arena, seemed to the Greeks the very type of effeminacy. The Ionian Greeks, however, were brought under the same influence, and gradually acquired the same character. The suppression of the name of the Ionians in the list of the Persian forces may be noticed as characteristic. The Athenian poet would not bring before an Athenian audience the shame of their Asiatic kinsmen.

<sup>9</sup> Tmôlos, sacred as being the mythical birth-place of Dionysos.

<sup>10</sup> "Spear-anvils," *sc.*, meeting the spear of their foes as the anvils would meet it, turning its point, themselves steadfast and immovable.

<sup>11</sup> So Herodotos (vii. 74) in his account of the army of Xerxes describes the Mysians as using for their weapons those darts or "javelins" made by hardening the ends in the fire.

<sup>12</sup> Helle the daughter of Athamas, from whom the Hellespont took its name. For the description of the pontoons formed by boats, which were moored together with cables and finally covered with faggots, comp. Herod., vii. 36.

And thrown his path, compact of many a vessel,  
As yoke upon the neck of mighty ocean.

### Antistrophe I

Of populous Asia thus the mighty ruler  
'Gainst all the land his God-sent host directeth  
In two divisions, both by land and water,  
Trusting the chieftains stern,  
The men who drive the host to fight, relentless —  
He, sprung from gold-born race, a hero godlike.<sup>13</sup>

### Strophe II

Glancing with darkling look, and eyes as of ravening dragon,  
With many a hand, and many a ship, and Syrian chariot driving,<sup>14</sup>  
He upon spearmen renowned brings battle of conquering arrows.<sup>15</sup>

### Antistrophe II

Yea, there is none so tried as, withstanding the flood of the mighty,  
To keep within steadfast bounds that wave of ocean resistless;  
Hard to fight is the host of the Persians, the people stout-hearted.

### Mesode

Yet ah! what mortal can ward the craft of the God all-deceiving?  
Who, with a nimble foot, of one leap is easily sovereign?  
For Atè, fawning and kind, at first a mortal betraying,  
Then in snares and meshes decoys him,  
Whence one who is but man in vain doth struggle to 'scape from.

---

<sup>13</sup> "Gold-born," *sc.*, descended from Perseus, the child of Danaë.

<sup>14</sup> Syrian, either in the vague sense in which it became almost synonymous with Assyrian, or else showing that Syria, properly so called, retained the fame for chariots which it had had at a period as early as the time of the Hebrew Judges (Judg. v. 3). Herodotos (vii. 140) gives an Oracle of Delphi in which the same epithet appears.

<sup>15</sup> The description, though put into the mouth of Persians, is meant to flatter Hellenic pride. The Persians and their army were for the most part light-armed troops only, barbarians equipped with javelins or bows. In the sculptures of Persepolis, as in those of Nineveh and Khorsabad, this mode of warfare is throughout the most conspicuous. They, the Hellenes, were the *hoplites*, warriors of the spear and the shield, the cuirass and the greaves.

### **Strophe III**

For Fate of old, by the high Gods' decree,  
Prevailed, and on the Persians laid this task,  
Wars with the crash of towers,  
And set the surge of horsemen in array,  
And the fierce sack that lays a city low.

### **Antistrophe III**

But now they learnt to look on ocean plains,<sup>16</sup>  
The wide sea hoary with the violent blast,  
Waxing o'er confident  
In cables formed of many a slender strand,  
And rare device of transport for the host.

### **Strophe IV**

So now my soul is torn,  
As clad in mourning, in its sore affright,  
Ah me! ah me! for all the Persian host!  
Lest soon our country learn  
That Susa's mighty fort is void of men.

### **Antistrophe IV**

And through the Kissians' town  
Shall echo heavy thud of hands on breast.  
Woe! woe! when all the crowd of women speak  
This utterance of great grief,  
And byssine robes are rent in agony.

### **Strophe V**

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<sup>16</sup> A touch of Athenian exultation in their life as seamen. To them the sea was almost a home. They were familiar with it from childhood. To the Persians it was new and untried. They had a new lesson to learn, late in the history of the nation, late in the lives of individual soldiers.

For all the horses strong,  
And host that march on foot,  
Like swarm of bees, have gone with him who led  
The vanguard of the host.  
Crossing the sea-washed, bridge-built promontory  
That joins the shores of either continent.<sup>17</sup>

### **Antistrophe V**

And beds with tears are wet  
In grief for husbands gone,  
And Persian wives are delicate in grief,  
Each yearning for her lord;  
And each who sent her warrior-spouse to battle  
Now mourns at home in dreary solitude.  
But come, ye Persians now,  
And sitting in this ancient hall of ours,  
Let us take thought deep-counselling and wise,  
(Sore need is there of that,)  
How fareth now the great king Xerxes, he  
Who calls Dareios sire,  
Bearing the name our father bore of old?  
Is it the archers' bow that wins the day?  
Or does the strength prevail  
Of iron point that heads the spear's strong shaft?  
But lo! in glory like the face of gods,  
The mother of my king, my queen, appears:  
Let us do reverent homage at her feet;  
Yea, it is meet that all  
Should speak to her with words of greeting kind.

### ***Enter Atossa in a chariot of state***

*Chor.* O sovereign queen of Persian wives deep-zoned,  
Mother of Xerxes, reverend in thine age,  
Wife of Dareios! hail!  
'Twas thine to join in wedlock with a spouse  
Whom Persians owned as God,<sup>18</sup>  
And of a God thou art the mother too,

---

<sup>17</sup> The bridge of boats, with the embankment raised upon it, is thought of as a new headland putting out from the one shore and reaching to the other.

<sup>18</sup> Stress is laid by the Hellenic poet, as in the *Agamemnon* (v. 895), and in v. 707 of this play, on the tendency of the East to give to its kings the names and the signs of homage which were due only to the Gods. The Hellenes might deify a dead hero, but not a living sovereign. On different grounds the Jews shrank, as in the stories of Nebuchadnezzar and Dareios (Dan. iii. 6), from all such acts.

Unless its ancient Fortune fails our host.

*Atoss.* Yes, thus I come, our gold-decked palace leaving,  
The bridal bower Dareios with me slept in.  
Care gnaws my heart, but now I tell you plainly  
A tale, my friends, which may not leave me fearless,  
Lest boastful wealth should stumble at the threshold,  
And with his foot o'erturn the prosperous fortune  
That great Dareios raised with Heaven's high blessing.  
And twofold care untold my bosom haunteth:  
We may not honour wealth that has no warriors,  
Nor on the poor shines light to strength proportioned;  
Wealth without stint we have, yet for our eye we tremble;  
For as the eye of home I deem a master's presence.  
Wherefore, ye Persians, aid me now in counsel;  
Trusty and old, in you lies hope of wisdom.

*Chor.* Queen of our land! be sure thou need'st not utter  
Or thing or word twice o'er, which power may point to;  
Thou bid'st us counsel give who fain would serve thee.

*Atoss.* Ever with many visions of the night<sup>19</sup>  
Am I encompassed, since my son went forth,  
Leading a mighty host, with aim to sack  
The land of the Ionians. But ne'er yet  
Have I beheld a dream so manifest  
As in the night just past. And this I'll tell thee:  
There stood by me two women in fair robes;  
And this in Persian garments was arrayed,  
And that in Dorian came before mine eyes;  
In stature both of tallest, comeliest size;  
And both of faultless beauty, sisters twain  
Of the same stock.<sup>20</sup> And they twain had their homes,  
One in the Hellenic, one in alien land.  
And these two, as I dreamt I saw, were set  
At variance with each other. And my son  
Learnt it, and checked and mollified their wrath,  
And yokes them to his chariot, and his collar  
He places on their necks. And one was proud  
Of that equipment,<sup>21</sup> and in harness gave  
Her mouth obedient; but the other kicked,  
And tears the chariot's trappings with her hands,

---

<sup>19</sup> In the Greek, as in the translation, there is a change of metre, intended apparently to represent the transition from the tone of eager excitement to the ordinary level of discourse.

<sup>20</sup> With reference either to the *mythos* that Asia and Europa were both daughters of Okeanos, or to the historical fact that the Asiatic Ionians and the Dorians of Europe were both of the same Hellenic stock. The contrast between the long flowing robes of the Asiatic women, and the short, scanty kilt-like dress of those of Sparta must be borne in mind if we would see the picture in its completeness.

<sup>21</sup> Athenian pride is flattered with the thought that they had resisted while the Ionian Greeks had submitted all too willingly to the yoke of the Barbarian.

And rushes off uncurbed, and breaks its yoke  
Asunder. And my son falls low, and then  
His father comes, Dareios, pitying him.  
And lo! when Xerxes sees him, he his clothes  
Rends round his limbs. These things I say I saw  
In visions of the night; and when I rose,  
And dipped my hands in fountain flowing clear,<sup>22</sup>  
I at the altar stood with hand that bore  
Sweet incense, wishing holy chrism to pour  
To the averting Gods whom thus men worship.  
And I beheld an eagle in full flight  
To Phœbos' altar-hearth; and then, my friends,  
I stood, struck dumb with fear; and next I saw  
A kite pursuing, in her wingèd course,  
And with his claws tearing the eagle's head,  
Which did nought else but crouch and yield itself.  
Such terrors it has been my lot to see,  
And yours to hear: For be ye sure, my son,  
If he succeed, will wonder-worthy prove;  
But if he fail, still irresponsible  
He to the people, and in either case,  
He, should he but return, is sovereign still.<sup>23</sup>

*Chor.* We neither wish, O Lady, thee to frighten  
O'ermuch with what we say, nor yet encourage:  
But thou, the Gods adoring with entreaties,  
If thou hast seen aught ill, bid them avert it,  
And that all good things may receive fulfilment  
For thee, thy children, and thy friends and country.  
And next 'tis meet libations due to offer  
To Earth and to the dead. And ask thy husband,  
Dareios, whom thou say'st by night thou sawest,  
With kindly mood from 'neath the Earth to send thee  
Good things to light for thee and for thine offspring,  
While adverse things shall fade away in darkness.  
Such things do I, a self-taught seer, advise thee  
In kindly mood, and any way we reckon  
That good will come to thee from out these omens.

*Atoss.* Well, with kind heart, hast thou, as first expounder,  
Out of my dreams brought out a welcome meaning  
For me, and for my sons; and thy good wishes,  
May they receive fulfilment! And this also,  
As thou dost bid, we to the Gods will offer  
And to our friends below, when we go homeward.

---

<sup>22</sup> Lustrations of this kind, besides their general significance in cleansing from defilement, had a special force as charms to turn aside dangers threatened by foreboding dreams. Comp. Aristoph. *Frogs*, v. 1264; Persius, *Sat.* ii. 16.

<sup>23</sup> The political bearing of the passage as contrasting this characteristic of the despotism of Persia with the strict account to which all Athenian generals were subject, is, of course, unmistakable.

But first, my friends, I wish to hear of Athens,  
Where in the world do men report it standeth?<sup>24</sup>

*Chor.* Far to the West, where sets our king the Sun-God.

*Atoss.* Was it this city my son wished to capture?

*Chor.* Aye, then would Hellas to our king be subject.

*Atoss.* And have they any multitude of soldiers?

*Chor.* A mighty host, that wrought the Medes much mischief.

*Atoss.* And what besides? Have they too wealth sufficing?

*Chor.* A fount of silver have they, their land's treasure.<sup>25</sup>

*Atoss.* Have they a host in archers' skill excelling?

*Chor.* Not so, they wield the spear and shield and bucklers.<sup>26</sup>

*Atoss.* What shepherd rules and lords it o'er their people?

*Chor.* Of no man are they called the slaves or subjects.

*Atoss.* How then can they sustain a foe invading?

*Chor.* So that they spoiled Dareios' goodly army.

*Atoss.* Dread news is thine for sires of those who're marching.

*Chor.* Nay, but I think thou soon wilt know the whole truth;  
This running one may know is that of Persian:<sup>27</sup>  
For good or evil some clear news he bringeth.

### ***Enter Messenger***

*Mess.* O cities of the whole wide land of Asia!

---

<sup>24</sup> The question, which seems to have rankled in the minds of the Athenians, is recorded as an historical fact, and put into the mouth of Dareios by Herodotos (v. 101). He had asked it on hearing that Sardis had been attacked and burnt by them.

<sup>25</sup> The words point to the silver mines of Laureion, which had been worked under Peisistratos, and of which this is the first mention in Greek literature.

<sup>26</sup> Once more the contrast between the Greek *hoplite* and the light-armed archers of the invaders is dwelt upon. The next answer of the Chorus dwells upon the deeper contrast, then prominent in the minds of all Athenians, between their democratic freedom and the despotism of Persia. Comp. Herod. v. 78.

<sup>27</sup> The system of postal communications by means of couriers which Dareios had organised had made their speed in running proverbial (Herod. vii. 97).



O soil of Persia, haven of great wealth!  
How at one stroke is brought to nothingness  
Our great prosperity, and all the flower  
Of Persia's strength is fallen! Woe is me!  
'Tis ill to be the first to bring ill news;  
Yet needs must I the whole woe tell, ye Persians:  
All our barbaric mighty host is lost.<sup>28</sup>

### Strophe I

*Chor.* O piteous, piteous woe!  
O strange and dread event!  
Weep, O ye Persians, hearing this great grief!

*Mess.* Yea, all things there are ruined utterly;  
And I myself beyond all hopes behold  
The light of day at home.

### Antistrophe I

*Chor.* O'er-long doth life appear  
To me, bowed down with years,  
On hearing this unlooked-for misery.

*Mess.* And I, indeed, being present and not hearing  
The tales of others, can report, ye Persians,  
What ills were brought to pass.

### Strophe II

*Chor.* Alas, alas! in vain  
The many-weaponed and commingled host  
Went from the land of Asia to invade  
The soil divine of Hellas.

*Mess.* Full of the dead, slain foully, are the coasts  
Of Salamis, and all the neighbouring shore.

---

<sup>28</sup> With the characteristic contempt of a Greek for other races, Æschylos makes the Persians speak of themselves throughout as 'barbarians,' 'barbaric.'

## Antistrophe II

*Chor.* Alas, alas! sea-tossed  
The bodies of our friends, and much disstained:  
Thou say'st that they are drifted to and fro

In far out-floating garments.<sup>29</sup>  
*Mess.* E'en so; our bows availed not, but the host  
Has perished, conquered by the clash of ships.

## Strophe III

*Chor.* Wail, raise a bitter cry  
And full of woe, for those who died in fight.  
How every way the Gods have wrought out ill,  
Ah me! ah me, our army all destroyed.

*Mess.* O name of Salamis that most I loathe!  
Ah, how I groan, remembering Athens too!

## Antistrophe III

*Chor.* Yea, to her enemies  
Athens may well be hateful, and our minds  
Remember how full many a Persian wife  
She, for no cause, made widows and bereaved.

*Atoss.* Long time I have been silent in my woe,  
Crushed down with grief; for this calamity  
Exceeds all power to tell the woe, or ask.  
Yet still we mortals needs must bear the griefs  
The Gods send on us. Clearly tell thy tale,  
Unfolding the whole mischief, even though  
Thou groan'st at evils, who there is not dead,  
And which of our chief captains we must mourn,  
And who, being set in office o'er the host,  
Left by their death their office desolate.

*Mess.* Xerxes still lives and sees the light of day.

---

<sup>29</sup> Perhaps – “On planks that floated onward,” or – “On land and sea far spreading.”

*Atoss.* To my house, then, great light thy words have brought,  
Bright dawn of morning after murky night.

*Mess.* Artembares, the lord of myriad horse,  
On the hard flinty coasts of the Sileni  
Is now being dashed; and valiant Dadakes,  
Captain of thousands, smitten with the spear,  
Leapt wildly from his ship. And Tenagon,  
Best of the true old Bactrians, haunts the soil  
Of Aias' isle; Lilaïos, Arsames,  
And with them too Argestes, there defeated,  
Hard by the island where the doves abound,<sup>30</sup>  
Beat here and there upon the rocky shore.  
[And from the springs of Neilos, Ægypt's stream,  
Arkteus, Adeues, Pheresseues too,  
These with Pharnuchos in one ship were lost;]  
Matallos, Chrysa-born, the captain bold  
Of myriads, leader he of swarthy horse  
Some thrice ten thousand strong, has fallen low,  
His red beard, hanging all its shaggy length,  
Deep dyed with blood, and purpled all his skin.  
Arabian Magos, Bactrian Artames,  
They perished, settlers in a land full rough.  
[Amistris and Amphistreus, guiding well  
The spear of many a conflict, and the noble  
Ariomardos, leaving bitter grief  
For Sardis; and the Mysian Seisames.]  
With twelve score ships and ten came Tharybis;  
Lyrnæan he in birth, once fair in form,  
He lies, poor wretch, a death inglorious dying:  
And, first in valour proved, Syennesis,  
Kilikian satrap, who, for one man, gave  
Most trouble to his foes, and nobly died.  
Of leaders such as these I mention make,  
And out of many evils tell but few.

*Atoss.* Woe, woe! I hear the very worst of ills,  
Shame to the Persians, cause of bitter wail;  
But tell me, going o'er the ground again,  
How great the number of the Hellenes' navy,  
That they presumed with Persia's armament  
To wage their warfare in the clash of ships.

*Mess.* As far as numbers went, be sure the ships  
Of Persia had the better, for the Hellenes

---

<sup>30</sup> Possibly Salamis itself, as famed for the doves which were reared there as sacred to Aphrodite, but possibly also one of the smaller islands in the Saronic gulf, which the epithet would be enough to designate for an Athenian audience. The "coasts of the Sileni" in v. 305 are identified by scholiasts with Salamis.

Had, as their total, ships but fifteen score,  
And other ten selected as reserve.<sup>31</sup>  
And Xerxes (well I know it) had a thousand  
Which he commanded – those that most excelled<sup>32</sup>  
In speed were twice five score and seven in number;  
So stands the account. Deem'st thou our forces less  
In that encounter? Nay, some Power above  
Destroyed our host, and pressed the balance down  
With most unequal fortune, and the Gods  
Preserve the city of the Goddess Pallas.

*Atoss.* Is the Athenians' city then unsacked?

*Mess.* Their men are left, and that is bulwark strong.<sup>33</sup>

*Atoss.* Next tell me how the fight of ships began.  
Who led the attack? Were those Hellenes the first,  
Or was't my son, exulting in his strength?

*Mess.* The author of the mischief, O my mistress,  
Was some foul fiend or Power on evil bent;  
For lo! a Hellene from the Athenian host<sup>34</sup>  
Came to thy son, to Xerxes, and spake thus,  
That should the shadow of the dark night come,  
The Hellenes would not wait him, but would leap  
Into their rowers' benches, here and there,  
And save their lives in secret, hasty flight.  
And he forthwith, this hearing, knowing not  
The Hellene's guile, nor yet the Gods' great wrath,  
Gives this command to all his admirals,  
Soon as the sun should cease to burn the earth  
With his bright rays, and darkness thick invade  
The firmament of heaven, to set their ships  
In threefold lines, to hinder all escape,  
And guard the billowy straits, and others place  
In circuit round about the isle of Aias:  
For if the Hellenes 'scaped an evil doom,  
And found a way of secret, hasty flight,  
It was ordained that all should lose their heads.<sup>35</sup>  
Such things he spake from soul o'erwrought with pride,

---

<sup>31</sup> Perhaps – “And ten of these selected as reserve.”

<sup>32</sup> As regards the number of the Persian ships, 1000 of average, and 207 of special swiftness. Æschylos agrees with Herodotos, who gives the total of 1207. The latter, however, reckons the Greek ships not at 310, but 378 (vii. 89, viii. 48).

<sup>33</sup> The fact that Athens had actually been taken, and its chief buildings plundered and laid waste, was, of course, not a pleasant one for the poet to dwell on. It could hardly, however, be entirely passed over, and this is the one allusion to it. In the truest sense it was still “unsacked:” it had not lost its most effective defence, its most precious treasure.

<sup>34</sup> As the story is told by Herodotos (vii. 75), this was Sikinnos, the slave of Themistocles, and the stratagem was the device of that commander to save the Greeks from the disgrace and ruin of a *saute qui peut* flight in all directions.

<sup>35</sup> The Greeks never beheaded their criminals, and the punishment is mentioned as being specially characteristic of the barbaric Persians.

For he knew not what fate the Gods would send;  
And they, not mutinous, but prompt to serve,  
Then made their supper ready, and each sailor  
Fastened his oar around true-fitting thole;  
And when the sunlight vanished, and the night  
Had come, then each man, master of an oar,  
Went to his ship, and all men bearing arms,  
And through the long ships rank cheered loud to rank;  
And so they sail, as 'twas appointed each,  
And all night long the captains of the fleet  
Kept their men working, rowing to and fro;  
Night then came on, and the Hellenic host  
In no wise sought to take to secret flight.  
And when day, bright to look on with white steeds,  
O'erspread the earth, then rose from the Hellenes  
Loud chant of cry of battle, and forthwith  
Echo gave answer from each island rock;  
And terror then on all the Persians fell,  
Of fond hopes disappointed. Not in flight  
The Hellenes then their solemn pæans sang:  
But with brave spirit hasting on to battle.  
With martial sound the trumpet fired those ranks;  
And straight with sweep of oars that flew through foam,  
They smote the loud waves at the boatswain's call;  
And swiftly all were manifest to sight.  
Then first their right wing moved in order meet;<sup>36</sup>  
Next the whole line its forward course began,  
And all at once we heard a mighty shout, —  
“O sons of Hellenes, forward, free your country;  
Free too your wives, your children, and the shrines  
Built to your fathers' Gods, and holy tombs  
Your ancestors now rest in. Now the fight  
Is for our all.” And on our side indeed  
Arose in answer din of Persian speech,  
And time to wait was over; ship on ship  
Dashed its bronze-pointed beak, and first a barque  
Of Hellas did the encounter fierce begin,<sup>37</sup>  
And from Phœnikian vessel crashes off  
Her carved prow. And each against his neighbour  
Steers his own ship: and first the mighty flood  
Of Persian host held out. But when the ships  
Were crowded in the straits,<sup>38</sup> nor could they give  
Help to each other, they with mutual shocks,  
With beaks of bronze went crushing each the other,

---

<sup>36</sup> The Æginetans and Megarians, according to the account preserved by Diodoros (xi. 18), or the Lacedæmonians, according to Herodotos (viii. 65).

<sup>37</sup> This may be meant to refer to the achievements of Ameinias of Pallene, who appears in the traditional life of Æschylos as his youngest brother.

<sup>38</sup> Sc., in Herod. viii. 60, the strait between Salamis and the mainland.

Shivering their rowers' benches. And the ships  
Of Hellas, with manœuvring not unskilful,  
Charged circling round them. And the hulls of ships  
Floated capsized, nor could the sea be seen,  
Strown, as it was, with wrecks and carcasses;  
And all the shores and rocks were full of corpses.  
And every ship was wildly rowed in fight,  
All that composed the Persian armament.  
And they, as men spear tunnies,<sup>39</sup> or a haul  
Of other fishes, with the shafts of oars,  
Or spars of wrecks went smiting, cleaving down;  
And bitter groans and wailings overspread  
The wide sea-waves, till eye of swarthy night  
Bade it all cease: and for the mass of ills,  
Not, though my tale should run for ten full days,  
Could I in full recount them. Be assured  
That never yet so great a multitude  
Died in a single day as died in this.

*Atoss.* Ah, me! Great then the sea of ills that breaks  
On Persia and the whole barbaric host.

*Mess.* Be sure our evil fate is but half o'er:  
On this has supervened such bulk of woe,  
As more than twice to outweigh what I've told.

*Atoss.* And yet what fortune could be worse than this?  
Say, what is this disaster which thou tell'st,  
That turns the scale to greater evils still?

*Mess.* Those Persians that were in the bloom of life,  
Bravest in heart and noblest in their blood,  
And by the king himself deemed worthiest trust,  
Basely and by most shameful death have died.

*Atoss.* Ah! woe is me, my friends, for our ill fate!  
What was the death by which thou say'st they perished?

*Mess.* There is an isle that lies off Salamis,<sup>40</sup>  
Small, with bad anchorage for ships, where Pan,  
Pan the dance-loving, haunts the sea-washed coast.  
There Xerxes sends these men, that when their foes,  
Being wrecked, should to the islands safely swim,  
They might with ease destroy th' Hellenic host,

---

<sup>39</sup> Tunny-fishing has always been prominent in the occupations on the Mediterranean coasts, and the sailors who formed so large a part of every Athenian audience would be familiar with the process here described, of striking or harpooning them. Aristophanes (*Wasps*, 1087) coins (or uses) the word "to tunny" (θυψάλλω) to express the act. Comp. Herod. i. 62.

<sup>40</sup> Sc., Psyttaleia, lying between Salamis and the mainland. Pausanias (i. 36-82) describes it in his time as having no artistic shrine or statue, but full everywhere of roughly carved images of Pan, to whom the island was sacred. It lay just opposite the entrance to the Peiræos. The connexion of Pan with Salamis and its adjacent islands seems implied in Sophocles, *Aias*, 695.

And save their friends from out the deep sea's paths;  
But ill the future guessing: for when God  
Gave the Hellenes the glory of the battle,  
In that same hour, with arms well wrought in bronze  
Shielding their bodies, from their ships they leapt,  
And the whole isle encircled, so that we  
Were sore distressed,<sup>41</sup> and knew not where to turn;  
For here men's hands hurled many a stone at them;  
And there the arrows from the archer's bow  
Smote and destroyed them; and with one great rush,  
At last advancing, they upon them dash  
And smite, and hew the limbs of these poor wretches,  
Till they each foe had utterly destroyed.  
[And Xerxes when he saw how deep the ill,<sup>42</sup>  
Groaned out aloud, for he had ta'en his seat,  
With clear, wide view of all the army round,  
On a high cliff hard by the open sea;  
And tearing then his robes with bitter cry,  
And giving orders to his troops on shore,  
He sends them off in foul retreat. This grief  
'Tis thine to mourn besides the former ills.]

*Atoss.* O hateful Power, how thou of all their hopes  
Hast robbed the Persians! Bitter doom my son  
Devised for glorious Athens, nor did they,  
The invading host who fell at Marathon,  
Suffice; but my son, counting it his task  
To exact requital for it, brought on him  
So great a crowd of sorrows. But I pray,  
As to those ships that have this fate escaped,  
Where did'st thou leave them? Can'st thou clearly tell?

*Mess.* The captains of the vessels that were left,  
With a fair wind, but not in meet array,  
Took flight: and all the remnant of the army  
Fell in Bœotia – some for stress of thirst  
About the fountain clear, and some of us,  
Panting for breath, cross to the Phokians' land,  
The soil of Doris, and the Melian gulf,  
Where fair Spercheios waters all the plains  
With kindly flood, and then the Achæan fields  
And city of the Thessali received us,  
Famished for lack of food;<sup>43</sup> and many died  
Of thirst and hunger, for both ills we bore;

---

<sup>41</sup> The manœuvre was, we learn from Herodotos (viii. 95), the work of Aristides, the personal friend of Æschylos, and the statesman with whose policy he had most sympathy.

<sup>42</sup> The lines are noted as probably a spurious addition, by a weaker hand, to the text, as introducing surplusage, as inconsistent with Herodotos, and as faulty in their metrical structure.

<sup>43</sup> So Herodotos (viii. 115) describes them as driven by hunger to eat even grass and leaves.

And then to the Magnetian land we came,  
And that of Macedonians, to the stream  
Of Axios, and Bolbe's reed-grown marsh,  
And Mount Pangaios and the Edonian land.  
And on that night God sent a mighty frost,  
Unwonted at that season, sealing up  
The whole course of the Strymon's pure, clear flood;<sup>44</sup>  
And they who erst had deemed the Gods as nought,  
Then prayed with hot entreaties, worshipping  
Both earth and heaven. And after that the host  
Ceased from its instant calling on the Gods,  
It crosses o'er the glassy, frozen stream;  
And whosoe'er set forth before the rays  
Of the bright God were shed abroad, was saved;  
For soon the glorious sun with burning blaze  
Reached the mid-stream and warmed it with its flame,  
And they, confused, each on the other fell.  
Blest then was he whose soul most speedily  
Breathed out its life. And those who yet survived  
And gained deliverance, crossing with great toil  
And many a pang through Thrakè, now are come,  
Escaped from perils, no great number they,  
To this our sacred land, and so it groans,  
This city of the Persians, missing much  
Our country's dear-loved youth. Too true my tale,  
And many things I from my speech omit,  
Ills which the Persians suffer at God's hand.

*Chor.* O Power resistless, with what weight of woe  
On all the Persian race have thy feet leapt!

*Atoss.* Ah! woe is me for that our army lost!  
O vision of the night that cam'st in dreams,  
Too clearly did'st thou show me of these ill!  
But ye (*to Chorus*) did judge them far too carelessly;  
Yet since your counsel pointed to that course,  
I to the Gods will first my prayer address.  
And then with gifts to Earth and to the Dead,  
Bringing the chrism from my store, I'll come.  
For our past ill, I know, 'tis all too late,  
But for the future, I may hope, will dawn  
A better fortune! But 'tis now your part  
In these our present ill, in counsel faithful  
To commune with the Faithful; and my son,  
Should he come here before me, comfort him,

---

<sup>44</sup> No trace of this passage over the frozen Strymon appears in Herodotos, who leaves the reader to imagine that it was crossed, as before, by a bridge. It is hardly, indeed, consistent with dramatic probability that the courier should have remained to watch the whole retreat of the defeated army; and on this and other grounds, the latter part of the speech has been rejected by some critics as a later addition.



And home escort him, lest he add fresh ill  
To all these evils that we suffer now. [*Exit*

*Chor.* Zeus our king, who now to nothing  
Bring'st the army of the Persians,  
Multitudinous, much boasting;  
And with gloomy woe hast shrouded  
Both Ecbatana and Susa;  
Many maidens now are tearing  
With their tender hands their mantles,  
And with tear-floods wet their bosoms,  
In the common grief partaking;  
And the brides of Persian warriors,  
Dainty even in their wailing,  
Longing for their new-wed husbands,  
Reft of bridal couch luxurious,  
With its coverlet so dainty,  
Losing joy of wanton youth-time,  
Mourn in never-sated wailings.  
And I too in fullest measure  
Raise again meet cry of sorrow,  
Weeping for the loved and lost ones.

### **Strophe I**

For now the land of Asia mourneth sore,  
Left desolate of men,  
'Twas Xerxes led them forth, woe! woe!  
'Twas Xerxes lost them all, woe! woe!  
'Twas Xerxes who with evil counsels sped  
Their course in sea-borne barques.  
Why was Dareios erst so free from harm,  
First bowman of the state,  
The leader whom the men of Susa loved,

### **Antistrophe I**

While those who fought as soldiers or at sea,  
These ships, dark-hulled, well-rowed,  
Their own ships bore them on, woe! woe!  
Their own ships lost them all, woe! woe!  
Their own ships, in the crash of ruin urged,

And by Ionian hands?<sup>45</sup>  
The king himself, we hear, but hardly 'scapes,  
Through Thrakè's widespread steppes,  
And paths o'er which the tempests wildly sweep.

### **Strophe II**

And they who perished first, ah me!  
Perforce unburied left, alas!  
Are scattered round Kychreia's shore,<sup>46</sup> woe! woe!  
Lament, mourn sore, and raise a bitter cry,  
Grievous, the sky to pierce, woe! woe!  
And let thy mourning voice uplift its strain  
Of loud and full lament.

### **Antistrophe II**

Torn by the whirling flood, ah me!  
Their carcasses are gnawed, alas!  
By the dumb brood of stainless sea, woe! woe!  
And each house mourneth for its vanished lord;  
And childless sires, woe! woe!  
Mourning in age o'er griefs the Gods have sent,  
Now hear their utter loss.

### **Strophe III**

And throughout all Asia's borders  
None now own the sway of Persia,  
Nor bring any more their tribute,  
Owning sway of sovereign master.  
Low upon the Earth, laid prostrate,  
Is the strength of our great monarch

### **Antistrophe III**

No more need men keep in silence

---

<sup>45</sup> The Ionians, not of the Asiatic Ionia, but of Attica.

<sup>46</sup> Kychreia, the archaic name of Salamis.

Tongues fast bound: for now the people  
May with freedom speak at pleasure;  
For the yoke of power is broken;  
And blood-stained in all its meadows  
Holds the sea-washed isle of Aias  
What was once the host of Persia.

***Re-enter Atossa***

*Atoss.* Whoe'er, my friends, is vexed in troublous times,  
Knows that when once a tide of woe sets in,  
A man is wont to fear in everything;  
But when Fate flows on smoothly, then to trust  
That the same Fate will ever send fair gales.  
So now all these disasters from the Gods  
Seem in mine eyes filled full of fear and dread,  
And in mine ears rings cry unpæanlike,  
So great a dread of all has seized my soul:  
And therefore now, without or chariot's state  
Or wonted pomp, have I thus issued forth  
From out my palace, to my son's sire bringing  
Libations loving, gifts propitiatory,  
Meet for the dead; milk pure and white from cow  
Unblemished, and bright honey that distils  
From the flower-working bee, and water drawn  
From virgin fountain, and the draught unmarred  
From mother wild, bright child of ancient vine;  
And here too of the tree that evermore  
Keeps its fresh life in foliage, the pale olive,  
Is the sweet-smelling fruit, and twinèd wreaths  
Of flowers, the children of all-bearing earth.<sup>47</sup>  
But ye, my friends, o'er these libations poured  
In honour of the dead, chant forth your hymns,  
And call upon Dareios as a God:  
While I will send unto the Gods below  
These votive offerings which the earth shall drink.

*[Goes to the tomb of Dareios in the centre  
of the stage]*

*Chor.* O royal lady, honoured of the Persians,  
Do thou libations pour  
To the dark chambers of the dead below;  
And we with hymns will pray

---

<sup>47</sup> The ritual described is Hellenic rather than Persian, and takes its place (Soph. *Electr.* 836; Eurip. *Iphig. Taur.* 583; Homer, *Il.* xxiii. 219) as showing what offerings were employed to soothe or call up the spirits of the dead. Comp. Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxx.

The Powers that act as escorts of the dead  
To give us kindly help beneath the earth.  
But oh, ye holy Ones in darkness dwelling,  
Hermes and Earth, and thou, the Lord of Hell,  
Send from beneath a soul  
Up to the light of earth;  
For should he know a cure for these our ills,  
He, he alone of men, their end may tell.

### **Strophe I**

Doth he, the blest one hear,  
The king, like Gods in power,  
Hear me, as I send forth  
My cries in barbarous speech,  
Yet very clear to him, —  
Sad, varied, broken cries  
So as to tell aloud  
Our troubles terrible?  
Ah, doth he hear below?

### **Antistrophe I**

But thou, O Earth, and ye,  
The other Lords of those  
Beneath the grave that dwell;  
Grant that the godlike one  
May come from out your home,  
The Persians' mighty God,  
In Susa's palace born;  
Send him, I pray you, up,  
The like of whom the soil  
Of Persia never hid.

### **Strophe II**

Dear was our chief, and dear to us his tomb,  
For dear the life it hides;  
Aidoneus, O Aidoneus, send him forth,  
Thou who dost lead the dead to Earth again,  
Yea, send Dareios... What a king was he!

### **Antistrophe II**

For never did he in war's bloody woe  
Lose all his warrior-host,  
But Heaven-taught Counsellor the Persians called him,  
And Heaven-taught Counsellor in truth he proved,  
Since he still ruled his hosts of subjects well.

### **Strophe III**

Monarch, O ancient monarch, come, oh, come,  
Come to the summit of sepulchral mound,  
Lifting thy foot encased  
In slipper saffron-dyed,  
And giving to our view  
Thy royal tiara's crest.<sup>48</sup>  
Speak, O Dareios, faultless father, speak.

### **Antistrophe III**

Yea, come, that thou, O Lord, may'st hear the woes,  
Woes new and strange, our lord has now endured;  
For on us now has fallen  
A dark and Stygian mist,  
Since all the armed youth  
Has perished utterly;  
Speak, O Dareios, faultless father, speak.

### **Epode**

O thou, whose death thy friends  
Bewail with many tears,  
Why thus, O Lord of lords,  
In double error of wild frenzy born,  
Have all our triremes good  
Been lost to this our land,  
Ships that are ships no more, yea, ships no more?

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<sup>48</sup> The description obviously gives the state dress of the Persian kings. They alone wore the tiara erect. Xen. *Kyrop.* viii. 3, 13.

*The Ghost of Dareios appears on the summit of the*

**mound**

*Dar.* O faithful of the Faithful, ye who were  
Companions of my youth, ye Persian elders,

What troubles is't my country toils beneath?  
The whole plain groans, cut up and furrowed o'er,<sup>49</sup>  
And I, beholding now my queen beloved  
Standing hard by my sepulchre, feared much,  
And her libations graciously received;  
But ye wail loud near this my sepulchre,  
And shouting shrill with cries that raise the dead,  
Ye call me with your plaints. No easy task  
Is it to come, for this cause above all,  
That the great Gods who reign below are apter  
To seize men than release: yet natheless I,  
Being great in power among them, now am come.  
Be quick then, that none blame me as too late;<sup>50</sup>  
What new dire evils on the Persians weigh?

*Chor.* I fear to look on thee,  
Fear before thee to speak,  
With all the awe of thee I felt of old.

*Dar.* But since I came by thy complaints persuaded,  
From below rising, spin no lengthened tale;  
But shortly, clearly speak, and tell thy story,  
And leave awhile thine awe and fear of me.

*Chor.* I dread thy wish to grant,  
I dread to say thee nay,<sup>51</sup>  
Saying things that it is hard for friends to speak.

*Dar.* Nay, then, since that old dread of thine prevents thee,  
Do thou [*to Atossa*], the ancient partner of my bed,  
My noble queen, from these thy plaints and moanings  
Cease, and say something clearly. Human sorrows  
May well on mortals fall; for many evils,

---

<sup>49</sup> Either that he has felt the measured tread of the mourners round his tomb, as they went wailing round and round, or that he has heard the rush of armies, and seen the plain tracked by chariot-wheels, and comes, not knowing all these things, to learn what it means.

<sup>50</sup> The words point to the widespread belief that when the souls of the dead were permitted to return to the earth, it was with strict limitations as to the time of their leave of absence.

<sup>51</sup> Perhaps – “I dread to speak the truth.”

Some on the sea, and some on dry land also,  
Happen to men if life be far prolonged.

*Atoss.* O thou, who in the fate of fair good fortune  
Excelled'st all men, who, while yet thou sawest  
The sun's bright rays, did'st lead a life all blessed,  
Admired, yea, worshipped as a God by Persians,  
Now, too, I count thee blest in that thou died'st  
Before thou saw'st the depth of these our evils.  
For now, Dareios, thou shalt hear a story  
Full, yet in briefest moment. Utter ruin,  
To sum up all, is come upon the Persians.

*Dar.* How so? Hath plague or discord seized my country?

*Atoss.* Not so, but all the host is lost near Athens.

*Dar.* What son of mine led that host hither, tell me?<sup>52</sup>

*Atoss.* Xerxes o'er-hasty, emptying all the mainland.

*Dar.* Made he this mad attempt by land or water?

*Atoss.* By both; two lines there were of two great armies.

*Dar.* How did so great a host effect its passage?

*Atoss.* He bridged the straits of Helle, and found transit.

*Dar.* Did he prevail to close the mighty Bosphoros?

*Atoss.* So was it; yet some God, it may be, helped him.

*Dar.* Alas! some great God came and stole his wisdom.

*Atoss.* Yea, the end shows what evil he accomplished.

*Dar.* And how have they fared, that ye thus bewail them?

*Atoss.* The naval host, o'ercome, wrecked all the land-force.

*Dar.* What! Is the whole host by the spear laid prostrate?

*Atoss.* For this doth Susa's city mourn her losses.

*Dar.* Alas, for that brave force and mighty army!

---

<sup>52</sup> According to Herodotos (vii. 225) two brothers of Xerxes fell at Thermopylæ.

*Atoss.* The Bactrians all are lost, not old men merely.

*Dar.* Poor fool! how he hath lost his host's fresh vigour!

*Atoss.* Xerxes, they say, alone, with but few others...

*Dar.* What is his end, and where? Is there no safety?

*Atoss.* Was glad to gain the bridge that joins two mainlands.

*Dar.* And has he reached this mainland? Is that certain?

*Atoss.* Yea, the report holds good. Here is no discord.<sup>53</sup>

*Dar.* Ah me! Full swift the oracles' fulfilment!  
And on my son hath Zeus their end directed.  
I hoped the Gods would work them out more slowly;  
But when man hastens, God too with him worketh.  
And now for all my friends a fount of evils  
Seems to be found. And this my son, not knowing,  
In youth's rash mood, hath wrought; for he did purpose  
To curb the sacred Hellespont with fetters,  
As though it were his slave, and sought to alter  
The stream of God, the Bosporos, full-flowing,  
And his well-hammered chains around it casting,  
Prevailed to make his mighty host a highway;  
And though a mortal, thought, with no good counsel,  
To master all the Gods, yea, e'en Poseidon.  
Nay, was not my poor son oppressed with madness?  
And much I fear lest all my heaped-up treasure  
Become the spoil and prey of the first comer.

*Atoss.* Such things the o'er-hasty Xerxes learns from others,  
By intercourse with men of evil counsel;<sup>54</sup>  
Who say that thou great wealth for thy son gained'st  
By thy spear's might, while he with coward spirit  
Does his spear-work indoors, and nothing addeth  
Unto his father's glory. Such reproaches  
Hearing full oft from men of evil counsel,  
He planned this expedition against Hellas.

*Dar.* Thus then a deed portentous hath been wrought,  
Ever to be remembered, such as ne'er  
Falling on Susa made it desolate,  
Since Zeus our king ordained this dignity,

---

<sup>53</sup> As Herodotos (viii. 117) tells the story, the bridge had been broken by the tempest before Xerxes reached it.

<sup>54</sup> Probably Mardonios and Onomacritos the Athenian soothsayer are referred to, who, according to Herodotos (vii. 6, viii. 99) were the chief instigators of the expedition.



That one man should be lord of Asia's plains.  
Where feed her thousand flocks, and hold the rod  
Of sovran guidance: for the Median first<sup>55</sup>  
Ruled o'er the host, and then his son in turn  
Finished the work, for reason steered his soul;  
And Kyros came as third, full richly blest,  
And ruled, and gained great peace for all his friends;  
And he won o'er the Lydians and the Phrygians,  
And conquered all the wide Ionian land;<sup>56</sup>  
For such his wisdom, he provoked not God.  
And Kyros' son came fourth, and ruled the host;  
And Mardos fifth held sway, his country's shame,<sup>57</sup>  
Shame to the ancient throne; and him with guile  
Artaphrenes<sup>58</sup> the brave smote down, close leagued  
With men, his friends, to whom the work was given.  
[Sixth, Maraphis and seventh Artaphrenes,]  
And I obtained this post that I desired,  
And with a mighty host great victories won.  
Yet no such evil brought I on the state;  
But my son Xerxes, young, thinks like a youth,  
And all my solemn charge remembers not;  
For know this well, my old companions true,  
That none of us who swayed the realm of old,  
Did e'er appear as working ills like these.

*Chor.* What then, O King Dareios? To what end  
Lead'st thou thy speech? And how, in this our plight,  
Could we, the Persian people, prosper best?

*Dar.* If ye no more attack the Hellenes' land,  
E'en though the Median host outnumbered theirs.  
To them the very land is true ally.

*Chor.* What meanest thou? How fights the land for them?

*Dar.* \*It slays with famine those vast multitudes.

*Chor.* We then a host, select, compact, will raise.

---

<sup>55</sup> Astyages, the father-in-law of Kyaxares and grandfather of Kyros. In this case Æschylos must be supposed to accept Xenophon's statement that Kyaxares succeeded to Astyages. Possibly, however, the Median may be Kyaxares I., the father of Astyages, and so the succession here would harmonise with that of Herodotos. The whole succession must be looked on as embodying the loose, floating notions of the Athenians as to the history of their great enemy, rather than as the result of inquiry.

<sup>56</sup> Stress is laid on the violence to which the Asiatic Ionians had succumbed, and their resistance to which distinguished them from the Lydians or Phrygians, whose submission had been voluntary.

<sup>57</sup> Mardos. Under this name we recognise the Pseudo-Smerdis of Herodotos (iii. 67), who, by restoring the dominion of the Median Magi, the caste to which he himself belonged, brought shame upon the Persians.

<sup>58</sup> Possibly another form of Intaphernes, who appears in Herodotos (iii. 70) as one of the seven conspirators against the Magian Pseudo-Smerdis.

*Dar.* Nay, e'en the host which now in Hellas stays<sup>59</sup>  
Will ne'er return in peace and safety home.

*Chor.* How say'st thou? Does not all the barbarous host  
Cross from Europa o'er the straits of Hellè?

*Dar.* But few of many; if 'tis meet for one  
Who looks upon the things already done  
To trust the oracles of Gods; for they,  
Not these or those, but all, are brought to pass:  
If this be so, then, resting on vain hopes,<sup>60</sup>  
He leaves a chosen portion of his host:  
And they abide where, watering all the plain,  
Asôpos pours his fertilising stream  
Dear to Bœotian land; and there of ill  
The topmost crown awaits them, penalty  
Of wanton outrage and of godless thoughts;  
For they to Hellas coming, held not back  
In awe from plundering sculptured forms of Gods<sup>61</sup>  
And burning down their temples; and laid low  
Are altars, and the shrines of Gods o'erthrown,  
E'en from their base. They therefore having wrought  
Deeds evil, now are suffering, and will suffer  
Evil not less, and not as yet is seen  
E'en the bare groundwork of the ill, but still  
They grow up to completeness. Such a stream  
Of blood and slaughter soon shall flow from them  
By Dorian spear upon Plataean ground,<sup>62</sup>  
And heaps of corpses shall to children's children,  
Though speechless, witness to the eyes of men  
That mortal man should not wax overproud;  
For wanton pride from blossom grows to fruit,  
The full corn in the ear, of utter woe,  
And reaps a tear-fraught harvest. Seeing then,  
Such recompense of these things, cherish well  
The memory of Athens and of Hellas;  
Let no man in his scorn of present fortune,  
And thirst for other, mar his good estate;  
Zeus is the avenger of o'er-lofty thoughts,  
A terrible controller. Therefore now,  
Since voice of God bids him be wise of heart,

---

<sup>59</sup> The force of 300,000 men left in Greece under Mardonios (Herod. viii. 113), afterwards defeated at Plataea.

<sup>60</sup> Comp. the speech of Mardonios urging his plan on Xerxes (Herod. viii. 100).

<sup>61</sup> This was of course a popular topic with the Athenians, whose own temples had been outraged. But other sanctuaries also, the temples at Delphi and Abæ, had shared the same fate, and these sins against the Gods of Hellas were naturally connected in the thoughts of the Greeks with the subsequent disasters of the Persians. In Egypt these outrages had an iconoclastic character. In Athens they were a retaliation for the destruction of the temple at Sardis (Herod. v. 102).

<sup>62</sup> The reference to the prominent part taken by the Peloponnesian forces in the battle of Plataea is probably due to the political sympathies of the dramatist.

Admonish him with counsel true and good  
To cease his daring sacrilegious pride;  
And thou, O Xerxes' mother, old and dear,  
Go to thy home, and taking what apparel  
Is fitting, go to meet thy son; for all  
The costly robes around his limbs are torn  
To rags and shreds in grief's wild agony.  
But do thou gently soothe his soul with words;  
For he to thee alone will deign to hearken;  
But I must leave the earth for darkness deep:  
And ye, old men, farewell, although in woe,  
And give your soul its daily bread of joy;  
For to the dead no profit bringeth wealth.

*[Exit, disappearing in the earth.]*

*Chor.* I shudder as I hear the many woes  
Both past and present that on Persians fall.

*Atoss.* [O God, how many evils fall on me!<sup>63</sup>  
And yet this one woe biteth more than all,  
Hearing my son's shame in the rags of robes  
That clothe his limbs. But I will go and take  
A fit adornment from my house, and try  
To meet my son. We will not in his troubles  
Basely abandon him whom most we love.]

### **Strophe I**

*Chor.* Ah me! a glorious and a blessed life  
Had we as subjects once,  
When our old king, Dareios, ruled the land,  
Meeting all wants, dispassionate, supreme,  
A monarch like a God.

### **Antistrophe I**

For first we showed the world our noble hosts;  
And laws of tower-like strength  
Directed all things; and our backward march  
After our wars unhurt, unsuffering led  
Our prospering armies home.

---

<sup>63</sup> The speech of Atossa is rejected by Paley, on internal grounds, as spurious.

## Strophe II

How many towns he took,  
Not crossing Halys' stream<sup>64</sup>  
Nor issuing from his home,  
There where in Strymon's sea,  
The Acheloian Isles<sup>65</sup>  
Lie near the coasts of Thrakian colonies.

## Antistrophe II

And those that lie outside the Ægæan main,  
The cities girt with towers,  
They hearkened to our king;  
And those who boast their site  
By Hellè's full, wide stream,  
Propontis with its bays, and mouth of Pontos broad.

## Strophe III

And all the isles that lie  
Facing the headland jutting in the sea,<sup>66</sup>  
Close bound to this our coast;  
Lesbos, and Samos with its olive groves;  
Chios and Paros too;  
Naxos and Myconos, and Andros too  
On Tenos bordering.

## Antistrophe III

And so he ruled the isles  
That lie midway between the continents,  
Lemnos, and Icaros,

---

<sup>64</sup> Apparently an allusion to the oracle given to Crœsos, that he, if he crossed the Halys, should destroy a great kingdom.

<sup>65</sup> The name originally given to the Echinades, a group of islands at the mouth of the Acheloös, was applied generically to all islands lying near the mouth of all great rivers, and here, probably, includes Imbros, Thasos, and Samothrakè.

<sup>66</sup> The geography is somewhat obscure, but the words seem to refer to the portion of the islands that are named as opposite (in a southerly direction) to the promontory of the Troad.

Rhodes and Cnidos and the Kyprian towns,  
Paphos and Soli famed,  
And with them Salamis,  
Whose parent city now our groans doth cause;<sup>67</sup>

### **Epode**

And many a wealthy town and populous,  
Of Hellenes in the Ionian region dwelling,  
He by his counsel ruled;  
His was the unconquered strength of warrior host,  
Allies of mingled race.  
And now, beyond all doubt,  
In strife of war defeated utterly,  
We find this high estate  
Through wrath of God o'erturned,  
And we are smitten low,  
By bitter loss at sea.

***Enter Xerxes in kingly apparel, but with his robes rent,***

### ***with Attendants***

*Xer.* Oh, miserable me!  
Who this dark hateful doom  
That I expected least  
Have met with as my lot,  
With what stern mood and fierce  
Towards the Persian race  
Is God's hand laid on us!  
What woe will come on me?  
Gone is my strength of limb,  
As I these elders see.  
Ah, would to Heaven, O Zeus,  
That with the men who fell  
Death's doom had covered me!

*Chor.* Ah, woe, O King, woe! woe!  
For the army brave in fight,  
And our goodly Persian name,

---

<sup>67</sup> Salamis in Kypros had been colonised by Teukros, the son of Aias, and had received its name in remembrance of the island in the Saronic Gulf.

And the fair array of men,  
Whom God hath now cut off!  
And the land bewails its youth  
Who for our Xerxes fell,  
For him whose deeds have filled  
Hades with Persian souls;  
For many heroes now  
Are Hades-travellers,  
Our country's chosen flower,  
Mighty with darts and bow;  
For lo! the myriad mass  
Of men has perished quite.  
Woe, woe for our fair fame!  
And Asia's land, O King,  
Is terribly, most terribly, o'erthrown.

*Xer.* I then, oh misery!  
Have to my curse been proved  
Sore evil to my country and my race.

*Chor.* Yea, and on thy return  
I will lift up my voice in wailing loud,  
Cry of sore-troubled thought,  
As of a mourner born  
In Mariandynian land,<sup>68</sup>  
Lament of many tears.

### Antistrophe I

*Xer.* Yea, utter ye a wail  
Dreary and full of grief;  
For lo! the face of Fate  
Against me now is turned.

*Chor.* Yea, I will raise a cry  
Dreary and full of grief,  
Giving this tribute due  
To all the people's woes,  
And all our loss at sea,  
Troubles of this our State  
That mourneth for her sons;  
Yea, I will wail full sore,  
With flood of bitter tears.

---

<sup>68</sup> The Mariandynoi, a Paphlagonian tribe, conspicuous for their orgiastic worship of Adonis, had become proverbial for the wildness of their plaintive dirges.

## **Strophe II**

*Xer.* For Ares, he whose might  
Was in our ships' array,  
Giving victory to our foes,  
Has in Ionians, yea,  
Ionians, found his match,  
And from the dark sea's plain,  
And that ill-omened shore,  
Has a fell harvest reaped.

*Chor.* Yea, wail, search out the whole;  
Where are our other friends?  
Where thy companions true,  
Such as Pharandakes,  
Susas, Pelagon, Psammis, Dotamas,  
Agdabatas, Susiskanes,  
From Ecbatana who started?

## **Antistrophe II**

*Xer.* I left them low in death,  
Falling from Tyrian ship,  
On Salaminian shores,  
Beating now here, now there,  
On the hard rock-girt coast.

*Chor.* Ah, where Pharnuchos then,  
And Ariomardos brave?  
And where Sevalkes king,  
Lilæos proud of race,  
Memphis and Tharybis,  
Masistras, and Artembares,  
Hystæchmas? This I ask.

## **Strophe III**

*Xer.* Woe! woe is me!  
They have looked on at Athens' ancient towers,  
Her hated towers, ah me!  
All, as by one fell stroke,  
Unhappy in their fate

Lie gasping on the shore.

*Chor.* And he, thy faithful Eye,<sup>69</sup>  
Who told the Persian host,  
Myriads on myriads o'er,<sup>70</sup>  
Alpistos, son and heir  
Of Batanôchos old

. . . . .

And the son of brave Sesames,  
Son himself of Megabates?  
Parthos, and the great Æbares,  
Did'st thou leave them, did'st thou leave them?  
Ah, woe! ah, woe is me,  
For those unhappy ones!  
Thou to the Persians brave  
Tellest of ills on ills.

### Antistrophe III

*Xer.* Ah, thou dost wake in me  
The memory of the spell of yearning love  
For comrades brave and true,  
Telling of cursed ills,  
Yea, cursed, hateful doom;  
And lo, within my frame  
My heart cries out, cries out.

*Chor.* Yea, another too we long for,  
Xanthes, captain of ten thousand  
Mardian warriors, and Anchares  
Arian born, and great Arsakes  
And Diæxis, lords of horsemen,  
Kigdagatas and Lythimnas,  
Tolmos, longing for the battle:  
Much I marvel, much I marvel,<sup>71</sup>  
For they come not, as the rear-guard  
Of thy tent on chariot mounted.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> The name seems to have been an official title for some Inspector-General of the Army. Comp. Aristoph. *Acharn.* v. 92.

<sup>70</sup> As in the account which Herodotos gives (vii. 60) of the way in which the army of Xerxes was numbered, *sc.*, by enclosing 10,000 men in a given space, and then filling it again and again till the whole army had passed through.

<sup>71</sup> Another reading gives —“They are buried, they are buried.”

<sup>72</sup> Perhaps referring to the waggon-chariots in which the rider reclines at ease, either protected by a canopy, or, as in the Assyrian



### **Strophe IV**

*Xer.* Gone those rulers of the army.

*Chor.* Gone are they in death inglorious.

*Xer.* Ah woe! ah woe! Alas! alas!

*Chor.* Ah! the Gods have sent upon us  
Ill we never thought to look on,  
Eminent above all others;  
Ne'er hath Atè seen its equal.

### **Antistrophe IV**

Smitten we by many sorrows,  
Such as come on men but seldom.

*Chor.* Smitten we, 'tis all too certain...

*Xer.* Fresh woes! fresh woes! ah me!

*Chor.* Now with adverse turn of fortune,  
With Ionian seamen meeting,  
Fails in war the race of Persians.

### **Strophe V**

*Xer.* Too true. Yea I and that vast host of mine  
Are smitten down.

*Chor.* Too true – the Persians' majesty and might  
Have perished utterly.

*Xer.* See'st thou this remnant of my armament?

*Chor.* I see it, yea, I see.

*Xer.* (*pointing to his quiver.*) Dost see thou that  
which arrows wont to hold?..

*Chor.* What speak'st thou of as saved?

*Xer.* This treasure-store for darts.

*Chor.* Few, few of many left!

*Xer.* Thus we all helpers lack.

*Chor.* Ionian soldiers flee not from the spear.

### **Antistrophe V**

*Xer.* Yea, very brave are they, and I have seen  
Unlooked-for woe.

*Chor.* Wilt tell of squadron of our sea-borne ships  
Defeated utterly?

*Xer.* I tore my robes at this calamity.

*Chor.* Ah me, ah me, ah me.

*Xer.* Ay, more than all 'ah me's'!

*Chor.* Twofold and threefold ills!

*Xer.* Grievous to us – but joy,  
Great joy, to all our foes!

*Chor.* Lopped off is all our strength.

*Xer.* Stripped bare of escort I!

*Chor.* Yea, by sore loss at sea  
Disastrous to thy friends.

### **Strophe VI**

*Xer.* Weep for our sorrow, weep,  
Yea, go ye to the house.

*Chor.* Woe for our griefs, woe, woe!

*Xer.* Cry out an echoing cry.

*Chor.* Ill gift of ills on ills.

*Xer.* Weep on in wailing chant.

*Chor.* Oh! ah! Oh! ah!

*Xer.* Grievous our bitter woes.

*Chor.* Ah me, I mourn them sore.

### **Antistrophe VI**

*Xer.* Ply, ply your hands and groan;  
Yea, for my sake bewail.

*Chor.* I weep in bitter grief.

*Xer.* Cry out an echoing cry.

*Chor.* Yea, we may raise our voice,  
O Lord and King, in wail.

*Xer.* Raise now shrill cry of woe.

*Chor.* Ah me! Ah! Woe is me!

*Xer.* Yea, with it mingle dark...

*Chor.* And bitter, grievous blows.

### **Strophe VII**

*Xer.* Yea, beat thy breast, and cry  
After the Mysian type.

*Chor.* Oh, misery! oh, misery!

*Xer.* Yea, tear the white hair off thy flowing beard.

*Chor.* Yea; with clenched hands, with clenched hands, I say,  
In very piteous guise.

*Xer.* Cry out, cry out aloud.

*Chor.* That also will I do.

## Antistrophe VII

*Xer.* And with thy fingers tear  
Thy bosom's folded robe.

*Chor.* Oh, misery! oh, misery!

*Xer.* Yea, tear thy hair in wailing for our host.

*Chor.* Yea, with clenched hands, I say, with clenched hands,  
In very piteous guise.

*Xer.* Be thine eyes wet with tears.

*Chor.* Behold the tears stream down.

## Epode

*Xer.* Raise a re-echoing cry.

*Chor.* Ah woe! ah woe!

*Xer.* Go to thy home with wailing loud and long.

*Chor.* O land of Persia, full of lamentations!

*Xer.* Through the town raise your cries.

*Chor.* We raise them, yea, we raise.

*Xer.* Wail, wail, ye men that walked so daintily.

*Chor.* O land of Persia, full of lamentations!  
Woe; woe!

*Xer.* Alas for those who in the triremes perished!

*Chor.* With broken cries of woe will I escort thee.

*[Exeunt in procession, wailing, and  
rending their robes.]*

# THE SEVEN WHO FOUGHT AGAINST THEBES

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Eteocles  
Scout  
Herald  
Ismene  
Antigone  
Chorus of Theban Maidens

ARGUMENT. —When Œdipus king of Thebes discovered that he had unknowingly been the murderer of his father, and had lived in incest with his mother, he blinded himself. And his two sons, Eteocles and Polyneikes, wishing to banish the remembrance of these horrors from the eyes of men, at first kept him in confinement. And he, being wroth with them, prayed that they might divide their inheritance with the sword. And they, in fear lest the prayer should be accomplished, agreed to reign in turn, each for a year, and Eteocles, as the elder of the two, took the first turn. But when at the end of the year Polyneikes came to ask for the kingdom, Eteocles refused to give way, and sent him away empty. So Polyneikes went to Argos and married the daughter of Adrastus the king of that country, and gathered together a great army under six great captains, himself going as the seventh, and led it against Thebes. And so they compassed it about, and at each of the seven gates of the city was stationed one of the divisions of the army.

Note.—*The Seven against Thebes* appears to have been produced B.C. 472, the year after *The Persians*.

## THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

**Scene. – Thebes in front of the Acropolis**

***Enter Eteocles, and crowd of Theban Citizens***

*Eteoc.* Ye citizens of Cadmos, it behoves  
That one who standeth at the stern of State  
Guiding the helm, with eyes unclosed in sleep,  
Should speak the things that meet occasion's need.  
For should we prosper, God gets all the praise:  
But if (which God forbid!) disaster falls,  
Eteocles, much blame on one head falling,  
Would find his name the by-word of the State,<sup>73</sup>  
Sung in the slanderous ballads of the town;

---

<sup>73</sup> Probably directed against the tendency of the Athenians, as shown in their treatment of Miltiades, and later in that of Thukydides, to punish their unsuccessful generals, "*pour encourager les autres*."

Yes, and with groanings, which may Zeus the Averter,  
True to his name, from us Cadmeians turn!  
But now 'tis meet for all, both him who fails  
Of full-grown age, and him advanced in years,  
Yet boasting still a stalwart strength of frame,  
And each in life's full prime, as it is fit,  
The State to succour and the altars here  
Of these our country's Gods, that never more  
Their votive honours cease, – to help our sons,  
And Earth, our dearest mother and kind nurse;  
For she, when young ye crept her kindly plain,  
Bearing the whole charge of your nourishment,  
Reared you as denizens that bear the shield,  
That ye should trusty prove in this her need.  
And now thus far God turns the scale for us;  
For unto us, beleaguered these long days,  
War doth in most things with God's help speed well,  
But now, as saith the seer, the augur skilled,<sup>74</sup>  
Watching with ear and mind, apart from fire,  
The birds oracular with mind unerring,  
He, lord and master of these prophet-arts,  
Says that the great attack of the Achæans  
This very night is talked of, and their plots  
Devised against the town. But ye, haste all  
Unto the walls and gateways of the forts;  
Rush ye full-armed, and fill the outer space,  
And stand upon the platforms of the towers,  
And at the entrance of the gates abiding  
Be of good cheer, nor fear ye overmuch  
The host of aliens. Well will God work all.  
And I have sent my scouts and watchers forth,  
And trust their errand is no fruitless one.  
I shall not, hearing them, be caught with guile.

*[Exeunt Citizens.]*

### ***Enter one of the Scouts***

*Mess.* King of Cadmeians, great Eteocles,  
I from the army come with tidings clear,  
And am myself eye-witness of its acts;  
For seven brave warriors, leading armèd bands,  
Cutting a bull's throat o'er a black-rimmed shield,  
And dipping in the bull's blood with their hands,

---

<sup>74</sup> Teiresias, as in Sophocles (*Antig.* v. 1005), sitting, though blind, and listening, as the birds flit by him, and the flames burn steadily or fitfully; a various reading gives “apart from sight.”

Swore before Ares, Enyo,<sup>75</sup> murderous Fear,  
That they would bring destruction on our town,  
And trample under foot the tower of Cadmos,  
Or dying, with their own blood stain our soil;  
And they memorials for their sires at home  
Placed with their hands upon Adrastos' car,<sup>76</sup>  
Weeping, but no wail uttering with their lips,  
For courage iron-hearted breathed out fire  
In manliness unconquered, as when lions  
Flash battle from their eyeballs. And report  
Of these things does not linger on the way.  
I left them casting lots, that each might take,  
As the lot fell, his station at the gate.  
Wherefore do thou our city's chosen ones  
Array with speed at entrance of the gates;  
For near already is the Argive host,  
Marching through clouds of dust, and whitening foam  
Spots all the plain with drops from horses' mouths.  
And thou, as prudent helmsman of the ship,  
Guard thou our fortress ere the blasts of Ares  
Swoop on it wildly; for there comes the roar  
Of the land-wave of armies. And do thou  
Seize for these things the swiftest tide and time;  
And I, in all that comes, will keep my eye  
As faithful sentry; so through speech full clear,  
Thou, knowing all things yonder, shalt be safe.

*[Exit.]*

*Eteoc.* O Zeus and Earth, and all ye guardian Gods!  
Thou Curse and strong Erinnys of my sire!  
Destroy ye not my city root and branch,  
With sore destruction smitten, one whose voice  
Is that of Hellas, nor our hearths and homes;<sup>77</sup>  
Grant that they never hold in yoke of bondage  
Our country free, and town of Cadmos named;  
But be ye our defence. I deem I speak  
Of what concerns us both; for still 'tis true,  
A prosperous city honours well the Gods. *[Exit.]*

---

<sup>75</sup> Enyo, the goddess of war, and companion of Ares.

<sup>76</sup> Amphiaraus the seer had prophesied that Adrastos alone should return home in safety. On his car, therefore, the other chieftains hung the clasps, or locks of hair, or other memorials which in the event of their death were to be taken to their parents.

<sup>77</sup> The Hellenic feeling, such as the Platæans appealed to in the Peloponnesian war (Thuc. iii. 58, 59), that it was noble and right for Hellenes to destroy a city of the barbarians, but that they should spare one belonging to a people of their own stock.

***Enter Chorus of Theban Maidens in solemn procession***

**as suppliants**

*Chor.* I in wild terror utter cries of woe;  
An army leaves its camp and is let loose:  
Hither the vanguard of the horsemen flows,  
And the thick cloud of dust,  
That suddenly is seen,  
Dumb herald, yet full clear,  
Constrains me to believe;  
And smitten with the horses' hoofs, the plain  
Of this my country rings with noise of war;  
It floats and echoes round,  
Like voice of mountain torrent dashing down  
Resistless in its might.  
Ah Gods! Ah Goddesses!  
Ward off the coming woe.  
With battle-shout that rises o'er the walls,  
The host whose shields are white<sup>78</sup>  
Marches in full array against our city.  
Who then, of all the Gods  
Or Goddesses, will come to help and save?  
Say, shall I fall before the shrines of Gods?  
O blessed Ones firm fixed!  
'Tis time to clasp your sacred images.  
Why linger we in wailing overmuch?  
Hear ye, or hear ye not, the din of shields?  
When, if not now, shall we  
Engage in prayer with peplos and with boughs?<sup>79</sup>  
I hear a mighty sound; it is the din  
Not of a single spear.  
O Ares! ancient guardian of our land!  
What wilt thou do? Wilt thou betray thy land?  
O God of golden casque,  
Look on our city, yea, with favour look,  
The city thou did'st love.  
And ye, ye Gods who o'er the city rule,  
Come all of you, come all.  
Behold the band of maidens suppliant,

---

<sup>78</sup> The characteristic feature of the Argive soldiers was, that they bore a shield painted white (comp. Sophocles, *Antig.* v. 114). The leaders alone appear to have embellished this with devices and mottoes.

<sup>79</sup> In solemn supplications, the litanies of the ancient world, especially in those to Pallas, the suppliants carried with them in procession the shawl or *peplos* of the Goddess, and with it enwrap her statue. To carry boughs of trees in the hands was one of the uniform, probably indispensable, accompaniments of such processions.



In fear of bondage foul;  
For now around the town  
The wave of warriors bearing sloped crests,  
With blasts of Ares rushing, hoarsely sounds:  
But thou, O Zeus! true father of us all,  
Ward off, ward off our capture by the foe.

### Strophe I

For Argives now surround the town of Cadmos,  
And dread of Ares' weapons falls on us;  
And, bound to horses' mouths,  
The bits and curbs ring music as of death;  
And seven chief rulers of the mighty host,  
With warriors' arms, at each of seven tall gates,  
Spear-armed and harnessed all,  
Stand, having cast their lots.

. . . . .

### Mesode

And thou, O Zeus-born power in war delighting,  
O Pallas! be our city's saviour now;  
And Thou who curb'st the steed,  
Great King of Ocean's waves,  
Poseidon, with thy trident fish-spear armed,<sup>80</sup>  
Give respite from our troubles, respite give!  
And Thou, O Ares, guard the town that takes  
Its name from Cadmos old,<sup>81</sup>  
Watch o'er it visibly.

### Antistrophe I

And thou, O Kypris, of our race the mother,  
Ward off these ills, for we are thine by blood:

---

<sup>80</sup> The words recall our thoughts to the original use of the trident, which became afterwards a symbol of Poseidon, as employed by the sailors of Hellas to spear or harpoon the larger fish of the Archipelago. Comp. *Pers.* v. 426, where the slaughter of a defeated army is compared to tunny-fishing.

<sup>81</sup> Cadmos, probably "the man from the East," the Phœnikian who had founded Thebes, and sown the dragon's seed, and taught men a Semitic alphabet for the non-Semitic speech of Hellas.

To thee in many a prayer,  
With voice that calls upon the Gods we cry,  
And unto thee draw near as suppliants:  
And Thou, Lykeian king, Lykeian be,<sup>82</sup>  
Foe of our hated foes,  
For this our wailing cry;  
And Thou, O child of Leto, Artemis,  
Make ready now thy bow.

### **Strophe II**

Ah! ah! I hear a din of chariot wheels  
Around the city walls;  
O Hera great and dread!  
The heavy axles of the chariots groan,  
O Artemis beloved!  
And the air maddens with the clash of spears;  
What must our city bear?  
What now shall come on us?  
When will God give the end?

### **Antistrophe II**

Ah! ah! a voice of stones is falling fast  
On battlements attacked;<sup>83</sup>  
O Lord, Apollo loved,  
A din of bronze-bound shields is in the gates;  
And oh! that Zeus may give  
A faultless issue of this war we wage!  
And Thou, O blessed queen,  
As Guardian Onca known,<sup>84</sup>  
Save thy seven-gated seat.

### **Strophe III**

And ye, all-working Gods,  
Of either sex divine,

---

<sup>82</sup> Worthy of his name as the Wolf-destroyer, mighty to destroy his foes.

<sup>83</sup> Possibly “*from* battlements attacked.” In the primitive sieges of Greek warfare stones were used as missiles alike by besieged and besiegers.

<sup>84</sup> The name of Onca belonged especially to the Theban worship of Pallas, and was said to have been of Phœnikian origin, introduced by Cadmos. There seems, however, to have been a town Onkæ in Bœotia, with which the name was doubtless connected.

Protectors of our towers,  
Give not our city, captured by the spear,  
To host of alien speech.<sup>85</sup>  
Hear ye our maidens; hear,  
As is most meet, our prayers with outstretched hands.

### **Antistrophe III**

O all ye loving Powers,  
Compass our State to save;  
Show how that State ye love;  
Think on our public votive offerings,  
And as ye think, oh, help:  
Be mindful ye, I pray,  
Of all our city's rites of sacrifice.

### ***Re-enter Eteocles***

*Eteoc. (to the Chorus)* I ask you, O ye brood intolerable,  
Is this course best and safest for our city?  
Will it give heart to our beleaguered host,  
That ye before the forms of guardian Gods  
Should wail and howl, ye loathèd of the wise;<sup>86</sup>  
Ne'er be it mine, in ill estate or good,  
To dwell together with the race of women;  
For when they rule, their daring bars approach,  
And when they fear, alike to house and State  
Comes greater ill; and now with these your rushings  
Hither and thither, ye have troubled sore  
Our subjects with a coward want of heart;  
And do your best for those our foes without;  
And we are harassed by ourselves within.  
This comes to one who dwells with womankind.  
And if there be that will not own my sway,  
Or man or woman in their prime, or those  
Who can be classed with neither, they shall take  
Their trial for their life, nor shall they 'scape  
The fate of stoning. Things outdoors are still  
The man's to look to: let not woman counsel.  
Stay thou within, and do no mischief more.

---

<sup>85</sup> "Alien," on account of the difference of dialect between the speech of Argos and that of Bœotia, though both were Hellenic.

<sup>86</sup> The vehemence with which Eteocles reproves the wild frenzied wailing of the Chorus may be taken as an element of the higher culture showing itself in Athenian life, which led Solon to restrain such lamentations by special laws (Plutarch, *Solon*, c. 20). Here, too, we note in Æschylos an echo of the teaching of Epimenides.

Hear'st thou, or no? or speak I to the deaf?

### Strophe I

*Chor.* Dear son of Ædipus,  
I shuddered as I heard the din, the din  
Of many a chariot's noise,  
When on the axles creaked the whirling wheels,  
And when I heard the sound  
Of fire-wrought curbs within the horses' mouths.

*Eteoc.* What then? Did ever yet the sailor flee  
From stern to stem, and find deliverance so,  
While his ship laboured in the ocean's wave?<sup>87</sup>

### Antistrophe I

*Chor.* Nay, to the ancient forms  
Of mighty Powers I rushed, as trusting Gods;  
And when behind the gates  
Was heard the crash of fierce and pelting storm,  
Then was it, in my fear,  
I prayed the Blessed Ones to guard our city.

*Eteoc.* Pray that our towns hold out 'gainst spear of foes.<sup>88</sup>

*Chor.* Do not the Gods grant these things?

*Eteoc.* Nay the Gods,  
So say they, leave the captured city's walls.<sup>89</sup>

### Strophe II

*Chor.* Ah! never in my life

---

<sup>87</sup> As now the sailor of the Mediterranean turns to the image of his patron saint, so of old he ran in his distress to the figure of his God upon the prow of his ship (often, as in Acts xxviii. II, that of the *Dioscuri*), and called to it for deliverance (comp. Jonah i. 8).

<sup>88</sup> Eteocles seems to wish for a short, plain prayer for deliverance, instead of the cries and supplications and vain repetitions of the Chorus.

<sup>89</sup> The thought thus expressed was, that the Gods, yielding to the mightier law of destiny, or in their wrath at the guilt of men, left the city before its capture. The feeling was all but universal. Its two representative instances are found in Virgil, *Æn.* 351 —“Excessere omnes adytis arisque relictis Di quibus imperium hoc steterat;” and the narrative given alike by Tacitus (*Hist.* v. 13), and Josephus (*Bell. Jud.* vi. 5, 3), that the cry “Let us depart hence,” was heard at midnight through the courts of the Temple, before the destruction of Jerusalem.

May all this goodly company of Gods  
Depart; nor may I see  
This city scene of rushings to and fro,  
And hostile army burning it with fire!  
*Eteoc.* Nay, call not on the Gods with counsel base;  
Obedience is the mother of success,  
Child strong to save. 'Tis thus the saying runs.

### **Antistrophe II**

*Chor.* True is it; but the Gods  
Have yet a mightier power, and oftentimes,  
In pressure of sore ill,  
It raises one perplexed from direst woe,  
When dark clouds gather thickly o'er his eyes.

*Eteoc.* 'Tis work of men to offer sacrifice  
And victims to the Gods, when foes press hard;  
Thine to be dumb and keep within the house.

### **Strophe III**

*Chor.* 'Tis through the Gods we live  
In city unsubdued, and that our towers  
Ward off the multitude of jealous foes.  
What Power will grudge us this?

*Eteoc.* I grudge not your devotion to the Gods;  
But lest you make my citizens faint-hearted  
Be tranquil, nor to fear's excess give way.

### **Antistrophe III**

*Chor.* Hearing but now a din  
Strange, wildly mingled, I with shrinking fear  
Here to our city's high Acropolis,  
Time-hallowed spot, have come.  
*Eteoc.* Nay, if ye hear of wounded men or dying,  
Bear them not swiftly off with wailing loud;  
For blood of men is Ares' chosen food.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Sc. Blood must be shed in war. Ares would not be Ares without it. It is better to take it as it comes.

*Chor.* Hark! now I hear the panting of the steeds.

*Eteoc.* Clear though thou hear, yet hear not overmuch.

*Chor.* Lo! from its depths the fortress groans, beleaguered.

*Eteoc.* It is enough that I provide for this.

*Chor.* I fear: the din increases at the gates.

*Eteoc.* Be still, say nought of these things in the city.

*Chor.* O holy Band!<sup>91</sup> desert ye not our towers.

*Eteoc.* A curse fall on thee! wilt thou not be still?

*Chor.* Gods of my city, from the slave's lot save me!

*Eteoc.* 'Tis thou enslav'st thyself and all thy city.

*Chor.* Oh, turn thy darts, great Zeus, against our foes!

*Eteoc.* Oh, Zeus, what race of women thou hast given us!

*Chor.* A sorry race, like men whose city falls.

*Eteoc.* What? Cling to these statues, yet speak words of ill?

*Chor.* Fear hurries on my tongue in want of courage.

*Eteoc.* Could'st thou but grant one small boon at my prayer!

*Chor.* Speak it out quickly, and I soon shall know.

*Eteoc.* Be still, poor fool, and frighten not thy friends.

*Chor.* Still am I, and with others bear our fate.

*Eteoc.* These words of thine I much prefer to those:  
And further, though no longer at the shrines,  
Pray thou for victory, that the Gods fight with us.  
And when my prayers thou hearest, then do thou  
Raise a loud, welcome, holy pæan-shout,  
The Hellenes' wonted cry at sacrifice;  
So cheer thy friends, and check their fear of foes;  
And I unto our country's guardian Gods,

---

<sup>91</sup> Sc., the company of Gods, Pallas, Hera and the others whom the Chorus had invoked.

Who hold the plain or watch the agora,  
The springs of Dirke, and Ismenos' stream; —  
If things go well, and this our city's saved, —  
I vow that staining with the blood of sheep  
The altar-hearths of Gods, or slaying bulls,  
We'll fix our trophies, and our foemen's robes  
On the spear's point on consecrated walls,  
Before the shrines I'll hang.<sup>92</sup> Pray thou this prayer,  
Not weakly wailing, nor with vain wild sobs,  
For no whit more thou'lt 'scape thy destined lot:  
And I six warriors, with myself as seventh,  
Against our foes in full state like their own,  
Will station at the seven gates' entrances,  
Ere hurrying heralds and swift-rushing words  
Come and inflame them in the stress of need. [*Exit*]

### Strophe I

*Chor.* My heart is full of care and knows not sleep,  
By panic fear o'ercome;  
And troubles throng my soul,  
And set a-glow my dread  
Of the great host encamped around our walls,  
As when a trembling dove  
Fears, for her callow brood,  
The snakes that come, ill mates for her soft nest;  
For some upon our towers  
March in full strength of mingled multitude;  
And what will me befall?  
And others on our men on either hand  
Hurl rugged blocks of stone.  
In every way, ye Zeus-born Gods, defend  
The city and the host  
That Cadmos claim as sire.

### Antistrophe I

What better land will ye receive for this,  
If ye to foes resign  
This rich and fertile clime,  
And that Dirkean stream,

---

<sup>92</sup> Reference to this custom, which has passed from Pagan temples into Christian churches, is found in the *Agamemnon*, v. 562. It was connected, of course, with the general practice of offering as *ex votos* any personal ornaments or clothing as a token of thanksgiving for special mercies.

Goodliest of founts by great Poseidon sent,  
Who circleth earth, or those  
Who Tethys parent call?<sup>93</sup>  
And therefore, O ye Gods that guard our city,  
Sending on those without  
Our towers a woe that robs men of their life,  
And makes them lose their shield,  
Gain glory for these countrymen of mine;  
And take your standing-ground,  
As saviours of the city, firm and true,  
In answer to our cry  
Of wailing and of prayer.

### **Strophe II**

For sad it were to hurl to Hades dark  
A city of old fame,  
The spoil and prey of war,  
With foulest shame in dust and ashes laid,  
By an Achæan foe at God's decree;  
And that our women, old and young alike,  
Be dragged away, ah me!  
Like horses, by their hair  
Their robes torn off from them.  
And lo, the city wails, made desolate,  
While with confused cry  
The wretched prisoners meet doom worse than death.  
Ah, at this grievous fate  
I shudder ere it comes.

### **Antistrophe II**

And piteous 'tis for those whose youth is fresh  
Before the rites that cull  
Their fair and first-ripe fruit,  
To take a hateful journey from their homes.  
Nay, but I say the dead far better fare  
Than these, for when a city is subdued  
It bears full many an ill.  
This man takes prisoner that,  
Or slays, or burns with fire;  
And all the city is defiled with smoke,

---

<sup>93</sup> Rivers and streams as the children of Tethys and Okeanos.



And Ares fans the flame  
In wildest rage, and laying many low,  
Tramples with foot unclean  
On all men sacred hold.

### **Strophe III**

And hollow din is heard throughout the town,  
Hemmed in by net of towers;  
And man by man is slaughtered with the spear,  
And cries of bleeding babes,  
Of children at the breast,  
Are heard in piteous wail,  
And rapine, sister of the plunderer's rush,  
Spoiler with spoiler meets,  
And empty-handed empty-handed calls,  
Wishing for share of gain,  
Both eager for a portion no whit less,  
For more than equal lot  
With what they deem the others' hands have found.

### **Antistrophe III**

And all earth's fruits cast wildly on the ground,  
Meeting the cheerless eye  
Of frugal housewives, give them pain of heart;  
And many a gift of earth  
In formless heaps is whirled  
In waves of nothingness;  
And the young maidens know a sorrow new;  
For now the foe prevails,  
And gains rich prize of wretched captive's bed;  
And now their only hope  
Is that the night of death will come at last,  
Their truest, best ally,  
To rescue them from sorrow fraught with tears.

***Enter Eteocles, followed by his Chief Captains,***

***and by the Scout***

*Semi-Chor. A.* The army scout, so deem I, brings to us,  
Dear friends, some tidings new, with quickest speed  
Plying the nimble axles of his feet.

*Semi-Chor. B.* Yea, the king's self, the son of Ædipus,  
Is nigh to hear the scout's exact report;  
And haste denies him too an even step.

*Mess.* I knowing well, will our foes' state report,  
How each his lot hath stationed at the gates.  
At those of Prætos, Tydeus thunders loud,  
And him the prophet suffers not to cross  
Ismenos' fords, the victims boding ill.<sup>94</sup>  
And Tydeus, raging eager for the fight,  
Shouts like a serpent in its noontide scream,  
And on the prophet, Æcleus' son, heaps shame,  
That he, in coward fear, doth crouch and fawn  
Before the doom and peril of the fight.  
And with such speech he shakes his triple crest,  
O'ershadowing all his helm, and 'neath his shield  
Bells wrought in bronze ring out their chimes of fear;  
And on his shield he bears this proud device, —  
A firmament enchased, all bright with stars,<sup>95</sup>  
And in the midst the full moon's glittering orb,  
Sovran of stars and eye of Night, shines forth.  
And thus exulting in o'er boastful arms,  
By the stream's bank he shouts in lust of war,  
[E'en as a war-horse panting in his strength  
Against the curb that galls him, who at sound  
Of trumpet's clang chafes hotly.] Whom wilt thou  
Set against him? Who is there strong enough  
When the bolts yield, to guard the Prætan gates?

*Eteoc.* No fear have I of any man's array;  
Devices have no power to pierce or wound,  
And crest and bells bite not without a spear;  
And for this picture of the heavens at night,  
Of which thou tellest, glittering on his shield,  
Perchance his madness may a prophet prove;  
For if night fall upon his dying eyes,  
Then for the man who bears that boastful sign  
It may right well be all too truly named,  
And his own pride shall prophet be of ill.

---

<sup>94</sup> Here, as in v. 571, Tydeus appears as the real leader of the expedition, who had persuaded Adrastus and the other chiefs to join in it, and Amphiaræos, the prophet, the son of Æcleus, as having all along foreseen its disastrous issue. The account of the expedition in the *Ædipus at Colonus* (1300-1330) may be compared with this.

<sup>95</sup> The legend of the Medusa's head on the shield of Athena shows the practice of thus decorating shields to have been of remote date. In Homer it does not appear as common, and the account given of the shield of Achilles lays stress upon the work of the artist (Hephæstos) who wrought the shield in relief, not, as here, upon painted insignia. They were obviously common in the time of Æschylos.

And against Tydeus, to defend the gates,  
I'll set this valiant son of Astacos;  
Noble is he, and honouring well the throne  
Of Reverence, and hating vaunting speech,  
Slow to all baseness, unattuned to ill:  
And of the dragon-race that Ares spared<sup>96</sup>  
He as a scion grows, a native true,  
E'en Melanippos; Ares soon will test  
His valour in the hazard of the die:  
And kindred Justice sends him forth to war,  
For her that bore him foeman's spear to check.

### Strophe I

*Chor.* May the Gods grant my champion good success!  
For justly he goes forth  
For this our State to fight;  
But yet I quake with fear  
To see the deaths of those who die for friends.

*Mess.* Yea, may the Gods give good success to him!  
The Electran gates have fallen to Capaneus,  
A second giant, taller far than he  
Just named, with boast above a mortal's bounds;  
And dread his threats against our towers (O Fortune,  
Turn them aside!) – for whether God doth will,  
Or willeth not, he says that he will sack<sup>97</sup>  
The city, nor shall e'en the wrath of Zeus,  
On the plain swooping, turn him from his will;  
And the dread lightnings and hot thunderbolts  
He likens to the heat of noon-day sun.  
And his device, the naked form of one  
Who bears a torch; and bright the blaze shines forth  
And in gold characters he speaks the words,  
“The city I will burn.” Against this man  
Send forth ... but who will meet him in the fight?  
Who, without fear, await this warrior proud?

*Eteoc.* Herein, too, profit upon profit comes;  
And 'gainst the vain and boastful thoughts of men,  
Their tongue itself is found accuser true.  
Threatening, equipped for work is Capaneus,

---

<sup>96</sup> The older families of Thebes boasted that they sprang from the survivors of the Sparti, who, sprung from the Dragon's teeth, waged deadly war against each other, till all but five were slain. The later settlers, who were said to have come with Cadmos, stood to these as the “greater” to the “lesser *gentes*” at Rome.

<sup>97</sup> So in the *Antigone* of Sophocles (v. 134), Capaneus appears as the special representative of boastful, reckless impiety.

Scorning the Gods: and giving speech full play,  
And in wild joy, though mortal, vents at Zeus,  
High in the heavens, loud-spoken foaming words.  
And well I trust on him shall rightly come  
Fire-bearing thunder, nothing likened then  
To heat of noon-day sun. And so 'gainst him,  
Though very bold of speech, a man is set  
Of fiery temper, Polyphontes strong,  
A trusty bulwark, by the loving grace  
Of guardian Artemis<sup>98</sup> and other Gods.  
Describe another, placed at other gates.

### Antistrophe I

*Chor.* A curse on him who 'gainst our city boasts!  
May thunder smite him down  
Before he force his way  
Into my home, and drive  
Me from my maiden bower with haughty spear?

*Mess.* And now I'll tell of him who by the gates  
Stands next; for to Eteocles, as third,  
To march his cohort to Neïstian gates,  
Leaped the third lot from upturned brazen helm:  
And he his mares, in head-gear snorting, whirls,  
Full eager at the gates to fall and die;  
Their whistling nozzles of barbaric mode,  
Are filled with loud blast of the panting nostrils.<sup>99</sup>  
In no poor fashion is his shield devised;  
A full-armed warrior climbs a ladder's rungs,  
And mounts his foeman's towers as bent to sack;  
And he too cries, in words of written speech,  
That "Not e'en Ares from the towers shall drive him."  
Send thou against him some defender true,  
To ward the yoke of bondage from our State.

*Eteoc.* Such would I send now; by good luck indeed  
He has been sent, his vaunting in his deeds,  
Megareus, Creon's son, who claims descent  
From those as Sparti known, and not by noise  
Of neighings loud of warlike steeds dismayed,  
Will he the gates abandon, but in death  
Will pay our land his nurture's debt in full,<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Artemis, as one of the special Deities to whom Thebes was consecrated.

<sup>99</sup> Apparently an Asiatic invention, to increase the terror of an attack of war-chariots.

<sup>100</sup> The phrase and thought were almost proverbial in Athens. Men, as citizens, were thought of as fed at a common table, bound

Or taking two men, and a town to boot,  
(That on the shield,) will deck his father's house  
With those his trophies. Of another tell  
The bragging tale, nor grudge thy words to me.

## Strophe II

*Chor.* Him I wish good success,  
O guardian of my home, and for his foes  
All ill success I pray;  
And since against our land their haughty words  
With maddened soul they speak,  
May Zeus, the sovran judge,  
With fiery, hot displeasure look on them!

*Mess.* Another stands as fourth at gates hard by,  
Onca-Athenà's, with a shout of war,  
Hippomedon's great form and massive limbs;  
And as he whirled his orb, his vast shield's disk,  
I shuddered; yea, no idle words I speak.  
No cheap and common draughtsman sure was he  
Who wrought this cunning ensign on his shield:  
Typhon emitting from his lips hot blast  
Of darkling smoke, the flickering twin of fire:  
And round the belly of the hollow shield  
A rim was made with wreaths of twisted snakes.  
And he too shouts his war-cry, and in frenzy,  
As man possessed by Ares, hastes to battle,  
Like Thyiad, darting terror from his eyes.<sup>101</sup>  
'Gainst such a hero's might we well may guard;  
Already at the gates men brag of rout.

*Eteoc.* First, the great Onca-Pallas, dwelling nigh  
Our city's gates, and hating man's bold pride,  
Shall ward him from her nestlings like a snake  
Of venom dread; and next Hyperbios,  
The stalwart son of CEnops, has been chosen,  
A hero 'gainst this hero, willing found  
To try his destiny at Fortune's hest.  
No fault has he in form, or heart, or arms;  
And Hermes with good reason pairs them off;  
For man with man will fight as enemy,  
And on their shields they'll bring opposing Gods;

---

to contribute their gifts to the common stock. When they offered up their lives in battle, they were giving, as Pericles says (Thucyd. ii. 43), their noblest "contribution," paying in full their subscription to the society of which they were members.

<sup>101</sup> Thyiad, another name for the Mænads, the frenzied attendants on Dionysos.

For this man beareth Typhon, breathing fire,  
And on Hyperbios' shield sits father Zeus,  
Full firm, with burning thunderbolt in hand;  
And never yet has man seen Zeus, I trow,  
O'ercome. Such then the favour of the Gods,  
We with the winners, they with losers are:<sup>102</sup>  
Good reason then the rivals so should fare,  
If Zeus than Typhon stronger be in fight,  
And to Hyperbios Zeus will saviour prove,  
As that device upon his shield presents him.

## Antistrophe II

*Chor.* Now do I trust that he  
Who bears upon his shield the hated form  
Of Power whom Earth doth shroud,  
Antagonist to Zeus, unloved by men  
And by the ageless Gods,  
Before those gates of ours  
To his own hurt may dash his haughty head.

*Mess.* So may it be! And now the fifth I tell,  
Who the fifth gates, the Northern, occupies,  
Hard by Amphion's tomb, the son of Zeus;  
And by his spear he swears, (which he is bold  
To honour more than God or his own eyes,)   
That he will sack the fort of the Cadmeians  
With that spear's might. So speaks the offspring fair  
Of mother mountain-bred, a stripling hero;  
And the soft down is creeping o'er his cheeks,  
Youth's growth, and hair that floweth full and thick;  
And he with soul, not maiden's like his name,<sup>103</sup>  
But stern, with flashing eye, is standing there.  
Nor stands he at the gate without a vaunt;  
For on his brass-wrought buckler, strong defence,  
Full-orbed, his body guarding, he the shame  
Of this our city bears, the ravenous Sphinx,  
With rivets fixed, all burnished and embossed;<sup>104</sup>  
And under her she holdeth a Cadmeian,  
That so on him most arrows might be shot.  
No chance that he will fight a peddling fight,

---

<sup>102</sup> Sc., in the legends of Typhon, not he, but Zeus, had proved the conqueror. The warrior, therefore, who chose Typhon for his badge was identifying himself with the losing, not the winning side.

<sup>103</sup> The name, as we are told in v. 542, is Parthenopæos, the maiden-faced.

<sup>104</sup> The Sphinx, besides its general character as an emblem of terror, had, of course, a special meaning as directed to the Thebans. The warrior who bore it threatened to renew the old days when the monster whom Œdipus had overcome had laid waste their city.

Nor shame the long, long journey he hath come,  
Parthenopæos, in Arcadia born:  
This man did Argos welcome as a guest,  
And now he pays her for her goodly rearing,  
And threatens these our towers with ... God avert it!

*Eteoc.* Should the Gods give them what they plan 'gainst us,  
Then they, with those their godless boastings high,  
Would perish shamefully and utterly.  
And for this man of Arcady thou tell'st of,  
We have a man who boasts not, but his hand  
Sees the right thing to do; – Actôr, of him  
I named but now the brother, – who no tongue  
Divorced from deeds will ever let within  
Our gates, to spread and multiply our ills,  
Nor him who bears upon his foeman's shield  
The image of the hateful venomed beast;  
But she without shall blame him as he tries  
To take her in, when she beneath our walls  
Gets sorely bruised and battered.<sup>105</sup> And herein,  
If the Gods will, I prophet true shall prove.

### Strophe III

*Chor.* Thy words thrill through my breast;  
My hair stands all on end,  
To hear the boastings great  
Of those who speak great things  
Unholy. May the Gods  
Destroy them in our land!

*Mess.* A sixth I tell of, one of noblest mood,  
Amphiaraos, seer and warrior famed;  
He, stationed at the Homolôian gates,  
Reproves the mighty Tydeus with sharp words  
As 'murderer,' and 'troubler of the State,'<sup>106</sup>  
'To Argos teacher of all direst ills,  
Erinnys' sumpnour,'<sup>107</sup> 'murder's minister,'  
Whose counsels led Adrastus to these ills.  
And at thy brother Polyneikes glancing  
With eyes uplifted for his father's fate,

---

<sup>105</sup> Sc., the Sphinx on his shield will not be allowed to enter the city. It will only serve as a mark, attracting men to attack both it and the warrior who bears it.

<sup>106</sup> The quarrel between Tydeus and the seer Amphiaraos had been already touched upon.

<sup>107</sup> I have used the old English word to express a term of like technical use in Athenian law processes. As the "sumpnour" called witnesses or parties to a suit into court, so Tydeus had summoned the Erinnys to do her work of destruction.

And ending, twice he syllabled his name,<sup>108</sup>  
And called him, and thus speaketh with his lips: —  
“A goodly deed, and pleasant to the Gods,  
Noble for after age to hear and tell,  
Thy father's city and thy country's Gods  
To waste through might of mercenary host!  
And how shall Justice stay thy mother's tears?<sup>109</sup>  
And how, when conquered, shall thy fatherland,  
Laid waste, become a true ally to thee?  
As for myself, I shall that land make rich,<sup>110</sup>  
A prophet buried in a foeman's soil:  
To arms! I look for no inglorious death.”  
So spake the prophet, bearing full-orbed shield  
Wrought all of bronze, no ensign on that orb.  
He wishes to be just, and not to seem,<sup>111</sup>  
Reaping full harvest from his soul's deep furrows,  
Whence ever new and noble counsels spring.  
I bid thee send defenders wise and brave  
Against him. Dread is he who fears the Gods.

*Eteoc.* Fie on the chance that brings the righteous man  
Close-mated with the ungodly! In all deeds  
Nought is there worse than evil fellowship,  
A crop men should not reap. Death still is found  
The harvest of the field of frenzied pride;  
For either hath the godly man embarked  
With sailors hot in insolence and guile,<sup>112</sup>  
And perished with the race the Gods did loathe;  
Or just himself, with citizens who wrong  
The stranger and are heedless of the Gods,  
Falling most justly in the self-same snare,  
By God's scourge smitten, shares the common doom.  
And thus this seer I speak of, Æcleus' son,  
Righteous, and wise, and good, and reverent,  
A mighty prophet, mingling with the godless  
And men full bold of speech in reason's spite,  
Who take long march to reach a far-off city,<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>108</sup> Sc., so pronounced his name as to emphasise the significance of its two component parts, as indicating that he who bore it was a man of much contention.

<sup>109</sup> The words are obscure, but seem to refer to the badge of Polyneikes, the figure of Justice described in v. 643 as on his shield. How shall that Justice, the seer asks, console Jocasta for her son's death? Another rendering gives, “And how shall Justice quench a mother's life?” the “mother” being the country against which Polyneikes wars.

<sup>110</sup> The words had a twofold fulfilment (1) in the burial of Amphiaraios, in the Theban soil; and (2) in the honour which accrued to Thebes after his death, through the fame of the oracle at his shrine.

<sup>111</sup> The passage cannot be passed over without noticing the old tradition (Plutarch, *Aristeid.* c. 3), that when the actor uttered these words, he and the whole audience looked to Aristeides, surnamed the Just, as recognising that the words were true of him as they were of no one else. “Best,” instead of “just,” is, however, a very old various reading.

<sup>112</sup> If the former reference to Aristeides be admitted, we can scarcely avoid seeing in this passage an allusion to Themistocles, as one with whose reckless and democratic policy it was dangerous for the more conservative leader to associate himself.

<sup>113</sup> The far-off city, not of Thebes, but of Hades. In the legend of Thebes, the earth opened and swallowed up Amphiaraios, as in 583.



If Zeus so will, shall be hurled down with them.  
And he, I trow, shall not draw nigh the gates,  
Not through faint-heart or any vice of mood,  
But well he knows this war shall bring his death,  
If any fruit is found in Loxias' words;  
And He or holds his speech or speaks in season.  
Yet against him the hero Lasthenes,  
A foe of strangers, at the gates we'll set;  
Old in his mind, his body in its prime,  
His eye swift-footed, and his hand not slow  
To grasp the spear from 'neath the shield laid bare:<sup>114</sup>  
Yet 'tis by God's gift men must win success.

### Antistrophe III

*Chor.* Hear, O ye Gods! our prayers,  
Our just entreaties grant,  
That so our State be blest.  
Turn ye the toils of war  
Upon the invading host.  
Outside the walls may Zeus  
With thunder smite them low!

*Mess.* The seventh chief then who at the seventh gate stands,  
Thine own, own brother, I will speak of now,  
What curses on our State he pours, and prays  
That he the towers ascending, and proclaimed  
By herald's voice to all the territory,  
And shouting out the captor's pæan-cry,  
May so fight with thee, slay, and with thee die;  
Or driving thee alive, who did'st him wrong,  
May on thee a vengeance wreak like in kind.  
So clamours he, and bids his father's Gods,  
His country's guardians, look upon his prayers,  
[And grant them all. So Polyneikes prays.]  
And he a new and well-wrought shield doth bear,  
And twofold sign upon it riveted;  
For there a woman with a stately tread  
Leads one who seems a warrior wrought in gold:  
Justice she calls herself, and thus she speaks:  
“I will bring back this man, and he shall have  
The city and his father's dwelling-place.”  
Such are the signs and mottoes of those men;  
And thou, know well whom thou dost mean to send:  
So thou shalt never blame my heraldings;

---

<sup>114</sup> The short spear was usually carried under the shelter of the shield; when brought into action it was, of course, laid bare.

And thou thyself know how to steer the State.

*Eteoc.* O frenzy-stricken, hated sore of Gods!  
O woe-fraught race (my race!) of Ædipus!  
Ah me! my father's curse is now fulfilled;  
But neither is it meet to weep or wail,  
Lest cry more grievous on the issue come.  
Of Polyneikes, name and omen true,  
We soon shall know what way his badge shall end,  
Whether his gold-wrought letters shall restore him,  
His shield's great swelling words with frenzied soul.  
An if great Justice, Zeus's virgin child,  
Ruled o'er his words and acts, this might have been;  
But neither when he left his mother's womb,  
Nor in his youth, nor yet in ripening age,  
Nor when his beard was gathered on his chin,  
Did Justice count him meet for fellowship;  
Nor do I think that she befriends him now  
In this great outrage on his father's land.  
Yea, justly Justice would as falsely named  
Be known, if she with one all-daring joined.  
In this I trust, and I myself will face him:  
Who else could claim a greater right than I?  
Brother with brother fighting, king with king,  
And foe with foe, I'll stand. Come, quickly fetch  
My greaves that guard against the spear and stones.

*Chor.* Nay, dearest friend, thou son of Ædipus,  
Be ye not like to him with that ill name.  
It is enough Cadmeian men should fight  
Against the Argives. That blood may be cleansed;  
But death so murderous of two brothers born,  
This is pollution that will ne'er wax old.

*Eteoc.* If a man must bear evil, let him still  
Be without shame – sole profit that in death.  
[No glory comes of base and evil deeds].

*Chor.* What dost thou crave, my son? Let no ill fate,  
Frenzied and hot for war,  
Carry thee headlong on;  
Check the first onset of an evil lust.

*Eteoc.* Since God so hotly urges on the matter,  
Let all of Laios' race whom Phœbos hates,  
Drift with the breeze upon Cokytos' wave.

*Chor.* An over-fierce and passionate desire  
Stirs thee and pricks thee on

To work an evil deed  
Of guilt of blood thy hand should never shed.

*Eteoc.* Nay, my dear father's curse, in full-grown hate,  
Dwells on dry eyes that cannot shed a tear,  
And speaks of gain before the after-doom.

*Chor.* But be not thou urged on. The coward's name  
Shall not be thine, for thou  
Hast ordered well thy life.  
Dark-robed Erinnys enters not the house,  
When at men's hands the Gods  
Accept their sacrifice.

*Eteoc.* As for the Gods, they scorned us long ago,  
And smile but on the offering of our deaths;  
What boots it then on death's doom still to fawn?

*Chor.* Nay do it now, while yet 'tis in thy power;<sup>115</sup>  
Perchance may fortune shift  
With tardy change of mood,  
And come with spirit less implacable:  
At present fierce and hot  
She waxeth in her rage.

*Eteoc.* Yea, fierce and hot the Curse of Ædipus;  
And all too true the visions of the night,  
My father's treasured store distributing.

*Chor.* Yield to us women, though thou lov'st us not.

*Eteoc.* Speak then what may be done, and be not long.

*Chor.* Tread not the path that to the seventh gate leads.

*Eteoc.* Thou shall not blunt my sharpened edge with words.

*Chor.* And yet God loves the victory that submits.<sup>116</sup>

*Eteoc.* That word a warrior must not tolerate.

*Chor.* Dost thou then haste thy brother's blood to shed?

*Eteoc.* If the Gods grant it, he shall not 'scape harm.

---

<sup>115</sup> Perhaps "since death is at nigh hand."

<sup>116</sup> The Chorus means that if Eteocles would allow himself to be overcome in this contest of his wishes with their prayers the Gods would honour that defeat as if it were indeed a victory. He makes answer that the very thought of being overcome implied in the word "defeat" in anything is one which the true warrior cannot bear.

*[Exeunt Eteocles, Scout, and Captains]*

### **Strophe I**

*Chor.* I fear her might who doth this whole house wreck,  
The Goddess unlike Gods,  
The prophetess of evil all too true,  
The Erinnys of thy father's imprecations,  
Lest she fulfil the curse,  
O'er-wrathful, frenzy-fraught,  
The curse of Ædipus,  
Laying his children low.  
This Strife doth urge them on.

### **Antistrophe I**

And now a stranger doth divide the lots,  
The Chalyb,<sup>117</sup> from the Skythians emigrant,  
The stern distributor of heaped-up wealth,  
The iron that hath assigned them just so much  
Of land as theirs, no more,  
As may suffice for them  
As grave when they shall fall,  
Without or part or lot  
In the broad-spreading plains.

### **Strophe II**

And when the hands of each  
The other's blood have shed,  
And the earth's dust shall drink  
The black and clotted gore,  
Who then can purify?  
Who cleanse thee from the guilt?  
Ah me! O sorrows new,  
That mingle with the old woes of our house!

---

<sup>117</sup> The "Chalyb stranger" is the sword, thought of as taking its name from the Skythian tribe of the Chalybes, between Colchis and Armenia, and passing through the Thrakians into Greece.

### **Antistrophe II**

I tell the ancient tale  
Of sin that brought swift doom;  
Till the third age it waits,  
Since Laïos, heeding not  
Apollo's oracle,  
(Though spoken thrice to him  
In Pythia's central shrine,)   
That dying childless, he should save the State.

### **Strophe III**

But he by those he loved full rashly swayed,  
Doom for himself begat,  
His murderer Œdipus,  
Who dared to sow in field  
Unholy, whence he sprang,  
A root of blood-flecked woe.  
Madness together brought  
Bridegroom and bride accursed.

### **Antistrophe III**

And now the sea of evil pours its flood:  
This falling, others rise,  
As with a triple crest,  
Which round the State's stern roars:  
And but a bulwark slight,  
A tower's poor breadth, defends:  
And lest the city fall  
With its two kings I fear.

### **Strophe IV**

And that atonement of the ancient curse  
Receives fulfilment now;<sup>118</sup>  
And when they come, the evils pass not by.

---

<sup>118</sup> The two brothers, *i. e.*, are set at one again, but it is not in the bonds of friendship, but in those of death.

E'en so the wealth of sea-adventurers,  
When heaped up in excess,  
Leads but to cargo from the stern thrown out.<sup>119</sup>

### Antistrophe IV

For whom of mortals did the Gods so praise,  
And fellow-worshippers,  
And race of those who feed their flocks and herds<sup>120</sup>  
As much as then they honoured Œdipus,  
Who from our country's bounds  
Had driven the monster, murderess of men?

### Strophe V

And when too late he knew,  
Ah, miserable man! his wedlock dire,  
Vexed sore with that dread shame,  
With heart to madness driven,  
He wrought a twofold ill,  
And with the hand that smote his father's life  
Blinded the eyes that might his sons have seen.

### Antistrophe V

And with a mind provoked  
By nurture scant, he at his sons did hurl<sup>121</sup>  
His curses dire and dark,  
(Ah, bitter curses those!)  
That they with spear in hand  
Should one day share their father's wealth; and I  
Fear now lest swift Erinnys should fulfil them.

---

<sup>119</sup> The image meets us again in *Agam.* 980. Here the thought is, that a man too prosperous is like a ship too heavily freighted. He must part with a portion of his possession in order to save the rest. Not to part with them leads, when the storm rages, to an enforced abandonment and utter loss.

<sup>120</sup> Another reading gives —“And race of those who crowd the Agora.”

<sup>121</sup> This seems to have been one form of the legends as to the cause of the curse which Œdipus had launched upon his sons, An alternative rendering is —And with a mind enragedAt thought of what they were whom he had reared,He at his sons did hurlHis curses dire and dark.

### *Enter Messenger*

*Mess.* Be of good cheer, ye maidens, mother-reared;  
Our city has escaped the yoke of bondage,  
The boasts of mighty men are fallen low,  
And this our city in calm waters floats,  
And, though by waves lashed, springs not any leak.  
Our fortress still holds out, and we did guard  
The gates with champions who redeemed their pledge.  
In the six gateways almost all goes well;  
But the seventh gate did King Apollo choose,<sup>122</sup>  
Seventh mighty chief, avenging Laios' want  
Of counsel on the sons of Ædipus.

*Chor.* What new disaster happens to our city?<sup>123</sup>

*Mess.* The city's saved, but both the royal brothers...

*Chor.* Who? and what of them? I'm distraught with fear.

*Mess.* Be calm, and hear: the sons of Ædipus...

*Chor.* Oh wretched me! a prophet I of ill!

*Mess.* Slain by each other, earth has drunk their blood.

*Chor.* Came they to that? 'Tis dire; yet tell it me.

*Mess.* Too true, by brother's hand our chiefs are slain.

*Chor.* What, did the brother's hands the brother lay?

*Mess.* No doubt is there that they are laid in dust.

*Chor.* Thus was there then a common fate for both?

*Mess.* \*Yea, it lays low the whole ill-fated race.

*Chor.* These things give cause for gladness and for tears,  
Seeing that our city prospers, and our lords,  
The generals twain, with well-wrought Skythian steel,  
Have shared between them all their store of goods,  
And now shall have their portion in a grave,  
Borne on, as spake their father's grievous curse.<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> Sc., when Eteocles fell, Apollo took his place at the seventh gate, and turned the tide of war in favour of the Thebans.

<sup>123</sup> I follow in this dialogue the arrangement which Paley adopts from Hermann.

<sup>124</sup> There seems an intentional ambiguity. They are "borne on," but it is as the corpses of the dead are borne to the sepulchre.

*Mess.* [The city's saved, but of the brother-kings  
The earth has drunk the blood, each slain by each.]

*Chor.* Great Zeus! and ye, O Gods!  
Guardians of this our town,  
Who save in very deed  
The towers of Cadmos old,  
Shall I rejoice and shout  
Over the happy chance  
That frees our State from harm;  
Or weep that ill-starred pair,  
The war-chiefs, childless and most miserable,  
Who, true to that ill name  
Of Polyneikes, died in impious mood,  
Contending overmuch?

### **Strophe**

Oh dark, and all too true  
That curse of Ædipus and all his race,<sup>125</sup>  
An evil chill is falling on my heart,  
And, like a Thyiad wild,  
Over his grave I sing a dirge of grief,  
Hearing the dead have died by evil fate,  
Each in foul bloodshed steeped;  
Ah me! Ill-omened is the spear's accord.<sup>126</sup>

### **Antistrophe**

It hath wrought out its end,  
And hath not failed, that prayer the father poured;  
And Laios' reckless counsels work till now:  
I fear me for the State;  
The oracles have not yet lost their edge;  
O men of many sorrows, ye have wrought  
This deed incredible;  
Not now in word come woes most lamentable.

---

<sup>125</sup> Not here the curse uttered by Ædipus, but that which rested on him and all his kin. There is possibly an allusion to the curse which Pelops is said to have uttered against Laios when he stole his son Chrysippos. Comp. v. 837.

<sup>126</sup> As in v. 763 we read of the brothers as made one in death, so now of the concord which is wrought out by conflict, the concord, *i. e.*, of the grave.



*[As the Chorus are speaking, the bodies of Eteocles  
and Polyneikes are brought in solemn procession  
by Theban Citizens]*

### Epode

Yea, it is all too clear,  
The herald's tale of woe comes full in sight;  
Twofold our cares, twin evils born of pride,  
Murderous, with double doom,  
Wrought unto full completeness all these ills.  
What shall I say? What else  
Are they than woes that make this house their home?  
But oh! my friends, ply, ply with swift, strong gale,  
That even stroke of hands upon your head,<sup>127</sup>  
In funeral order, such as evermore  
O'er Acheron sends on  
That bark of State, dark-rigged, accursed its voyage,  
Which nor Apollo visits nor the sun,<sup>128</sup>  
On to the shore unseen,  
The resting-place of all.

*[Ismene and Antigone are seen approaching in  
mourning garments, followed by a procession of  
women wailing and lamenting]*

For see, they come to bitter deed called forth,  
Ismene and the maid Antigone,  
To wail their brothers' fall;  
With little doubt I deem,  
That they will pour from fond, deep-bosomed breasts  
A worthy strain of grief:  
But it is meet that we,  
Before we hear their cry,  
Should utter the harsh hymn Erinnys loves,  
And sing to Hades dark  
The Pæan of distress.  
O ye, most evil-fated in your kin,  
Of all who guard their robes with maiden's band,  
I weep and wail, and feigning know I none,

---

<sup>127</sup> The Chorus are called on to change their character, and to pass from the attitude of suppliants, with outstretched arms, to that of mourners at a funeral, beating on their breasts. But, perhaps, the call is addressed to the mourners who are seen approaching with Ismene and Antigone.

<sup>128</sup> The thought is drawn from the *theoris* or pilgrim-ship, which went with snow-white sails, and accompanied by joyful pæans, on a solemn mission from Athens to Delos. In contrast with this type of joy, Æschylos draws the picture of the boat of Charon, which passes over the gloomy pool accompanied by the sighs and gestures of bitter lamentation. So, in the old Attic legend, the ship that annually carried seven youths and maidens to the Minotaur of Crete was conspicuous for its black sails.

That I should fail to speak  
My sorrow from my heart.

### **Strophe I**

*Semi-Chor. A.* Alas! alas!  
Men of stern mood, who would not list to friends,  
Unwearied in all ills,  
Seizing your father's house, O wretched ones  
With the spear's murderous point.

*Semi-Chor. B.* Yea, wretched they who found a wretched doom,  
With havoc of the house.

### **Antistrophe I**

*Semi-Chor. A.* Alas! alas!  
Ye who laid low the ancient walls of home,  
On sovereignty, ill won,  
Your eyes have looked, and ye at last are brought  
To concord by the sword.

*Semi-Chor. B.* Yea, of a truth, the curse of Ædipus  
Erinnys dread fulfils.

### **Strophe II**

*Semi-Chor. A.* Yea, smitten through the heart,  
Smitten through sides where flowed the blood of brothers.  
Ah me! ye doomed of God!  
Ah me! the curses dire  
Of deaths ye met with each at other's hands!

*Semi-Chor. B.* Thou tell'st of men death-smitten through and through,  
Both in their homes and lives,  
With wrath beyond all speech,  
And doom of discord fell,  
That sprang from out the curse their father spake.

## Antistrophe II

*Semi-Chor. A.* Yea, through the city runs  
A wailing cry. The high towers wail aloud;  
Wails all the plain that loves her heroes well;  
And to their children's sons  
The wealth will go for which  
The strife of those ill-starred ones brought forth death.

*Semi-Chor. B.* Quick to resent, they shared their fortune so,  
That each like portion won;  
Nor can their friends regard  
Their umpire without blame;  
Nor is our voice in thanks to Ares raised.

## Strophe III

*Semi-Chor. A.* By the sword smitten low,  
Thus are they now;  
By the sword smitten low,  
There wait them ... Nay,  
Doth one perchance ask what?  
Shares in their old ancestral sepulchres.

*Semi-Chor. B.* \*The sorrow of the house is borne to them  
By my heart-rending wail.  
Mine own the cries I pour;  
Mine own the woes I weep,  
Bitter and joyless, shedding truest tears  
From heart that faileth, even as they fall,  
For these two kingly chiefs.

## Antistrophe III

*Semi-Chor. A.* Yes; one may say of them,  
That wretched pair,  
That they much ill have wrought  
To their own host;  
Yea, and to alien ranks  
Of many nations fallen in the fray.

*Semi-Chor. B.* Ah! miserable she who bare those twain,

'Bove all of women born  
Who boast a mother's name!  
Taking her son, her own,  
As spouse, she bare these children, and they both,  
By mutual slaughter and by brothers' hands,  
Have found their end in death.

### **Strophe IV**

*Semi-Chor. A.* Yes; of the same womb born, and doomèd both,  
Not as friends part, they fell,  
In strife to madness pushed  
In this their quarrel's end.

*Semi-Chor. B.* The quarrel now is hushed,  
And in the ensanguined earth their lives are blent;  
Full near in blood are they.  
Stern umpire of their strifes  
Has been the stranger from beyond the sea,<sup>129</sup>  
Fresh from the furnace, keen and sharpened steel.  
Stern, too, is Ares found,  
Distributing their goods,  
Making their father's curses all too true.

### **Antistrophe IV**

*Semi-Chor. A.* At last they have their share, ah, wretched ones!  
Of burdens sent from God.  
And now beneath them lies  
A boundless wealth of – earth.

*Semi-Chor. B.* O ye who your own race  
Have made to burgeon out with many woes!  
Over the end at last  
The brood of Curses raise  
Their shrill, sharp cry of lamentation loud,  
The race being put to flight of utmost rout,  
And Atè's trophy stands,  
Where in the gates they fell;  
And Fate, now both are conquered, rests at last.

---

<sup>129</sup> The “Chalyb,” or iron sword, which the Hellenes had imported from the Skythians. Comp. vv. 70. 86.

***Enter Antigone and Ismene, followed by mourning***

***maidens*** <sup>130</sup>

*Ant.* Thou wast smitten, and thou smotest.

*Ism.* Thou did'st slaughter, and wast slaughtered.

*Ant.* Thou with spear to death did'st smite him.

*Ism.* Thou with spear to death wast smitten.

*Ant.* Oh, the woe of all your labours!

*Ism.* Oh, the woe of all ye suffered!

*Ant.* Pour the cry of lamentation.

*Ism.* Pour the tears of bitter weeping.

*Ant.* There in death thou liest prostrate.

*Ism.* Having wrought a great destruction.

**Strophe**

*Ant.* Ah! my mind is crazed with wailing.

*Ism.* Yea, my heart within me groaneth.

*Ant.* Thou for whom the city weepeth!

*Ism.* Thou too, doomed to all ill-fortune!

*Ant.* By a loved hand thou hast perished.

*Ism.* And a loved form thou hast slaughtered.

---

<sup>130</sup> The lyrical, operative character of Greek tragedies has to be borne in mind as we read passages like that which follows. They were not meant to be *read*. Uttered in a passionate recitative, accompanied by expressive action, they probably formed a very effective element in the actual representation of the tragedy. We may look on it as the only extant specimen of the kind of wailing which was characteristic of Eastern burials, and which was slowly passing away in Greece under the influence of a higher culture. The early fondness of Æschylos for a *finale* of this nature is seen also in *The Persians*, and in a more solemn and subdued form, in the *Eumenides*. The feeling that there was something barbaric in these untoward displays of grief, showed itself alike in the legislation of Solon, and the eloquence of Pericles.

*Ant.* Double woes are ours to tell of.

*Ism.* Double woes too ours to look on.

*Ant.* \*Twofold sorrows from near kindred.

*Ism.* \*Sisters we by brothers standing.

*Ant.* Terrible are they to tell of.

*Ism.* Terrible are they to look on.

*Chor.* Ah me, thou Destiny,  
Giver of evil gifts, and working woe,  
And thou dread spectral form of Œdipus,  
And swarth Erinnys too,  
A mighty one art thou.

### **Antistrophe**

*Ant.* Ah me! ah me! woes dread to look on...

*Ism.* Ye showed to me, returned from exile.

*Ant.* Not, when he had slain, returned he.

*Ism.* Nay, he, saved from exile, perished.

*Ant.* Yea, I trow too well, he perished.

*Ism.* And his brother, too, he murdered.

*Ant.* Woeful, piteous, are those brothers!

*Ism.* Woeful, piteous, all they suffered!

*Ant.* Woes of kindred wrath enkindling!

*Ism.* Saturate with threefold horrors!

*Ant.* Terrible are they to tell of.

*Ism.* Terrible are they to look on.

*Chor.* Ah me, thou Destiny,  
Giver of evil gifts, and stern of soul,

And thou dread spectral form of Ædipus,  
And swarth Erinnys too,  
A mighty one art thou.

### Epode

*Ant.* Thou, then, by full trial knowest...

*Ism.* Thou, too, no whit later learning...

*Ant.* When thou cam'st back to this city<sup>131</sup>...

*Ism.* Rival to our chief in warfare.

*Ant.* Woe, alas! for all our troubles!

*Ism.* Woe, alas! for all our evils!

*Ant.* Evils fallen on our houses!

*Ism.* Evils fallen on our country!

*Ant.* And on me before all others...

*Ism.* And to me the future waiting...

*Ant.* Woe for those two brothers luckless!

*Ism.* King Eteocles, our leader!

*Ant.* Oh, before all others wretched!

*Ism.*...

*Ant.* Ah, by Atè frenzy-stricken!

*Ism.* Ah, where now shall they be buried?

*Ant.* There where grave is highest honour.

*Ism.* Ah, the woe my father wedded!

---

<sup>131</sup> Here, and perhaps throughout, we must think of Antigone as addressing and looking on the corpse of Polyneikes, Ismene on that of Eteocles.

### *Enter a Herald*

*Her.* 'Tis mine the judgment and decrees to publish  
Of this Cadmeian city's counsellors:  
It is decreed Eteocles to honour,  
For his good-will towards this land of ours,  
With seemly burial, such as friend may claim;  
For warding off our foes he courted death;  
Pure as regards his country's holy things,  
Blameless he died where death the young beseems;  
This then I'm ordered to proclaim of him.  
But for his brother's, Polyneikes' corpse,  
To cast it out unburied, prey for dogs,  
As working havoc on Cadmeian land,  
Unless some God had hindered by the spear  
Of this our prince;<sup>132</sup> and he, though, dead, shall gain  
The curse of all his father's Gods, whom he

*[Pointing to Polyneikes]*

With alien host dishonouring, sought to take  
Our city. Him by ravenous birds interred  
Ingloriously, they sentence to receive  
His full deserts; and none may take in hand  
To heap up there a tomb, nor honour him  
With shrill-voiced wailings; but he still must lie,  
Without the meed of burial by his friends.  
So do the high Cadmeian powers decree.

*Ant.* And I those rulers of Cadmeians tell,<sup>133</sup>  
That if no other care to bury him,  
I will inter him, facing all the risk,  
Burying my brother: nor am I ashamed  
To thwart the State in rank disloyalty;  
Strange power there is in ties of blood, that we,  
Born of woe-laden mother, sire ill-starred,  
Are bound by: therefore of thy full free-will,  
Share thou, my soul, in woes he did not will,  
Thou living, he being dead, with sister's heart.  
And this I say, no wolves with ravening maw,  
Shall tear his flesh – No! no! let none think that!  
For tomb and burial I will scheme for him,

---

<sup>132</sup> Perhaps “Unless some God had stood against the spear This chief did wield.”

<sup>133</sup> The speech of the Antigone becomes the starting-point, in the hands of Sophocles, of the noblest of his tragedies. The denial of burial, it will be remembered, was looked on as not merely an indignity and outrage against the feelings of the living, but as depriving the souls of the dead of all rest and peace. As such it was the punishment of parricides and traitors.



Though I be but weak woman, bringing earth  
Within my byssine raiment's fold, and so  
Myself will bury him; let no man think  
(I say't again) aught else. Take heart, my soul!  
There shall not fail the means effectual.

*Her.* I bid thee not defy the State in this.

*Ant.* I bid thee not proclaim vain words to me.

*Her.* Stern is the people now, with victory flushed.

*Ant.* Stern let them be, he shall not tombless lie.

*Her.* And wilt thou honour whom the State doth loathe?

*Ant.* \*Yea, from the Gods he gets an honour due.<sup>134</sup>

*Her.* It was not so till he this land attacked.

*Ant.* He, suffering evil, evil would repay.

*Her.* Not against one his arms were turned, but all.

*Ant.* Strife is the last of Gods to end disputes:  
Him I will bury; talk no more of it.

*Her.* Choose for thyself then, I forbid the deed.

*Chor.* Alas! alas! alas!  
Ye haughty boasters, race-destroying,  
Now Fates and now Erinnyes, smiting  
The sons of Ædipus, ye slew them,  
With a root-and-branch destruction.  
What shall I then do, what suffer?  
What shall I devise in counsel?  
How should I dare nor to weep thee,  
Nor escort thee to the burial?  
But I tremble and I shrink from  
All the terrors which they threatened,  
They who are my fellow-townsmen.  
Many mourners thou (*looking to the bier of Eteocles*) shalt meet with;  
But he, lost one, unlamented,  
With his sister's wailing only

---

<sup>134</sup> The words are obscure enough, the point lying, it may be, in their ambiguity. Antigone here, as in the tragedy of Sophocles, pleads that the Gods have pardoned; they still command and love the reverence for the dead, which she is about to show. The herald catches up her words and takes them in another sense, as though all the honour he had met with from the Gods had been defeat, and death, and shame, as the reward of his sacrilege. Another rendering, however, gives —“Yes, so the Gods have done with honouring him.”

Passeth. Who with this complieth?

*Semi-Chor. A.* Let the city doom or not doom  
Those who weep for Polyneikes;  
We will go, and we will bury,  
Maidens we in sad procession;  
For the woe to all is common,  
And our State with voice uncertain,  
Of the claims of Right and Justice;  
Hither, thither, shifts its praises.

*Semi-Chor. B.* We will thus, our chief attending,  
Speak, as speaks the State, our praises:  
Of the claims of Right and Justice;<sup>135</sup>  
For next those the Blessed Rulers,  
And the strength of Zeus, he chiefly  
Saved the city of Cadmeians  
From the doom of fell destruction,  
From the doom of whelming utter,  
In the flood of alien warriors.

*[Exeunt Antigone and Semi-Chorus A., following  
the corpse of Polyneikes; Ismene  
and Semi-Chorus B. that of Eteocles.]*

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<sup>135</sup> The words are probably a protest against the changeableness of the Athenian *demos*, as seen especially in their treatment of Aristeides.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

### DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Prometheus  
Hermes  
Okeanos  
Strength  
Hephæstos  
Force  
*Chorus of Ocean Nymphs*

*ARGUMENT.* – In the old time, when Cronos was sovereign of the Gods, Zeus, whom he had begotten, rose up against him, and the Gods were divided in their counsels, some, the Titans chiefly, siding with the father, and some with the son. And Prometheus, the son of Earth or Themis, though one of the Titans, supported Zeus, as did also Okeanos, and by his counsels Zeus obtained the victory, and Cronos was chained in Tartaros, and the Titans buried under mountains, or kept in bonds in Hades. And then Prometheus, seeing the miseries of the race of men, of whom Zeus took little heed, stole the fire which till then had belonged to none but Hephæstos and was used only for the Gods, and gave it to mankind, and taught them many arts whereby their wretchedness was lessened. But Zeus being wroth with Prometheus for this deed, sent Hephæstos, with his two helpers, Strength and Force, to fetter him to a rock on Caucasos.

And in yet another story was the cruelty of the Gods made known. For Zeus loved Io, the daughter of Inachos, king of Argos, and she was haunted by visions of the night, telling her of his passion, and she told her father thereof. And Inachos, sending to the God at Delphi, was told to drive Io forth from her home. And Zeus gave her the horns of a cow, and Hera, who hated her because she was dear to Zeus, sent with her a gadfly that stung her, and gave her no rest, and drove her over many lands.

*Note.*— The play is believed to have been the second of a Trilogy, of which the first was *Prometheus the Fire-giver*, and the third *Prometheus Unbound*.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

**Scene. – Skythia, on the heights of Caucasos. The Euxine**

**seen in the distance**

***Enter Hephæstos, Strength, and Force, leading***

**Prometheus in chains<sup>136</sup>**

*Strength.* Lo! to a plain, earth's boundary remote,  
We now are come, – the tract as Skythian known,  
A desert inaccessible: and now,  
Hephæstos, it is thine to do the hests  
The Father gave thee, to these lofty crags  
To bind this crafty trickster fast in chains  
Of adamantine bonds that none can break;  
For he thy choice flower stealing, the bright glory  
Of fire that all arts spring from, hath bestowed it  
On mortal men. And so for fault like this  
He now must pay the Gods due penalty,  
That he may learn to bear the sovereign rule  
Of Zeus, and cease from his philanthropy.

*Heph.* O Strength, and thou, O Force, the hest of Zeus,  
As far as touches you, attains its end,  
And nothing hinders. Yet my courage fails  
To bind a God of mine own kin by force  
To this bare rock where tempests wildly sweep;  
And yet I needs must muster courage for it:  
'Tis no slight thing the Father's words to scorn.  
O thou of Themis [*to Prometheus*] wise in counsel son,  
Full deep of purpose, lo! against my will,<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup> The scene seems at first an exception to the early conventional rule, which forbade the introduction of a third actor on the Greek stage. But it has been noticed that (1) Force does not speak, and (2) Prometheus does not speak till Strength and Force have retired, and that it is therefore probable that the whole work of nailing is done on a lay figure or effigy of some kind, and that one of the two who had before taken part in the dialogue then speaks behind it in the character of Prometheus. So the same actor must have appeared in succession as Okeanos, Io, and Hermes.

<sup>137</sup> Prometheus (*Forethought*) is the son of Themis (*Right*) the second occupant of the Pythian Oracle (*Eumen.* v. 2). His sympathy with man leads him to impart the gift which raised them out of savage animal life, and for this Zeus, who appears throughout the play as a hard taskmaster, sentences him to fetters. Hephæstos, from whom this fire had been stolen, has a touch of pity for him. Strength, who comes as the servant, not of Hephæstos, but of Zeus himself, acts, as such, with merciless cruelty.

I fetter thee against thy will with bonds  
Of bronze that none can loose, to this lone height,  
Where thou shalt know nor voice nor face of man,  
But scorching in the hot blaze of the sun,  
Shalt lose thy skin's fair beauty. Thou shalt long  
For starry-mantled night to hide day's sheen,  
For sun to melt the rime of early dawn;  
And evermore the weight of present ill  
Shall wear thee down. Unborn as yet is he  
Who shall release thee: this the fate thou gain'st  
As due reward for thy philanthropy.  
For thou, a God not fearing wrath of Gods,  
In thy transgression gav'st their power to men;  
And therefore on this rock of little ease  
Thou still shalt keep thy watch, nor lying down,  
Nor knowing sleep, nor ever bending knee;  
And many groans and wailings profitless  
Thy lips shall utter; for the mind of Zeus  
Remains inexorable. Who holds a power  
But newly gained<sup>138</sup> is ever stern of mood.

*Strength.* Let be! Why linger in this idle pity?  
Why dost not hate a God to Gods a foe,  
Who gave thy choicest prize to mortal men?

*Heph.* Strange is the power of kin and intercourse.<sup>139</sup>

*Strength.* I own it; yet to slight the Father's words,  
How may that be? Is not that fear the worse?

*Heph.* Still art thou ruthless, full of savagery.

*Strength.* There is no help in weeping over him:  
Spend not thy toil on things that profit not.

*Heph.* O handicraft to me intolerable!

*Strength.* Why loath'st thou it? Of these thy present griefs  
That craft of thine is not one whit the cause.

*Heph.* And yet I would some other had that skill.

*Strength.* \*All things bring toil except for Gods to reign;<sup>140</sup>  
For none but Zeus can boast of freedom true.

---

<sup>138</sup> The generalised statement refers to Zeus, as having but recently expelled Cronos from his throne in Heaven.

<sup>139</sup> Hephaestus, as the great fire-worker, had taught Prometheus to use the fire which he afterwards bestowed on men.

<sup>140</sup> Perhaps, "All might is ours except o'er Gods to rule."

*Heph.* Too well I see the proof, and gainsay not.

*Strength.* Wilt thou not speed to fix the chains on him,  
Lest He, the Father, see thee loitering here?

*Heph.* Well, here the handcuffs thou may'st see prepared.

*Strength.* In thine hands take him. Then with all thy might  
Strike with thine hammer; nail him to the rocks.

*Heph.* The work goes on, I ween, and not in vain.

*Strength.* Strike harder, rivet, give no whit of ease:  
A wondrous knack has he to find resource,  
Even where all might seem to baffle him.

*Heph.* Lo! this his arm is fixed inextricably.

*Strength.* Now rivet thou this other fast, that he  
May learn, though sharp, that he than Zeus is duller.

*Heph.* No one but he could justly blame my work.

*Strength.* Now drive the stern jaw of the adamant wedge  
Right through his chest with all the strength thou hast.

*Heph.* Ah me! Prometheus, for thy woes I groan.

*Strength.* Again, thou'rt loth, and for the foes of Zeus  
Thou groanest: take good heed to it lest thou  
Ere long with cause thyself commiserate.

*Heph.* Thou see'st a sight unsightly to our eyes.

*Strength.* I see this man obtaining his deserts:  
Nay, cast thy breast-chains round about his ribs.

*Heph.* I must needs do it. Spare thine o'er much bidding;  
Go thou below and rivet both his legs.<sup>141</sup>

*Strength.* Nay, I will bid thee, urge thee to thy work.

*Heph.* There, it is done, and that with no long toil.

*Strength.* Now with thy full power fix the galling fetters:  
Thou hast a stern o'erlooker of thy work.

---

<sup>141</sup> The words indicate that the effigy of Prometheus, now nailed to the rock, was, as being that of a Titan, of colossal size.

*Heph.* Thy tongue but utters words that match thy form.<sup>142</sup>

*Strength.* Choose thou the melting mood; but chide not me  
For my self-will and wrath and ruthlessness.

*Heph.* Now let us go, his limbs are bound in chains.

*Strength.* Here then wax proud, and stealing what belongs  
To the Gods, to mortals give it. What can they  
Avail to rescue thee from these thy woes?  
Falsely the Gods have given thee thy name,  
Prometheus, Forethought; forethought thou dost need  
To free thyself from this rare handiwork.

*[Exeunt Hephestos, Strength, and Force,  
leaving Prometheus on the rock]*

*Prom.* <sup>143</sup> Thou firmament of God, and swift-winged 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.  
Behold in what foul case  
I for ten thousand years  
Shall struggle in my woe,  
In these unseemly chains.  
Such doom the new-made Monarch of the Blest  
Hath now devised for me.  
Woe, woe! The present and the oncoming pang  
I wail, as I search out  
The place and hour when end of all these ills  
Shall dawn on me at last.  
What say I? All too clearly I foresee  
The things that come, and nought of pain shall be  
By me unlooked-for; but I needs must bear  
My destiny as best I may, knowing well  
The might resistless of Necessity.  
And neither may I speak of this my fate,  
Nor hold my peace. For I, poor I, through giving  
Great gifts to mortal men, am prisoner made  
In these fast fetters; yea, in fennel stalk<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> The touch is characteristic as showing that here, as in the *Eumenides*, Æschylos relied on the horribleness of the masks, as part of the machinery of his plays.

<sup>143</sup> The silence of Prometheus up to this point was partly, as has been said, consequent on the conventional laws of the Greek drama, but it is also a touch of supreme insight into the heroic temper. In the presence of his torturers, the Titan will not utter even a groan. When they are gone, he appeals to the sympathy of Nature.

<sup>144</sup> The legend is from Hesiod (*Theogon.*, v. 567). The fennel, or *narthex*, seems to have been a large umbelliferous plant, with a large stem filled with a sort of pith, which was used when dry as tinder. Stalks were carried as wands (the *thyrsi*) by the men and women who joined in Bacchanalian processions. In modern botany, the name is given to the plant which produces Asafoetida, and the stem of which, from its resinous character, would burn freely, and so connect itself with the Promethean myth. On the other hand, the

I snatched the hidden spring of stolen fire,  
Which is to men a teacher of all arts,  
Their chief resource. And now this penalty  
Of that offence I pay, fast riveted  
In chains beneath the open firmament.  
Ha! ha! What now?  
What sound, what odour floats invisibly?<sup>145</sup>  
Is it of God or man, or blending both?  
And has one come to the remotest rock  
To look upon my woes? Or what wills he?  
Behold me bound, a God to evil doomed,  
The foe of Zeus, and held  
In hatred by all Gods  
Who tread the courts of Zeus:  
And this for my great love,  
Too great, for mortal men.  
Ah me! what rustling sounds  
Hear I of birds not far?  
With the light whirr of wings  
The air re-echoeth:  
All that draws nigh to me is cause of fear.<sup>146</sup>

***Enter Chorus of Ocean Nymphs, with wings,***

***floating in the air*** <sup>147</sup>

*Chor.* Nay, fear thou nought: in love  
All our array of wings  
In eager race hath come  
To this high peak, full hardly gaining o'er  
Our Father's mind and will;  
And the swift-rushing breezes bore me on:  
For lo! the echoing sound of blows on iron  
Pierced to our cave's recess, and put to flight  
My shamefast modesty,  
And I in unshod haste, on winged car,  
To thee rushed hitherward.

*Prom.* Ah me! ah me!

---

Narthex Asafœtida is found at present only in Persia, Afghanistan, and the Punjaub.

<sup>145</sup> The ocean nymphs, like other divine ones, would be anointed with ambrosial unguents, and the odour would be wafted before them by the rustling of their wings. This too we may think of as part of the "stage effects" of the play.

<sup>146</sup> The words are not those of a vague terror only. The sufferer knows that his tormentor is to come to him before long on wings, and therefore the sound as of the flight of birds is full of terrors.

<sup>147</sup> By the same stage mechanism the Chorus remains in the air till verse 280, when, at the request of Prometheus, they alight.



Offspring of Tethys blest with many a child,  
Daughters of Old Okeanos that rolls  
Round all the earth with never-sleeping stream,  
Behold ye me, and see  
With what chains fettered fast,  
I on the topmost crags of this ravine  
Shall keep my sentry-post unenviable.

*Chor.* I see it, O Prometheus, and a mist  
Of fear and full of tears comes o'er mine eyes,  
Thy frame beholding thus,  
Writhing on these high rocks  
In adamantine ills.  
New pilots now o'er high Olympos rule,  
And with new-fashioned laws  
Zeus reigns, down-trampling right,  
And all the ancient powers He sweeps away.

*Prom.* Ah! would that 'neath the Earth, 'neath Hades too,  
Home of the dead, far down to Tartaros  
Unfathomable He in fetters fast  
In wrath had hurled me down:  
So neither had a God  
Nor any other mocked at these my woes;  
But now, the wretched plaything of the winds,  
I suffer ills at which my foes rejoice.

*Chor.* Nay, which of all the Gods  
Is so hard-hearted as to joy in this?  
Who, Zeus excepted, doth not pity thee  
In these thine ills? But He,  
Ruthless, with soul unbent,  
Subdues the heavenly host, nor will He cease<sup>148</sup>  
Until his heart be satiate with power,  
Or some one seize with subtle stratagem  
The sovran might that so resistless seemed.

*Prom.* Nay, of a truth, though put to evil shame,  
In massive fetters bound,  
The Ruler of the Gods  
Shall yet have need of me, yes, e'en of me,  
To tell the counsel new  
That seeks to strip from him  
His sceptre and his might of sovereignty.  
In vain will He with words

---

<sup>148</sup> Here, as throughout the play, the poet puts into the mouth of his *dramatis personæ* words which must have seemed to the devouter Athenians sacrilegious enough to call for an indictment before the Areiopagos. But the final play of the Trilogy came, we may believe, as the *Eumenides* did in its turn, as a reconciliation of the conflicting thoughts that rise in men's minds out of the seeming anomalies of the world.

Or suasion's honeyed charms  
Soothe me, nor will I tell  
Through fear of his stern threats,  
Ere He shall set me free  
From these my bonds, and make,  
Of his own choice, amends  
For all these outrages.

*Chor.* Full rash art thou, and yield'st  
In not a jot to bitterest form of woe;  
Thou art o'er-free and reckless in thy speech:  
But piercing fear hath stirred  
My inmost soul to strife;  
For I fear greatly touching thy distress,  
As to what haven of these woes of thine  
Thou now must steer: the son of Cronos hath  
A stubborn mood and heart inexorable.

*Prom.* I know that Zeus is hard,  
And keeps the Right supremely to himself;  
But then, I trow, He'll be  
Full pliant in his will,  
When He is thus crushed down.  
Then, calming down his mood  
Of hard and bitter wrath,  
He'll hasten unto me,  
As I to him shall haste,  
For friendship and for peace.

*Chor.* Hide it not from us, tell us all the tale:  
For what offence Zeus, having seized thee thus,  
So wantonly and bitterly insults thee:  
If the tale hurt thee not, inform thou us.

*Prom.* Painful are these things to me e'en to speak:  
Painful is silence; everywhere is woe.  
For when the high Gods fell on mood of wrath,  
And hot debate of mutual strife was stirred,  
Some wishing to hurl Cronos from his throne,  
That Zeus, forsooth, might reign; while others strove,  
Eager that Zeus might never rule the Gods:  
Then I, full strongly seeking to persuade  
The Titans, yea, the sons of Heaven and Earth,  
Failed of my purpose. Scorning subtle arts,  
With counsels violent, they thought that they  
By force would gain full easy mastery.  
But then not once or twice my mother Themis

And Earth, one form though bearing many names,<sup>149</sup>  
Had prophesied the future, how 'twould run,  
That not by strength nor yet by violence,  
But guile, should those who prospered gain the day.  
And when in my words I this counsel gave,  
They deigned not e'en to glance at it at all.  
And then of all that offered, it seemed best  
To join my mother, and of mine own will,  
Not against his will, take my side with Zeus,  
And by my counsels, mine, the dark deep pit  
Of Tartaros the ancient Cronos holds,  
Himself and his allies. Thus profiting  
By me, the mighty ruler of the Gods  
Repay me with these evil penalties:  
For somehow this disease in sovereignty  
Inheres, of never trusting to one's friends.<sup>150</sup>  
And since ye ask me under what pretence  
He thus maltreats me, I will show it you:  
For soon as He upon his father's throne  
Had sat secure, forthwith to divers Gods  
He divers gifts distributed, and his realm  
Began to order. But of mortal men  
He took no heed, but purposed utterly  
To crush their race and plant another new;  
And, I excepted, none dared cross his will;  
But I did dare, and mortal men I freed  
From passing on to Hades thunder-stricken;  
And therefore am I bound beneath these woes,  
Dreadful to suffer, pitiable to see:  
And I, who in my pity thought of men  
More than myself, have not been worthy deemed  
To gain like favour, but all ruthlessly  
I thus am chained, foul shame this sight to Zeus.

*Chor.* Iron-hearted must he be and made of rock  
Who is not moved, Prometheus, by thy woes:  
Fain could I wish I ne'er had seen such things,  
And, seeing them, am wounded to the heart.

*Prom.* Yea, I am piteous for my friends to see.

*Chor.* Did'st thou not go to farther lengths than this?

---

<sup>149</sup> The words leave it uncertain whether Themis is identified with Earth, or, as in the *Eumenides* (v. 2) distinguished from her. The Titans as a class, then, children of Okeanos and Chthôn (another name for *Land* or *Earth*), are the kindred rather than the brothers of Prometheus.

<sup>150</sup> The generalising words here, as in v. 35, appeal to the Athenian hatred of all that was represented by the words *tyrant* and *tyranny*.

*Prom.* I made men cease from contemplating death.<sup>151</sup>

*Chor.* What medicine did'st thou find for that disease?

*Prom.* Blind hopes I gave to live and dwell with them.

*Chor.* Great service that thou did'st for mortal men!

*Prom.* And more than that, I gave them fire, yes I.

*Chor.* Do short-lived men the flaming fire possess?

*Prom.* Yea, and full many an art they'll learn from it.

*Chor.* And is it then on charges such as these  
That Zeus maltreats thee, and no respite gives  
Of many woes? And has thy pain no end?

*Prom.* End there is none, except as pleases Him.

*Chor.* How shall it please? What hope hast thou? See'st not  
That thou hast sinned? Yet to say how thou sinned'st  
Gives me no pleasure, and is pain to thee.  
Well! let us leave these things, and, if we may,  
Seek out some means to 'scape from this thy woe.

*Prom.* 'Tis a light thing for one who has his foot  
Beyond the reach of evil to exhort  
And counsel him who suffers. This to me  
Was all well known. Yea, willing, willingly  
I sinned, nor will deny it. Helping men,  
I for myself found trouble: yet I thought not  
That I with such dread penalties as these  
Should wither here on these high-towering crags,  
Lighting on this lone hill and neighbourless.  
Wherefore wail not for these my present woes,  
But, drawing nigh, my coming fortunes hear,  
That ye may learn the whole tale to the end.  
Nay, hearken, hearken; show your sympathy  
With him who suffers now. 'Tis thus that woe,  
Wandering, now falls on this one, now on that.

*Chor.* Not to unwilling hearers hast thou uttered,  
Prometheus, thy request,  
And now with nimble foot abounding

---

<sup>151</sup> The state described is that of men who “through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage.” That state, the parent of all superstition, fostered the slavish awe in which Zeus delighted. Prometheus, representing the active intellect of man, bestows new powers, new interests, new hopes, which at last divert them from that fear.

My swiftly rushing car,  
And the pure æther, path of birds of heaven,  
I will draw near this rough and rocky land,  
For much do I desire  
To hear this tale, full measure, of thy woes.

***Enter Okeanos, on a car drawn by a winged gryphon***

*Okean.* Lo, I come to thee, Prometheus,  
Reaching goal of distant journey,<sup>152</sup>  
Guiding this my winged courser  
By my will, without a bridle;  
And thy sorrows move my pity.  
Force, in part, I deem, of kindred  
Leads me on, nor know I any,  
Whom, apart from kin, I honour  
More than thee, in fuller measure.  
This thou shall own true and earnest:  
I deal not in glozing speeches.  
Come then, tell me how to help thee;  
Ne'er shalt thou say that one more friendly  
Is found than unto thee is Okean.

*Prom.* Let be. What boots it? Thou then too art come  
To gaze upon my sufferings. How did'st dare  
Leaving the stream that bears thy name, and caves  
Hewn in the living rock, this land to visit,  
Mother of iron? What then, art thou come  
To gaze upon my fall and offer pity?  
Behold this sight: see here the friend of Zeus,  
Who helped to seat him in his sovereignty,  
With what foul outrage I am crushed by him!

*Okean.* I see, Prometheus, and I wish to give thee  
My best advice, all subtle though thou be.  
Know thou thyself,<sup>153</sup> and fit thy soul to moods  
To thee full new. New king the Gods have now;  
But if thou utter words thus rough and sharp,  
Perchance, though sitting far away on high,  
Zeus yet may hear thee, and his present wrath  
Seem to thee but as child's play of distress.  
Nay, thou poor sufferer, quit the rage thou hast,  
And seek a remedy for these thine ills.

---

<sup>152</sup> The home of Okeanos was in the far west, at the boundary of the great stream surrounding the whole world, from which he took his name.

<sup>153</sup> One of the sayings of the Seven Sages, already recognised and quoted as a familiar proverb.

A tale thrice-told, perchance I seem to speak:  
Lo! this, Prometheus, is the punishment  
Of thine o'er lofty speech, nor art thou yet  
Humbled, nor yieldest to thy miseries,  
And fain would'st add fresh evils unto these.  
But thou, if thou wilt take me as thy teacher,  
Wilt not kick out against the pricks;<sup>154</sup> seeing well  
A monarch reigns who gives account to none.  
And now I go, and will an effort make,  
If I, perchance, may free thee from thy woes;  
Be still then, hush thy petulance of speech,  
Or knowest thou not, o'er-clever as thou art,  
That idle tongues must still their forfeit pay?

*Prom.* I envy thee, seeing thou art free from blame  
Though thou shared'st all, and in my cause wast bold;<sup>155</sup>  
Nay, let me be, nor trouble thou thyself;  
Thou wilt not, canst not soothe Him; very hard  
Is He of soothing. Look to it thyself,  
Lest thou some mischief meet with in the way.

*Okean.* It is thy wont thy neighbours' minds to school  
Far better than thine own. From deeds, not words,  
I draw my proof. But do not draw me back  
When I am hasting on, for lo, I deem,  
I deem that Zeus will grant this boon to me,  
That I should free thee from these woes of thine.

*Prom.* I thank thee much, yea, ne'er will cease to thank;  
For thou no whit of zeal dost lack; yet take,  
I pray, no trouble for me; all in vain  
Thy trouble, nothing helping, e'en if thou  
Should'st care to take the trouble. Nay, be still;  
Keep out of harm's way; sufferer though I be,  
I would not therefore wish to give my woes  
A wider range o'er others. No, not so:  
For lo! my mind is wearied with the grief  
Of that my kinsman Atlas,<sup>156</sup> who doth stand  
In the far West, supporting on his shoulders  
The pillars of the earth and heaven, a burden

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<sup>154</sup> See note on *Agam.* 1602.

<sup>155</sup> In the mythos, Okeanos had given his daughter Hesione in marriage to Prometheus after the theft of fire, and thus had identified himself with his transgression.

<sup>156</sup> In the *Theogony* of Hesiod (v. 509), Prometheus and Atlas appear as the sons of two sisters. As other Titans were thought of as buried under volcanoes, so this one was identified with the mountain which had been seen by travellers to Western Africa, or in the seas beyond it, rising like a column to support the vault of heaven. In Herodotos (iv. 174) and all later writers, the name is given to the chain of mountains in Lybia, as being the "pillar of the firmament;" but Humboldt and others identify it with the lonely peak of Teneriffe, as seen by Phœnikian or Hellenic voyagers. Teneriffe, too, like most of the other Titan mountains, was at one time volcanic. Homer (*Odys.* i. 53) represents him as holding the pillars which separate heaven from earth; Hesiod (*Theogon.* v. 517) as himself standing near the Hesperides (this too points to Teneriffe), sustaining the heavens with his head and shoulders.

His arms can ill but hold: I pity too  
The giant dweller of Kilikian caves,  
Dread portent, with his hundred hands, subdued  
By force, the mighty Typhon,<sup>157</sup> who arose  
'Gainst all the Gods, with sharp and dreadful jaws  
Hissing out slaughter, and from out his eyes  
There flashed the terrible brightness as of one  
Who would lay low the sovereignty of Zeus.  
But the unsleeping dart of Zeus came on him,  
Down-swooping thunderbolt that breathes out flame,  
Which from his lofty boastings startled him,  
For he i' the heart was struck, to ashes burnt,  
His strength all thunder-shattered; and he lies  
A helpless, powerless carcase, near the strait  
Of the great sea, fast pressed beneath the roots  
Of ancient Ætna, where on highest peak  
Hephæstos sits and smites his iron red-hot,  
From whence hereafter streams of fire shall burst,<sup>158</sup>  
Devouring with fierce jaws the golden plains  
Of fruitful, fair Sikelia. Such the wrath  
That Typhon shall belch forth with bursts of storm,  
Hot, breathing fire, and unapproachable,  
Though burnt and charred by thunderbolts of Zeus.  
Not inexperienced art thou, nor dost need  
My teaching: save thyself, as thou know'st how;  
And I will drink my fortune to the dregs,  
Till from his wrath the mind of Zeus shall rest.<sup>159</sup>

*Okean.* Know'st thou not this, Prometheus, even this,  
Of wrath's disease wise words the healers are?

*Prom.* Yea, could one soothe the troubled heart in time,  
Nor seek by force to tame the soul's proud flesh.

*Okean.* But in due forethought with bold daring blent,  
What mischief see'st thou lurking? Tell me this.

*Prom.* Toil bootless, and simplicity full fond.

*Okean.* Let me, I pray, that sickness suffer, since  
'Tis best being wise to have not wisdom's show.

*Prom.* Nay, but this error shall be deemed as mine.

---

<sup>157</sup> The volcanic character of the whole of Asia Minor, and the liability to earthquakes which has marked nearly every period of its history, led men to connect it also with the traditions of the Titans, some accordingly placing the home of Typhon in Phrygia, some near Sardis, some, as here, in Kilikia. Hesiod (*Theogon.* v. 820) describes Typhon (or Typhoeus) as a serpent-monster hissing out fire; Pindar (*Pyth.* i. 30, viii. 21) as lying with his head and breast crushed beneath the weight of Ætna, and his feet extending to Cumæ.

<sup>158</sup> The words point probably to an eruption, then fresh in men's memories, which had happened B.C. 476.

<sup>159</sup> By some editors this speech from "No, not so," to "thou know'st how," is assigned to Okeanos.

*Okean.* Thy word then clearly sends me home at once.

*Prom.* Yea, lest thy pity for me make a foe...

*Okean.* What! of that new king on his mighty throne?

*Prom.* Look to it, lest his heart be vexed with thee.

*Okean.* Thy fate, Prometheus, teaches me that lesson.

*Prom.* Away, withdraw! keep thou the mind thou hast.

*Okean.* Thou urgest me who am in act to haste;  
For this my bird four-footed flaps with wings  
The clear path of the æther; and full fain  
Would he bend knee in his own stall at home. [*Exit.*

### **Strophe I**

*Chor.* I grieve, Prometheus, for thy dreary fate,  
Shedding from tender eyes  
The dew of plenteous tears;  
With streams, as when the watery south wind blows,  
My cheek is wet;  
For lo! these things are all unenviable,  
And Zeus, by his own laws his sway maintaining,  
Shows to the elder Gods  
A mood of haughtiness.

### **Antistrophe I**

And all the country echoeth with the moan,  
And poureth many a tear  
For that magnific power  
Of ancient days far-seen that thou did'st share  
With those of one blood sprung;  
And all the mortal men who hold the plain  
Of holy Asia as their land of sojourn,  
They grieve in sympathy  
For thy woes lamentable.



## **Strophe II**

And they, the maiden band who find their home  
On distant Colchian coasts,  
Fearless of fight,<sup>160</sup>  
Or Skythian horde in earth's remotest clime,  
By far Mæotic lake;<sup>161</sup>

## **Antistrophe II**

And warlike glory of Arabia's tribes,<sup>162</sup>  
Who nigh to Caucasos  
In rock-fort dwell,  
An army fearful, with sharp-pointed spear  
Raging in war's array.

## **Strophe III**

One other Titan only have I seen,  
One other of the Gods,  
Thus bound in woes of adamantine strength —  
Atlas, who ever groans  
Beneath the burden of a crushing might,  
The out-spread vault of heaven.

## **Antistrophe III**

And lo! the ocean billows murmur loud  
In one accord with him;<sup>163</sup>  
The sea-depths groan, and Hades' swarthy pit  
Re-echoeth the sound,  
And fountains of clear rivers, as they flow,

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<sup>160</sup> These are, of course, the Amazons, who were believed to have come through Thrakè from the Tauric Chersonesos, and had left traces of their name and habits in the Attic traditions of Theseus.

<sup>161</sup> Beyond the plains of Skythia, and the lake Mæotis (the sea of Azov) there would be the great river Okeanos, which was believed to flow round the earth.

<sup>162</sup> Sarmatia has been conjectured instead of Arabia. No Greek author sanctions the extension of the latter name to so remote a region as that north of the Caspian.

<sup>163</sup> The Greek leaves the object of the sympathy undefined, but it seems better to refer it to that which Atlas receives from the waste of waters around, and the dark world beneath, than to the pity shown to Prometheus. This has already been dwelt on in line 421.

Bewail his bitter griefs.

*Prom.* Think not it is through pride or stiff self-will  
That I am silent. But my heart is worn,  
Self-contemplating, as I see myself  
Thus outraged. Yet what other hand than mine  
Gave these young Gods in fulness all their gifts?  
But these I speak not of; for I should tell  
To you that know them. But those woes of men,<sup>164</sup>  
List ye to them, – how they, before as babes,  
By me were roused to reason, taught to think;  
And this I say, not finding fault with men,  
But showing my good-will in all I gave.  
For first, though seeing, all in vain they saw,  
And hearing, heard not rightly. But, like forms  
Of phantom-dreams, throughout their life's whole length  
They muddled all at random; did not know  
Houses of brick that catch the sunlight's warmth,  
Nor yet the work of carpentry. They dwelt  
In hollowed holes, like swarms of tiny ants,  
In sunless depths of caverns; and they had  
No certain signs of winter, nor of spring  
Flower-laden, nor of summer with her fruits;  
But without counsel fared their whole life long,  
Until I showed the risings of the stars,  
And settings hard to recognise.<sup>165</sup> And I  
Found Number for them, chief device of all,  
Groupings of letters, Memory's handmaid that,  
And mother of the Muses.<sup>166</sup> And I first  
Bound in the yoke wild steeds, submissive made  
Or to the collar or men's limbs, that so  
They might in man's place bear his greatest toils;  
And horses trained to love the rein I yoked  
To chariots, glory of wealth's pride of state;<sup>167</sup>  
Nor was it any one but I that found  
Sea-crossing, canvas-wingèd cars of ships:  
Such rare designs inventing (wretched me!)  
For mortal men, I yet have no device  
By which to free myself from this my woe.<sup>168</sup>

*Chor.* Foul shame thou sufferest: of thy sense bereaved,  
Thou errest greatly: and, like leech unskilled,

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<sup>164</sup> The passage that follows has for modern palæontologists the interest of coinciding with their views as to the progress of human society, and the condition of mankind during what has been called the “Stone” period. Comp. Lucretius, v. 955-984.

<sup>165</sup> Comp. Mr. Blakesley's note on Herod. ii. 4, as showing that here there was the greater risk of faulty observation.

<sup>166</sup> Another reading gives perhaps a better sense — “Memory, handmaid true And mother of the Muses.”

<sup>167</sup> In Greece, as throughout the East, the ox was used for all agricultural labours, the horse by the noble and the rich, either in war chariots, or stately processions, or in chariot races in the great games.

<sup>168</sup> Compare with this the account of the inventions of Palamedes in Sophocles, *Fragm.* 379.

Thou lovest heart when smitten with disease,  
And know'st not how to find the remedies  
Wherewith to heal thine own soul's sicknesses.

*Prom.* Hearing what yet remains thou'lt wonder more,  
What arts and what resources I devised:  
And this the chief: if any one fell ill,  
There was no help for him, nor healing food,  
Nor unguent, nor yet potion; but for want  
Of drugs they wasted, till I showed to them  
The blendings of all mild medicaments,<sup>169</sup>  
Wherewith they ward the attacks of sickness sore.  
I gave them many modes of prophecy;<sup>170</sup>  
And I first taught them what dreams needs must prove  
True visions, and made known the ominous sounds  
Full hard to know; and tokens by the way,  
And flights of taloned birds I clearly marked, —  
Those on the right propitious to mankind,  
And those sinister, – and what form of life  
They each maintain, and what their enmities  
Each with the other, and their loves and friendships;  
And of the inward parts the plumpness smooth.  
And with what colour they the Gods would please,  
And the streaked comeliness of gall and liver:  
And with burnt limbs enwrap in fat, and chine,  
I led men on to art full difficult:  
And I gave eyes to omens drawn from fire,  
Till then dim-visioned. So far then for this.  
And 'neath the earth the hidden boons for men,  
Bronze, iron, silver, gold, who else could say  
That he, ere I did, found them? None, I know,  
Unless he fain would babble idle words.  
In one short word, then, learn the truth condensed, —  
All arts of mortals from Prometheus spring.

*Chor.* Nay, be not thou to men so over-kind,  
While thou thyself art in sore evil case;  
For I am sanguine that thou too, released  
From bonds, shall be as strong as Zeus himself.

*Prom.* It is not thus that Fate's decree is fixed;  
But I, long crushed with twice ten thousand woes

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<sup>169</sup> Here we can recognise the knowledge of one who had studied in the schools of Pythagoras, or had at any rate picked up their terminology. A more immediate connexion may perhaps be traced with the influence of Epimenides, who was said to have spent many years in searching out the healing virtues of plants, and to have written books about them.

<sup>170</sup> The lines that follow form almost a manual of the art of divination as then practised. The “ominous sounds” include chance words, strange cries, any unexpected utterance that connected itself with men's fears for the future. The flights of birds were watched by the diviner as he faced the north, and so the region on the right hand was that of the sunrise, light, blessedness; on the left there were darkness and gloom and death.

And bitter pains, shall then escape my bonds;  
Art is far weaker than Necessity.

*Chor.* Who guides the helm, then, of Necessity?

*Prom.* Fates triple-formed, Errinyes unforgetting.

*Chor.* Is Zeus, then, weaker in his might than these?

*Prom.* Not even He can 'scape the thing decreed.

*Chor.* What is decreed for Zeus but still to reign?

*Prom.* Thou may'st no further learn, ask thou no more.

*Chor.* 'Tis doubtless some dread secret which thou hidest.

*Prom.* Of other theme make mention, for the time  
Is not yet come to utter this, but still  
It must be hidden to the uttermost;  
For by thus keeping it it is that I  
Escape my bondage foul, and these my pains.

### **Strophe I**

*Chor.* Ah! ne'er may Zeus the Lord,  
Whose sovran sway rules all,  
His strength in conflict set  
Against my feeble will!  
Nor may I fail to serve  
The Gods with holy feast  
Of whole burnt-offerings,  
Where the stream ever flows  
That bears my father's name,  
The great Okeanos!  
Nor may I sin in speech!  
May this grace more and more  
Sink deep into my soul  
And never fade away!

### **Antistrophe I**

Sweet is it in strong hope  
To spend long years of life,  
With bright and cheering joy

Our heart's thoughts nourishing.  
I shudder, seeing thee  
Thus vexed and harassed sore.  
By twice ten thousand woes;  
For thou in pride of heart,  
Having no fear of Zeus,  
In thine own obstinacy,  
Dost show for mortal men,  
Prometheus, love o'ermuch.

### **Strophe II**

See how that boon, dear friends,  
For thee is bootless found.  
Say, where is any help?  
What aid from mortals comes?  
Hast thou not seen this brief and powerless life,  
Fleeting as dreams, with which man's purblind race  
Is fast in fetters bound?  
Never shall counsels vain  
Of mortal men break through  
The harmony of Zeus.

### **Antistrophe II**

This lesson have I learnt  
Beholding thy sad fate,  
Prometheus! Other strains  
Come back upon my mind,  
When I sang wedding hymns around thy bath,  
And at thy bridal bed, when thou did'st take  
In wedlock's holy bands  
One of the same sire born,  
Our own Hesione,  
Persuading her with gifts  
As wife to share thy couch.

*Enter Io in form like a fair woman with a heifer's*

*horns,<sup>171</sup> followed by the Spectre of Argos*

*Io.* What land is this? What people? Whom shall I  
Say that I see thus vexed  
With bit and curb of rock?  
For what offence dost thou  
Bear fatal punishment?  
Tell me to what far land  
I've wandered here in woe.  
Ah me! ah me!  
Again the gadfly stings me miserable.  
Spectre of Argos, thou, the earth-born one —  
Ah, keep him off, O Earth!  
I fear to look upon that herdsman dread,  
Him with ten thousand eyes:  
Ah lo! he cometh with his crafty look,  
Whom Earth refuses even dead to hold;<sup>172</sup>  
But coming from beneath  
He hunts me miserable,  
And drives me famished o'er the sea-beach sand.

### Strophe

And still his waxened reed-pipe soundeth clear  
A soft and slumberous strain;  
O heavens! O ye Gods!  
Whither do these long wanderings lead me on?  
For what offence, O son of Cronos, what,  
Hast thou thus bound me fast  
In these great miseries?  
Ah me! ah me!  
And why with terror of the gadfly's sting  
Dost thou thus vex me, frenzied in my soul?

---

<sup>171</sup> So Io was represented, we are told, by Greek sculptors (Herod. ii. 41), as Isis was by those of Egypt. The points of contact between the myth of Io and that of Prometheus, as adopted, or perhaps developed, by Æschylos are – (1) that from her the destined deliverer of the chained Titan is to come; (2) that both were suffering from the cruelty of Zeus; (3) that the wanderings of Io gave scope for the wild tales of far countries on which the imagination of the Athenians fed greedily. But, as the *Suppliants* may serve to show, the story itself had a strange fascination for him. In the birth of Epaphos, and Io's release from her frenzy, he saw, it may be, a reconciliation of what had seemed hard to reconcile, a solution of the problems of the world, like in kind to that which was shadowed forth in the lost *Prometheus Unbound*.

<sup>172</sup> Argos had been slain by Hermes, and his eyes transferred by Hera to the tail of the peacock, and that bird was henceforth sacred to her.

Burn me with fire, or bury me in earth,  
Or to wild sea-beasts give me as a prey:  
Nay, grudge me not, O King,  
An answer to my prayers:  
Enough my many-wandered wanderings  
Have exercised my soul,  
Nor have I power to learn  
How to avert the woe.

(*To Prometheus.*) Hear'st thou the voice of maiden crowned with horns?

*Prom.* Surely I heard the maid by gadfly driven,  
Daughter of Inachos, who warmed the heart  
Of Zeus with love, and now through Hera's hate  
Is tried, perforce, with wanderings over-long?

### **Antistrophe**

*Io.* How is it that thou speak'st my father's name?  
Tell me, the suffering one,  
Who art thou, who, poor wretch,  
Who thus so truly nam'st me miserable,  
And tell'st the plague from Heaven,  
Which with its haunting stings  
Wears me to death? Ah woe!  
And I with famished and unseemly bounds  
Rush madly, driven by Hera's jealous craft.  
Ah, who of all that suffer, born to woe,  
Have trouble like the pain that I endure?  
But thou, make clear to me,  
What yet for me remains,  
What remedy, what healing for my pangs.  
Show me, if thou dost know:  
Speak out and tell to me,  
The maid by wanderings vexed.

*Prom.* I will say plainly all thou seek'st to know;  
Not in dark tangled riddles, but plain speech,  
As it is meet that friends to friends should speak;  
Thou see'st Prometheus who gave fire to men.

*Io.* O thou to men as benefactor known,  
Why, poor Prometheus, sufferest thou this pain?

*Prom.* I have but now mine own woes ceased to wail.

*Io.* Wilt thou not then bestow this boon on me?

*Prom.* Say what thou seek'st, for I will tell thee all.

*Io.* Tell me, who fettered thee in this ravine?

*Prom.* The counsel was of Zeus, the hand Hephæstos'.

*Io.* Of what offence dost thou the forfeit pay?

*Prom.* Thus much alone am I content to tell.

*Io.* Tell me, at least, besides, what end shall come  
To my drear wanderings; when the time shall be.

*Prom.* Not to know this is better than to know.

*Io.* Nay, hide not from me what I have to bear.

*Prom.* It is not that I grudge the boon to thee.

*Io.* Why then delayest thou to tell the whole?

*Prom.* Not from ill will, but loth to vex thy soul.

*Io.* Nay, care thou not beyond what pleases me.

*Prom.* If thou desire it I must speak. Hear then.

*Chor.* Not yet though; grant me share of pleasure too.  
Let us first ask the tale of her great woe,  
While she unfolds her life's consuming chances;  
Her future sufferings let her learn from thee.

*Prom.* 'Tis thy work, Io, to grant these their wish,  
On other grounds and as thy father's kin:<sup>173</sup>  
For to bewail and moan one's evil chance,  
Here where one trusts to gain a pitying tear  
From those who hear, – this is not labour lost.

*Io.* I know not how to disobey your wish;  
So ye shall learn the whole that ye desire  
In speech full clear. And yet I blush to tell  
The storm that came from God, and brought the loss  
Of maiden face, what way it seized on me.  
For nightly visions coming evermore  
Into my virgin bower, sought to woo me

---

<sup>173</sup> Inachos the father of Io (identified with the Argive river of the same name), was, like all rivers, a son of Okeanos, and therefore brother to the nymphs who had come to see Prometheus.



With glozing words. "O virgin greatly blest,  
Why art thou still a virgin when thou might'st  
Attain to highest wedlock? For with dart  
Of passion for thee Zeus doth glow, and fain  
Would make thee his. And thou, O child, spurn not  
The bed of Zeus, but go to Lerna's field,  
Where feed thy father's flocks and herds,  
That so the eye of Zeus may find repose  
From this his craving." With such visions I  
Was haunted every evening, till I dared  
To tell my father all these dreams of night,  
And he to Pytho and Dodona sent  
Full many to consult the Gods, that he,  
Might learn what deeds and words would please Heaven's lords.  
And they came bringing speech of oracles  
Shot with dark sayings, dim and hard to know.  
At last a clear word came to Inachos  
Charging him plainly, and commanding him  
To thrust me from my country and my home,  
To stray at large<sup>174</sup> to utmost bounds of earth;  
And, should he gainsay, that the fiery bolt  
Of Zeus should come and sweep away his race.  
And he, by Loxias' oracles induced,  
Thrust me, against his will, against mine too,  
And drove me from my home; but spite of all,  
The curb of Zeus constrained him this to do.  
And then forthwith my face and mind were changed;  
And hornèd, as ye see me, stung to the quick  
By biting gadfly, I with maddened leap  
Rushed to Kerchneia's fair and limpid stream,  
And fount of Lerna.<sup>175</sup> And a giant herdsman,  
Argos, full rough of temper, followed me,  
With many an eye beholding, on my track:  
And him a sudden and unlooked-for doom  
Deprived of life. And I, by gadfly stung,  
By scourge from Heaven am driven from land to land.  
What has been done thou hearest. And if thou  
Can'st tell what yet remains of woe, declare it;  
Nor in thy pity soothe me with false words;  
For hollow words, I deem, are worst of ills.

*Chor.* Away, away, let be:  
Ne'er thought I that such tales  
Would ever, ever come unto mine ears;

---

<sup>174</sup> The words used have an almost technical meaning as applied to animals that were consecrated to the service of a God, and set free to wander where they liked. The fate of Io, as at once devoted to Zeus and animalised in form, was thus shadowed forth in the very language of the Oracle.

<sup>175</sup> Lerna was the lake near the mouth of the Inachos, close to the sea. Kerchneia may perhaps be identified with the Kenchreæ, the haven of Korinth in later geographies.

Nor that such terrors, woes and outrages,  
Hard to look on, hard to bear,  
Would chill my soul with sharp goad, double-edged.  
Ah fate! Ah fate!  
I shudder, seeing Io's fortune strange.  
*Prom.* Thou art too quick in groaning, full of fear:  
Wait thou a while until thou hear the rest.  
*Chor.* Speak thou and tell. Unto the sick 'tis sweet  
Clearly to know what yet remains of pain.

*Prom.* Your former wish ye gained full easily.  
Your first desire was to learn of her  
The tale she tells of her own sufferings;  
Now therefore hear the woes that yet remain  
For this poor maid to bear at Hera's hands.  
And thou, O child of Inachos! take heed  
To these my words, that thou may'st hear the goal  
Of all thy wanderings. First then, turning hence  
Towards the sunrise, tread the untilled plains,  
And thou shalt reach the Skythian nomads, those<sup>176</sup>  
Who on smooth-rolling waggons dwell aloft  
In wicker houses, with far-darting bows  
Duly equipped. Approach thou not to these,  
But trending round the coasts on which the surf  
Beats with loud murmurs,<sup>177</sup> traverse thou that clime.  
On the left hand there dwell the Chalybes,<sup>178</sup>  
Who work in iron. Of these do thou beware,  
For fierce are they and most inhospitable;  
And thou wilt reach the river fierce and strong,  
True to its name.<sup>179</sup> This seek not thou to cross,  
For it is hard to ford, until thou come  
To Caucasos itself, of all high hills  
The highest, where a river pours its strength  
From the high peaks themselves. And thou must cross  
Those summits near the stars, must onward go  
Towards the south, where thou shalt find the host  
Of the Amâzons, hating men, whose home  
Shall one day be around Thermôdon's bank,  
By Themiskyra,<sup>180</sup> where the ravenous jaws  
Of Salmydessos ope upon the sea,

---

<sup>176</sup> The wicker huts used by Skythian or Thracian nomads (the Calmucks of modern geographers) are described by Herodotos (iv. 46) and are still in use.

<sup>177</sup> Sc., the N.E. boundary of the Euxine, where spurs of the Caucasos ridge approach the sea.

<sup>178</sup> The Chalybes are placed by geographers to the south of Colchis. The description of the text indicates a locality farther to the north.

<sup>179</sup> Probably the Araxes, which the Greeks would connect with a word conveying the idea of a torrent dashing on the rocks. The description seems to imply a river flowing into the Euxine from the Caucasos, and the condition is fulfilled by the Hypanis or *Kouban*.

<sup>180</sup> When the Amazons appear in contact with Greek history, they are found in Thrace. But they had come from the coast of Pontos, and near the mouth of the Thermodon (*Thermeh*). The words of Prometheus point to yet earlier migrations from the East.

Treacherous to sailors, stepdame stern to ships.<sup>181</sup>  
And they with right good-will shall be thy guides;  
And thou, hard by a broad pool's narrow gates,  
Wilt pass to the Kimmerian isthmus. Leaving  
This boldly, thou must cross Mæotic channel;<sup>182</sup>  
And there shall be great fame 'mong mortal men  
Of this thy journey, and the Bosporos<sup>183</sup>  
Shall take its name from thee. And Europe's plain  
Then quitting, thou shalt gain the Asian coast.  
Doth not the all-ruling monarch of the Gods  
Seem all ways cruel? For, although a God,  
He, seeking to embrace this mortal maid,  
Imposed these wanderings on her. Thou hast found,  
O maiden! bitter suitor for thy hand;  
For great as are the ills thou now hast heard,  
Know that as yet not e'en the prelude's known.

*Io.* Ah woe! woe! woe!

*Prom.* Again thou groan'st and criest. What wilt do  
When thou shall learn the evils yet to come?

*Chor.* What! are there troubles still to come for her?

*Prom.* Yea, stormy sea of woe most lamentable.

*Io.* What gain is it to live? Why cast I not  
Myself at once from this high precipice,  
And, dashed to earth, be free from all my woes?  
Far better were it once for all to die  
Than all one's days to suffer pain and grief.

*Prom.* My struggles then full hardly thou would'st bear,  
For whom there is no destiny of death;  
For that might bring a respite from my woes:  
But now there is no limit to my pangs  
Till Zeus be hurled out from his sovereignty.

*Io.* What! shall Zeus e'er be hurled from his high state?

*Prom.* Thou would'st rejoice, I trow, to see that fall.

*Io.* How should I not, when Zeus so foully wrongs me?

---

<sup>181</sup> Here, as in Soph. *Antig.* (970) the name Salmydessos represents the rockbound, havenless coast from the promontory of Thynias to the entrance of the Bosporos, which had given to the Black Sea its earlier name of Axenos, the "inhospitable."

<sup>182</sup> The track is here in some confusion. From the Amazons south of the Caucasos, Io is to find her way to the Tauric Chersonese (the Crimea) and the Kimmerian Bosporos, which flows into the Sea of Azov, and so to return to Asia.

<sup>183</sup> Here, as in a hundred other instances, a false etymology has become the parent of a myth. The name Bosporos is probably Asiatic not Greek, and has an entirely different signification.

*Prom.* That this is so thou now may'st hear from me.

*Io.* Who then shall rob him of his sceptred sway?

*Prom.* Himself shall do it by his own rash plans.

*Io.* But how? Tell this, unless it bringeth harm.

*Prom.* He shall wed one for whom one day he'll grieve.

*Io.* Heaven-born or mortal? Tell, if tell thou may'st.

*Prom.* Why ask'st thou who? I may not tell thee that.

*Io.* Shall his bride hurl him from his throne of might?

*Prom.* Yea; she shall bear child mightier than his sire.

*Io.* Has he no way to turn aside that doom?

*Prom.* No, none; unless I from my bonds be loosed.<sup>184</sup>

*Io.* Who then shall loose thee 'gainst the will of Zeus?

*Prom.* It must be one of thy posterity.

*Io.* What, shall a child of mine free thee from ills?

*Prom.* Yea, the third generation after ten.<sup>185</sup>

*Io.* No more thine oracles are clear to me.

*Prom.* Nay, seek not thou thine own drear fate to know.

*Io.* Do not, a boon presenting, then withdraw it.

*Prom.* Of two alternatives, I'll give thee choice.

*Io.* Tell me of what, then give me leave to choose.

*Prom.* I give it then. Choose, or that I should tell  
Thy woes to come, or who shall set me free.

---

<sup>184</sup> The lines refer to the story that Zeus loved Thetis the daughter of Nereus, and followed her to Caucasos, but abstained from marriage with her because Prometheus warned him that the child born of that union should overthrow his father. Here the future is used of what was still contingent only. In the lost play of the Trilogy the myth was possibly brought to its conclusion and connected with the release of Prometheus.

<sup>185</sup> Heracles, whose genealogy was traced through Alcmena, Perseus, Danae, Danaos and seven other names, to Epaphos and Io.

*Chor.* Of these be willing one request to grant  
To her, and one to me; nor scorn my words:  
Tell her what yet of wanderings she must bear,  
And me who shall release thee. This I crave.

*Prom.* Since ye are eager, I will not refuse  
To utter fully all that ye desire.  
Thee, Io, first I'll tell thy wanderings wild,  
Thou, write it in the tablets of thy mind.  
When thou shalt cross the straits, of continents  
The boundary,<sup>186</sup> take thou the onward path  
On to the fiery-hued and sun-tracked East.  
[And first of all, to frozen Northern blasts  
Thou'lt come, and there beware the rushing whirl,  
Lest it should come upon thee suddenly,  
And sweep thee onward with the cloud-rack wild;]<sup>187</sup>  
Crossing the sea-surf till thou come at last  
Unto Kisthene's Gorgoneian plains,  
Where dwell the grey-haired virgin Phorkides,<sup>188</sup>  
Three, swan-shaped, with one eye between them all  
And but one tooth; whom nor the sun beholds  
With radiant beams, nor yet the moon by night:  
And near them are their wingèd sisters three,  
The Gorgons, serpent-tressed, and hating men,  
Whom mortal wight may not behold and live.  
Such is one ill I bid thee guard against;  
Now hear another monstrous sight: Beware  
The sharp-beaked hounds of Zeus that never bark,<sup>189</sup>  
The Gryphons, and the one-eyed, mounted host  
Of Arimaspians, who around the stream  
That flows o'er gold, the ford of Pluto, dwell:<sup>190</sup>  
Draw not thou nigh to them. But distant land  
Thou shalt approach, the swarthy tribes who dwell  
By the sun's fountain,<sup>191</sup> Æthiopia's stream:

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<sup>186</sup> Probably the Kimmerian Bosphoros. The Tanais or Phasis has, however, been conjectured.

<sup>187</sup> The history of the passage in brackets is curious enough to call for a note. They are not in any extant MS., but they are found in a passage quoted by Galen (v. p. 454), as from the *Prometheus Bound*, and are inserted here by Mr. Paley.

<sup>188</sup> Kisthene belongs to the geography of legend, lying somewhere on the shore of the great ocean-river in Lybia or Æthiopia, at the end of the world, a great mountain in the far West, beyond the Hesperides, the dwelling-place, as here, of the Gorgons, the daughters of Phorkys. Those first-named are the Graiæ.

<sup>189</sup> Here, like the "wingèd hound" of v. 1043, for the eagles that are the messengers of Zeus.

<sup>190</sup> We are carried back again from the fabled West to the fabled East. The Arimaspians, with one eye, and the Grypes or Gryphons (the griffins of mediæval heraldry), quadrupeds with the wings and beaks of eagles, were placed by most writers (Herod. iv. 13, 27) in the north of Europe, in or beyond the *terra incognita* of Skythia. The mention of the "ford of Pluto" and Æthiopia, however, may possibly imply (if we identify it, as Mr. Paley does, with the Tartessos of Spain, or Bætis — *Guadalquivir*) that Æschylos followed another legend which placed them in the West. There is possibly a *paronomasia* between Pluto, the God of Hades, and Plutos, the ideal God of riches.

<sup>191</sup> The name was applied by later writers (Quintus Curtius, iv. 7, 22; Lucretius, vi. 848) to the fountain in the temple of Jupiter Ammon in the great Oasis. The "river Æthiops" may be purely imaginary, but it may also suggest the possibility of some vague knowledge of the Niger, or more probably of the Nile itself in the upper regions of its course. The "Bybline hills" carry the name Byblos, which we only read of as belonging to a town in the Delta, to the Second Cataract.

By its banks wend thy way until thou come  
To that great fall where from the Bybline hills  
The Neilos pours its pure and holy flood;  
And it shall guide thee to Neilotic land,  
Three-angled, where, O Io, 'tis decreed  
For thee and for thy progeny to found  
A far-off colony. And if of this  
Aught seem to thee as stammering speech obscure,  
Ask yet again and learn it thoroughly:  
Far more of leisure have I than I like.

*Chor.* If thou hast aught to add, aught left untold  
Of her sore-wasting wanderings, speak it out;  
But if thou hast said all, then grant to us  
The boon we asked. Thou dost not, sure, forget it.

*Prom.* The whole course of her journeying she hath heard,  
And that she know she hath not heard in vain  
I will tell out what troubles she hath borne  
Before she came here, giving her sure proof  
Of these my words. The greater bulk of things  
I will pass o'er, and to the very goal  
Of all thy wanderings go. For when thou cam'st  
To the Molossian plains, and by the grove<sup>192</sup>  
Of lofty-ridged Dodona, and the shrine  
Oracular of Zeus Thesprotian,  
And the strange portent of the talking oaks,  
By which full clearly, not in riddle dark,  
Thou wast addressed as noble spouse of Zeus, —  
If aught of pleasure such things give to thee, —  
Thence strung to frenzy, thou did'st rush along  
The sea-coast's path to Rhea's mighty gulf,<sup>193</sup>  
In backward way from whence thou now art vexed,  
And for all time to come that reach of sea,  
Know well, from thee Ionian shall be called,  
To all men record of thy journeyings.  
These then are tokens to thee that my mind  
Sees somewhat more than that is manifest.

What follows (*to the Chorus*) I will speak to you and her  
In common, on the track of former words  
Returning once again. A city stands,  
Canôbos, at its country's furthest bound,  
Hard by the mouth and silt-bank of the Nile;  
There Zeus shall give thee back thy mind again,<sup>194</sup>

---

<sup>192</sup> Comp. Sophocles, *Trachin.*, v. 1168.

<sup>193</sup> The Adriatic or Ionian Gulf.

<sup>194</sup> In the *Suppliants*, Zeus is said to have soothed her, and restored her to her human consciousness by his "divine breathings." The

With hand that works no terror touching thee, —  
Touch only – and thou then shalt bear a child  
Of Zeus begotten, Epaphos, “Touch-born,”  
Swarthy of hue, whose lot shall be to reap  
The whole plain watered by the broad-streamed Neilos:  
And in the generation fifth from him  
A household numbering fifty shall return  
Against their will to Argos, in their flight  
From wedlock with their cousins.<sup>195</sup> And they too,  
(Kites but a little space behind the doves)  
With eager hopes pursuing marriage rites  
Beyond pursuit shall come; and God shall grudge  
To give up their sweet bodies. And the land  
Pelasgian<sup>196</sup> shall receive them, when by stroke  
Of woman's murderous hand these men shall lie  
Smitten to death by daring deed of night:  
For every bride shall take her husband's life,  
And dip in blood the sharp two-edged sword  
(So to my foes may Kypris show herself!)<sup>197</sup>  
Yet one of that fair band shall love persuade  
Her husband not to slaughter, and her will  
Shall lose its edge; and she shall make her choice  
Rather as weak than murderous to be known.  
And she at Argos shall a royal seed  
Bring forth (long speech 'twould take to tell this clear)  
Famed for his arrows, who shall set me free<sup>198</sup>  
From these my woes. Such was the oracle  
Mine ancient mother Themis, Titan-born,  
Gave to me; but the manner and the means, —  
That needs a lengthy tale to tell the whole,  
And thou can'st nothing gain by learning it.

*Io.* Eleleu! Oh, Eleleu!<sup>199</sup>  
The throbbing pain inflames me, and the mood  
Of frenzy-smitten rage;  
The gadfly's pointed sting,  
Not forged with fire, attacks,  
And my heart beats against my breast with fear.  
Mine eyes whirl round and round:  
Out of my course I'm borne

---

thought underlying the legend may be taken either as a distortion of some primitive tradition, or as one of the “unconscious prophecies” of heathenism. The deliverer is not to be born after the common manner of men, and is to have a divine as well as a human parentage.

<sup>195</sup> See the argument of the *Suppliants*, who, as the daughters of Danaos, descended from Epaphos, are here referred to. The passage is noticeable as showing that the theme of that tragedy was already present to the poet's thoughts.

<sup>196</sup> Argos. So in the *Suppliants*, Pelasgos is the mythical king of the Apian land who receives them.

<sup>197</sup> Hypermnæstra, who spared Lynceus, and by him became the mother of Abas and a line of Argive kings.

<sup>198</sup> Heracles, who came to Caucasos, and with his arrows slew the eagle that devoured Prometheus.

<sup>199</sup> The word is simply an interjection of pain, but one so characteristic that I have thought it better to reproduce it than to give any English equivalent.

By the wild spirit of fierce agony,  
And cannot curb my lips,  
And turbid speech at random dashes on  
Upon the waves of dread calamity.

### **Strophe I**

*Chor.* Wise, very wise was he  
Who first in thought conceived this maxim sage,  
And spread it with his speech,<sup>200</sup>—  
That the best wedlock is with equals found,  
And that a craftsman, born to work with hands,  
Should not desire to wed  
Or with the soft luxurious heirs of wealth,  
Or with the race that boast their lineage high.

### **Antistrophe I**

Oh ne'er, oh ne'er, dread Fates,  
May ye behold me as the bride of Zeus,  
The partner of his couch,  
Nor may I wed with any heaven-born spouse!  
For I shrink back, beholding Io's lot  
Of loveless maidenhood,  
Consumed and smitten low exceedingly  
By the wild wanderings from great Hera sent!

### **Strophe II**

To me, when wedlock is on equal terms,  
It gives no cause to fear:  
Ne'er may the love of any of the Gods,  
The strong Gods, look on me  
With glance I cannot 'scape!

### **Antistrophe II**

That fate is war that none can war against,

---

<sup>200</sup> The maxim, "Marry with a woman thine equal," was ascribed to Pittacos.



Source of resourceless ill;  
Nor know I what might then become of me:  
I see not how to 'scape  
The counsel deep of Zeus.

*Prom.* Yea, of a truth shall Zeus, though stiff of will,  
Be brought full low. Such bed of wedlock now  
Is he preparing, one to cast him forth  
In darkness from his sovereignty and throne.  
And then the curse his father Cronos spake  
Shall have its dread completion, even that  
He uttered when he left his ancient throne;  
And from these troubles no one of the Gods  
But me can clearly show the way to 'scape.  
I know the time and manner: therefore now  
Let him sit fearless, in his peals on high  
Putting his trust, and shaking in his hands  
His darts fire-breathing. Nought shall they avail  
To hinder him from falling shamefully  
A fall intolerable. Such a combatant  
He arms against himself, a marvel dread,  
Who shall a fire discover mightier far  
Than the red levin, and a sound more dread  
Than roaring of the thunder, and shall shiver  
That plague sea-born that causeth earth to quake,  
The trident, weapon of Poseidon's strength:  
And stumbling on this evil, he shall learn  
How far apart a king's lot from a slave's.

*Chor.* What thou dost wish thou mutterest against Zeus.

*Prom.* Things that shall be, and things I wish, I speak.

*Chor.* And must we look for one to master Zeus?

*Prom.* Yea, troubles harder far than these are his.

*Chor.* Art not afraid to vent such words as these?

*Prom.* What can I fear whose fate is not to die?

*Chor.* But He may send on thee worse pain than this.

*Prom.* So let Him do: nought finds me unprepared.

*Chor.* Wisdom is theirs whoAdrasteia worship.<sup>201</sup>

---

<sup>201</sup> The Euhemerism of later scholiasts derived the name from a king Adrastos, who was said to have been the first to build a temple to Nemesis, and so the power thus worshipped was called after his name. A better etymology leads us to see in it the idea of

*Prom.* Worship then, praise and flatter him that rules;  
My care for Zeus is nought, and less than nought:  
Let Him act, let Him rule this little while,  
E'en as He will; for long He shall not rule  
Over the Gods. But lo! I see at hand  
The courier of the Gods, the minister  
Of our new sovereign. Doubtless he has come  
To bring me tidings of some new device.

***Enter Hermes***

*Herm.* Thee do I speak to, – thee, the teacher wise,

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