

EURIPIDES

THE TRAGEDIES OF
EURIPIDES, VOLUME I.

Euripides

The Tragedies of Euripides, Volume I.

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Euripides

The Tragedies of Euripides, Volume I

PREFACE

The translations of the first six plays in the present volume were published at Oxford some years since, and have been frequently reprinted. They are now carefully revised according to Dindorf's text, and are accompanied by a few additional notes adapted to the requirements of the student.

The translations of the *Bacchæ*, *Heraclidæ*, and the two *Iphigenias*, are based upon the same text, with certain exceptions, which are pointed out at the foot of the page. The annotations on the *Iphigenias* are almost exclusively critical, as it is presumed that a student who proceeds to the reading of these somewhat difficult plays¹, will be sufficiently advanced in his acquaintance with the Greek drama to dispense with more elementary information.

T.A. BUCKLEY,
CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

¹ The reader will obtain some notion of the difficulties alluded to, and the best mode of grappling with them, by consulting the recent Cambridge edition, published with English notes (*Iph. in Aulide*, 1840, in *Tauris*, 1846), performances of great critical acumen, attributed to the present Bishop of Gloucester.

INTRODUCTION

Euripides, son of Mnesarchus, was born in the island of Salamis, on the day of the celebrated victory (B.C. 480). His mother, Clito, had been sent thither in company with the other Athenian women, when Attica was given up, and the ships became at once the refuge of the male population, and the national defense. Mr. Donaldson² well remarks, that the patronymic form of his name, derived from the Euripus, which was the scene of the first successful resistance offered to the Persian navy, shows that the attention of his parents was fully excited by the stirring events of the time.

Notwithstanding the fact that his mother had been an herb-seller, it is probable that his father was a man of some family. That he was at least possessed of ample means, is evident from the care and expense bestowed upon our poet's education. Under the tutorship of Anaxagoras, Prodicus, and Protagoras, he had studied both natural philosophy and rhetoric in its sophistical form. In gymnastic exercises he exhibited a successful prowess, being twice victorious in the Eleusinian and Thesean games. Of his skill in painting, some specimens were preserved at Megara.

His appearance as a dramatist was at an earlier age than that of his predecessors, as he was only five and twenty years old when he produced the "Peliades," his first tragedy. On this occasion, he gained the third prize in the tragic contests, but the first, fourteen years after, and subsequently, with the "Hippolytus," in 428 B.C. The peculiar tendency of some of the ideas expressed in his plays, was the probable cause of the retirement of Euripides to Macedonia, where he obtained the friendship of King Archelaus. Perhaps, however, the unhappiness of his connubial state, arising from the infidelity of his two wives, might have rendered Athens a disagreeable place of abode for the woman-hating poet, especially when his "domestic bliss" was continually seasoned by the sarcastic jokes and allusions of his political enemy, Aristophanes. Moreover, his acquaintance with the talking philosopher, Socrates, must have been unfavorable to the continuance of his popularity.

The fate of Pentheus in our author's noble play, the "Bacchæ," appears to have given origin to the tradition that he himself was torn to pieces by dogs. If we reflect that this play was probably the last of his works, the mistake seems a plausible one. The death of Euripides, which probably happened in the ordinary course of nature, has, like that of Æschylus, been associated with the marvelous.

The Athenians vainly craved the honor of giving a resting-place to the ashes of their philosopher-poet. He was buried at Pella, but a cenotaph at Athens showed that his countrymen had not forgotten Euripides. His death took place B.C. 406.

The inferiority of our author to the greater tragedians, prevents our feeling much desire to enter upon the respective merits and demerits of his several plays, especially as we are completely anticipated by Schlegel, with whose masterly analysis every reader ought to be acquainted. Nevertheless, a few general remarks may, perhaps, be not wholly unprofitable.

It has been truly remarked, that tragedy, in no small degree, owed its downfall to Euripides. Poetry was gradually superseded by rhetoric, sublimity by earnestness, pathos by reasoning. Thus, Iphigenia and Macaria give so many good reasons for dying, that the sacrifice appears very small, and a modern wag in the upper regions of the theatre would, at the end of the speech of the latter heroine, almost have exclaimed, "Then why don't you die?"

It has been said, that our poet drew the characters of life as he found them, but bad as his characters are, they exhibit only a vulgar wickedness. Unable to portray a Clytæmnestra, he revels in the continual paltriness of a Menelaus or Ulysses. As if he took a delight in the black side of humanity, he loves to show the strength of false reasoning, of sophistry antagonistic to truth, and of cold expediency in opposition to the natural feelings of humanity. From a similar reason, his occasional attempts at comedy degenerate into mere farce. We question whether the scene between

² See Theatre of the Greeks, p. 92. sqq.

Death and Apollo in the "Alcestis," could be surpassed in vulgarity, even by the modern school of English dramatists, while his exaggerations in the minor characters are scarcely to be surpassed by the lowest writer of any period.

Under Euripides, the stage began gradually to approximate more closely to the ordinary and, at that time, debased character of Athenian society. A contempt for the Lacedæmonians, a passionate taste for the babbling and trickery of the forum, and an attempt to depreciate the social position and influence of the weaker sex, form the most unamiable features of this change. Yet we must allow, that if Euripides has reveled in the amiabilities of a Melanippe or a Phædra, in the gentle revenge of a Medea or Hecuba, he has at the same time given us an Alcestis, the only real example of genuine conjugal affection on the Greek stage.

Nor must we forget that Euripides is a greater admirer of nature, a more complete delineator of her workings, than the two greater tragedians. He has more of illustrative philosophy, more of regard to the objects of the animated creation, the system of the universe, than his greater rivals exhibit. He is, as Vitruvius has justly styled him, a "stage-philosopher." Did we possess a larger acquaintance with the works of Parmenides, Empedocles, and other early cosmogonists, we should perhaps think less of his merits on this head: as it is, the possession of some such fragments of our poet makes us deeply regret the loss of the plays themselves.

But his very love for the contemplation of nature has in no small degree contributed to the mischievous skepticism promulgated by our poet. In early times, when a rural theogony was the standard of belief, when each star had its deity, each deity its undisputed, unquestioned prerogative and worship, there was little inclination, less opportunity, for skepticism. Throughout the poetry of Hesiod, we find this feeling ever predominant, a feeling which Virgil and Tibullus well knew how to appreciate. Even Euripides himself, perhaps taught by some dangerous lessons at home, has expressed his belief that it is best "not to be too clever in matters regarding the Gods."³ A calm retreat in the wild, picturesque tracts of Macedonia, might have had some share in reforming this spoiled pupil of the sophists. But as we find that the too careful contemplation of nature degenerates into superstition or rationalism in their various forms, so Euripides had imbibed the taste for saying startling things,⁴ rather than wise; for reducing the principles of creation to materialism, the doctrines of right and wrong to expediency, and immutable truths to a popular system of question and answer. Like the generality of sophists, he took away a received truth, and left nothing to supply its place; he reasoned falsehood into probability, truth into nonentity.

At a period when the Prodicus-Socratic style of disputing was in high fashion, the popularity of Euripides must have been excessive. His familiar appeals to the trifling matters of ordinary life, his characters all philosophizing, from the prince to the dry-nurse, his excellent reasons for doing right or wrong, as the case might be, must have been inestimably delightful to the accommodating morals of the Athenians. The Court of Charles the Second could hardly have derived more pleasure from the writings of a Behn or a Hamilton, than these unworthy descendants of Codrus must have experienced in hearing a bad cause so cleverly defended. Whether the orators and dikasts followed the example of the stage in those days, can scarcely be ascertained, but it is more than certain that they practically illustrated its principles. At least, the Sicilians were so fond of our author, that a few of the unfortunate survivors of the Syracusan disaster, were enabled to pick up a living by quoting such passages of our author as they had learned by heart. A compliment paid to few living dramatists in our days!

In dramatic conduct, Euripides is at an even greater disadvantage with Æschylus and Sophocles. The best characters of the piece are often the least employed, as in the instance of Macaria in the "Heraclidæ," while the play is dwindled away with dull, heavy dirges, and the complaints of senile

³ Bacch. 200. This play was written during his sojourn with Archelaus.

⁴ τοιούτων τι παρακεκινδευμένων. Aristoph. Ran. 99.

childishness. The chorus, as Aristotle⁵ has remarked, is most unfortunately independent of the plot, although the finest poetry is generally to be found in the lyric portions of our author's plays. In fact, Euripides rather wanted management in employing his resources, than the resources themselves. An ear well attuned to the harmony of verse, a delicate perception of the graceful points of language, and a finished subtilty in touching the more minute feelings and impulses of the mind, were all thrown away either upon bad subjects or worse principles. There is no true tragedy in Euripides, He is a melodramatist, but not according to the modern acceptation. His plays might end either happily or the reverse. A deity conveniently brought in, the arrival of a messenger, however unexpectedly, together with a liberal allowance for a cowardly revenge upon the vanquished – these are the Euripidean elements for giving a tragic end to a play. Nay, so great is the prodigality of slaughter throughout his dramas, that we can but imagine morbid cruelty to have formed a considerable ingredient in the disposition of Euripides. Even his pathos is somewhat tinctured with this taste for painful images. As we have beheld in our own times a barbarian alternately glut his sight with executions, and then shed floods of tears, and sink into idiot despondency; so the poetry of Euripides in turn disgusts us with outrageous cruelty, and depresses us with the most painful demands upon our compassion.

In the lyric portions of his dramas, our poet has been far more successful. The description of the capture of Troy by night,⁶ is a splendid specimen of animation blended with true pathos. But taken as a whole. Euripides is a most unequal author. We may commence a play with pleasure (but O for the prologues!), we may proceed with satisfaction, but the feeling rarely lasts to the end. If I may venture an opinion upon so uncertain a subject, I should name the *Hippolytus*, *Ion*, *Troades*, *Bacchæ*, and *Iphigenia in Aulis* as his best plays, placing the *Phœnissæ*, *Alcestis*, *Medea*, *Hecuba*, and *Orestes* in a lower rank. The *Helena* is an amusing heap of absurdities, and reads much better in the burlesque of *Aristophanes*; the *Electra* is utterly beneath criticism; the *Cyclops* a weak, but humorous imitation of *Homer*. The other plays appear to be neither bad nor good.

The style of Euripides is, generally speaking, easy; and I can mention no author from whom a taste for elegant Greek and a facility in composition can more easily be derived. Some of his plays have suffered severely from the ravages of time, the ignorance of copyists, and the more dangerous officiousness of grammarians. Some passages of the *Bacchæ*, *Rhesus*, *Troades*, and the two *Iphigenias*, despite the ingenuity and erudition of such scholars as *Porson*, *Elmsley*, *Monk*, *Burges*, and a host of others, must still remain mere matter for guessing. *Hermann's Euripides* is, as a whole, sadly unworthy the abilities of the *Humboldt* of Greek literature.

The present volume contains the most popular of our author's works, according to present usage. But the spirit which is gradually infusing itself into the minds of those who are most actively engaged in the educational system of England, fully warrants a hope that *Porson's "four plays"* will shortly cease to be the boundaries of the student's acquaintance with Euripides.

I need scarcely observe, that the study of *Aristophanes* is indissolubly connected with that of our author. If the reader discover the painful fact that the burlesque writer is greater than the tragedian, he will perhaps also recollect that such a literary relation is, unfortunately, by no means confined to the days of *Aristophanes*.

⁵ Poet. § xviii.

⁶ Hec. 905 sqq.

HECUBA

PERSONS REPRESENTED

GHOST OF POLYDORE.
HECUBA.
CHORUS OF FEMALE CAPTIVES.
POLYXENA.
ULYSSES.
TALTHYBIUS.
FEMALE ATTENDANT.
AGAMEMNON.
POLYMESTOR AND HIS CHILDREN.

The Scene lies before the Grecian tents, on the coast of the Thracian Chersonese

THE ARGUMENT

After the capture of Troy, the Greeks put into the Chersonese over against Troas, But Achilles, having appeared by night, demanded one of the daughters of Priam to be slain. The Greeks therefore, in honor to their hero, tore Polyxena from Hecuba, and offered her up in sacrifice. Polymestor moreover, the king of the Thracians, murdered Polydore, a son of Priam's. Now Polymestor had received him from the hands of Priam as a charge to take care of, together with some money. But when the city was taken, wishing to seize upon his wealth, he determined to dispatch him, and disregarded the ill-fated friendship that subsisted between them; but his body being cast out into the sea, the wave threw him up on the shore before the tents of the captive women. Hecuba, on seeing the corpse, recognized it; and having imparted her design to Agamemnon, sent for Polymestor to come to her with his sons, concealing what had happened, under pretense that she might discover to him some treasures hidden in Ilium. But on his arrival she slew his sons, and put out his eyes; but pleading her cause before the Greeks, she gained it over her accuser (Polymestor). For it was decided that she did not begin the cruelty, but only avenged herself on him who did begin it.

HECUBA

GHOST OF POLYDORE

I am present, having left the secret dwellings of the dead and the gates of darkness, where Pluto has his abode apart from the other Gods, Polydore the son of Hecuba the daughter of Cisseus,⁷ and Priam my sire, who when the danger of falling by the spear of Greece was threatening the city of the Phrygians, in fear, privately sent me from the Trojan land to the house of Polymestor, his Thracian friend, who cultivates the most fruitful soil of the Chersonese, ruling a warlike people with his spear.⁸ But my father sends privately with me a large quantity of gold, in order that, if at any time the walls of Troy should fall, there might not be a lack of sustenance for his surviving children. But I was the youngest of the sons of Priam; on which account also he sent me privately from the land, for I was able neither to bear arms nor the spear with my youthful arm. As long then indeed as the landmarks of the country remained erect, and the towers of Troy were unshaken, and Hector my brother prevailed with his spear, I miserable increased vigorously as some young branch, by the nurture I received at the hands of the Thracian, my father's friend. But after that both Troy and the life of Hector were put an end to, and my father's mansions razed to the ground, and himself falls at the altar built by the God, slain by the blood-polluted son of Achilles, the friend of my father slays me, wretched man, for the sake of my gold, and having slain me threw me into the surf of the sea, that he might possess the gold himself in his palace. But I am exposed on the shore, at another time on the ocean's surge, borne about by many ebbings and flowings of the waves, unwept, unburied; but at present I am hastening on my dear mother's account, having left my body, borne aloft this day already the third,⁹ for so long has my wretched mother been present in this territory of the Chersonese from Troy. But all the Grecians, holding their ships at anchor, are sitting quiet on the shores of this land of Thrace. For Achilles the son of Peleus, appearing above his tomb, stayed all the army of the Grecians as they were directing homeward their sea dipped oars; and asks to receive my sister Polyxena as a dear victim, and a tribute of honor to his tomb. And this he will obtain, nor will he be without this gift from his friends; and fate this day leads forth my sister to death. But my mother will see the two corpses of her two children, both mine and the unhappy virgin's; for I shall appear on a breaker before the feet of a female slave, that I wretched may obtain sepulture; for I have successfully entreated those who have power beneath to find a tomb, and to fall into my mother's hands. As much then as I wish to have shall be mine; but I will withdraw myself out of the way of the aged Hecuba, for she is advancing her step beyond the tent of Agamemnon, dreading my phantom. Alas! O my mother, who, from kingly palaces, hast beheld the day of slavery, how unfortunate art thou now, in the degree that thou wert once fortunate! but some one of the Gods counterpoising your state, destroys you on account of your ancient prosperity.

HECUBA. CHORUS

HEC. Lead onward, ye Trojan dames, the old woman before the tent; lead onward, raising up one now your fellow-slave, but once your queen; take me, bear me, conduct me, support my body, holding my aged hand; and I, leaning on the bending staff of my hand,¹⁰ will hasten to put forward

⁷ Homer makes Dymas, not Cisseus, the father of Hecuba. Virgil however follows Euripides, the rest of the Latin poets Virgil.

⁸ In the martial time of antiquity the spear was revered as something divine, and signified the chief command in arms, it was also the insigne of the highest civil authority: in this sense Euripides in other places uses the word δορυ. See Hippol. 988.

⁹ τριταίος properly signifies *triduanus*; here it is used for τρίτος, the cardinal number for the ordinal. So also Hippol. 275. Πως δ' ου, τριταίαν γ' ουσ' ασιτος ἡμεραν:

¹⁰ Most interpreters render this, *leaning on the crooked staff with my hand*. Nor has Beck altered it in his Latin version, though he

the slow motion of my joints. O lightning of Jove! O thou gloomy night! why, I pray, am I thus disquieted in the night with terrors, with phantoms? O thou venerable Earth, the mother of black-winged dreams, I renounce the nightly vision, which regarding my son who is preserved in Thrace, and regarding Polyxena my dear daughter, in my dreams have I beheld, a fearful sight, I have learned, I have understood. Gods of this land, preserve my son, who, my only son, and, [as it were,] the anchor of my house, inhabits the snowy Thrace under the protection of his father's friend. Some strange event will take place, some strain will come mournful to the mournful. Never did my mind so incessantly shudder and tremble. Where, I pray, ye Trojan dames, can I behold the divine spirit of Helenus, or Cassandra, that they may interpret my dreams? For I beheld a dappled hind torn by the blood-stained fang of the wolf, forcibly dragged from my bosom, a miserable sight. And dreadful this vision also; the spectre of Achilles came above the summit of his tomb, and demanded as a tribute of honor one of the wretched Trojan women. From my daughter then, from my daughter avert this fate, ye Gods, I implore you.

CHOR. Hecuba, with haste to thee I flew, leaving the tents of our lords, where I was allotted and ordained a slave, driven from the city of Troy, led captive of the Greeks by the point of the spear, not to alleviate aught of your sufferings, but bringing a heavy weight of tidings, and to thee, O lady, a herald of woe. For it is said that it has been decreed in the full council of the Greeks to make thy daughter a sacrifice to Achilles: for you know how that having ascended o'er his tomb, he appeared in his golden arms and restrained the fleet ships, as they were setting their sails with their halliards, exclaiming in these words; "Where speed ye, Grecians, leaving my tomb unhonored!" Then the waves of great contention clashed together, and a divided opinion went forth through the army of the Greeks; to some it appeared advisable to give a victim to his tomb, and to others it appeared not. But Agamemnon was studious to advance your good, cherishing the love of the infuriated prophetess. But the two sons of Theseus, scions of Athens, were the proposers of different arguments, but in this one opinion they coincided, to crown the tomb of Achilles with fresh blood; and declared they would never prefer the bed of Cassandra before the spear of Achilles. And the strength of the arguments urged on either side was in a manner equal, till that subtle adviser, that babbling knave,¹¹ honeyed in speech, pleasing to the populace, that son of Laertes, persuades the army, not to reject the suit of the noblest of all the Greeks on account of a captive victim, and not to put it in the power of any of the dead standing near Proserpine to say that the Grecians departed from the plains of Troy ungrateful to the heroes who died for the state of Greece. And Ulysses will come only not now, to tear your child from your bosom, and to take her from your aged arms. But go to the temples, speed to the altars, sit a suppliant at the knees of Agamemnon, invoke the Gods, both those of heaven, and those under the earth; for either thy prayers will prevent thy being deprived of thy wretched daughter, or thou must behold the virgin falling before the tomb, dyed in blood gushing forth in a dark stream from her neck adorned with gold.¹²

HEC. Alas! wretched me! what shall I exclaim? what shriek shall I utter? what lamentation? miserable through miserable age, and slavery not to be endured, insupportable. Alas! who is there to defend me? what offspring, what city! The old man is gone. My children are gone. Whither shall I turn me? and whither shall I go? Where is any god or deity to succor me? O Trojan dames, bearers of evil tidings, bearers of woe, you have destroyed me utterly, you have destroyed me. Life in the light is no more desirable! O wretched foot, lead, lead an aged woman to this tent! O child, daughter of

transcribed Musgrave's note. "σκολιω, σκιπῶνι (*for which Porson directs σκιπῶνι*.) Scipiones in universum recti sunt, non curvi. Loquitur igitur non de vero scipione, sed metaphorice de brachio, quod ancillis innitens, scipionis usum præstabat; quodque, ob cubiti flexuram, σκολιον σκιπῶμα vocat."

¹¹ *that babbling knave.*] Tzetzes on Lycophron, line 763. κοπις, ὁ ῥητωρ, και εμπειρος, ὁ ὑπο πολλων πραγματων κεκοιμενος. In the Index to Lycophron κοπις is translated *scurra*.

¹² Among the ancients it was the custom for virgins to have a great quantity of golden ornaments about them, to which Homer alludes, Il. B. 872. Ὀς και χρυσον εχων πολεμιον δ' εν ηυτε κουρη. PORSON.

the most afflicted mother, come forth, come forth from the tent, hear thy mother's voice, that thou mayest know what a report I hear that concerns thy life.

HECUBA, POLYXENA, CHORUS

POLYX. O mother, why dost thou call! proclaiming what new affliction hast thou frightened me from the tent, as some bird from its nest, with this alarm?

HEC. Alas! my child!

POLYX. Why address me in words of ill omen? This is an evil prelude.

HEC. Alas! for thy life.

POLYX. Speak, conceal it no longer from me. I fear, I fear, my mother; why I pray dost thou groan?

HEC. O child, child of an unhappy mother!

POLYX. Why sayest thou this?

HEC. My child, the common decree of the Greeks unites to slay thee at the tomb of the son of Peleus.

POLYX. Alas, my mother! how are you relating unenviable ills? Tell me, tell me, my mother.

HEC. I declare, my child, the ill-omened report, they bring word that a decree has passed by the vote of the Greeks regarding thy life.

POLYX. O thou that hast borne affliction! O thou wretched on every side! O mother unhappy in your life, what most hated and most unutterable calamity has some destiny again sent against thee! This child is no longer thine; no longer indeed shall I miserable share slavery with miserable age. For as a mountain whelp or heifer shalt thou wretched behold me wretched torn from thine arms, and sent down beneath the darkness of the earth a victim to Pluto, where I shall lie bound in misery with the dead. But it is for thee indeed, my afflicted mother, that I lament in these mournful strains, but for my life, my wrongs, my fate, I mourn not; but death, a better lot, has befallen me.

CHOR. But see Ulysses advances with hasty step, to declare to thee, Hecuba, some new determination.

ULYSSES, HECUBA, POLYXENA, CHORUS

ULYSS. Lady, I imagine that you are acquainted with the decree of the army, and the vote which has prevailed; nevertheless, I will declare it. It has been decreed by the Greeks to offer on the lofty mound of Achilles's tomb thy daughter Polyxena. But they order me to conduct and convey the damsel; but the son of Achilles is appointed to be the priest, and to preside over the rites. Do you know then what to do? Be not dragged away by violence, nor enter into a contest of strength with me, but acknowledge superior force and the presence of thy ills; it is wise to have proper sentiments even in adversity.

HEC. Alas! alas! the great trial is at hand, as it seems, of lamentations full, nor without tears; for I have not died in the state in which I ought to have died, nor hath Jove destroyed me, but preserves me, that I wretched may behold other misfortunes greater than [past] misfortunes. But if it be allowed slaves to put questions to the free, not offensive nor grating to the feelings, it will be your part to be questioned, and ours who are asking to attend.

ULYSS. You have permission, ask freely, I grudge not the time.

HEC. Dost thou remember when thou camest a spy on Troy, disfigured by a vile dress, and from thine eyes drops caused by the fear of death bedewed thy beard?

ULYSS. I remember well; for it made no slight impression on my heart.

HEC. But Helen knew thee, and told me alone.

ULYSS. I remember the great danger I encountered.

HEC. And didst thou embrace my knees in thy humility?

ULYSS. So that my hand was numbered¹³⁶⁸⁷ through fear on thy garments.

HEC. What then didst thou say, being then my slave?

ULYSS. Many arguments that I invented to save me from death.

HEC. Did I preserve thee then, and conduct thee safe from the land?

ULYSS. Yes, so that I now behold the light of the sun.

HEC. Art thou not then convicted of baseness by this conduct, who hast received benefits from me such as thou acknowledgest thou hast, and doest us no good in return, but evil, as far as in thee lies? Thankless is your race, as many of you as court honor from oratory before the populace; be ye not known to me, who care not to injure your friends, provided you say what is gratifying to the people. But plotting what dark design have they determined upon a decree of death against my child? Did fate impel them to offer human sacrifices at the tomb, where it were rather right to sacrifice cattle? Or does Achilles, desirous of devoting in his turn to death those that wrought his death, with a color of justice meditate her destruction? But she has done him no ill: he should demand Helen as a sacrifice on his tomb; for she destroyed him, and brought him to Troy. But if some captive selected from the rest, and excelling in beauty, ought to die, this is not ours. For the daughter of Tyndarus is most preeminent in beauty, and has been found to be no less injurious than us. On the score of justice then I urge this argument; but with respect to what you ought to repay at my demand, hear: thou hast touched my hand, as thou ownest, and this aged cheek also, falling at my knees. Thy hand and knees I in return grasp, and re-demand the favor I granted you then, and beseech you, do not tear my child from my arms, nor kill her; enough have died already. In her I rejoice, and forget my misfortunes; she serves as my consolation in the stead of many things, she is my city, my nurse, my staff, the guide of my way. It becomes not those who have power to exercise their power in things wherein they ought not, nor should the fortunate imagine their fortune will last forever. For I too have had my time of prosperity, but now have I ceased to be: one day wrenched from me all my happiness. But by thy beard which I supplicate, reverence me, pity me; go to the Grecian army, and remind them that it is a shameful thing to slay women whom ye have once spared, and that too dragging them from the altar. But show mercy. But the laws of blood among you are laid down alike for the free and the slave. But your worth will carry with it persuasion, although your arguments be bad; for the same words from those of little character, have not the same force as when they proceed from those of high reputation.

CHOR. There is no nature of man so obdurate, which on hearing thy groans, and thy long complaints of misery, would not let fall the tear.

ULYSS. Hecuba, be advised, nor through passion deem him thine enemy who gives thee good advice. I indeed am ready to preserve thy person through the means of which I was fortunate; and I say no other. But what I declared before all I will not deny, that, Troy being captured, we should give thy daughter as a victim to the noblest man of the army, who demands her; for in this many cities fail, when any man who is brave and zealous receives no more honor than those who are less valiant. But Achilles, O lady, is worthy of honor from us, a man who died most gloriously in behalf of the Grecian country. Were not then this disgraceful, if when living we treat him as a friend, but after he is gone we no longer treat him so? Well! what then will any one say, if there again should be an assembling of the army, and a contest with the enemy: "Shall we fight or preserve our lives, seeing that he who falls lies unhonored?" But for me at least, living from day to day, although I have but little, that little is sufficient; but I would wish that my monument should be beheld crowned with

¹³ This is the only sense that can be made of *ενθανειν*, and this sense seems strained: Brunck proposes *εντακηναί* for *ενθανειν γε*. See Note⁶⁸⁷.

⁶⁸⁷ Vs. 246, *ενθανειν γε*. "Pravam esse scripturam dici Brunckius et Corayus viderunt; quorum ille legere voluit 'ωστ' εντακηναί, hic vero 'ωστ' εμβαλειν. Sed neuter rem acu tetigit. Euripides scripsit: 'ωστ' εν γε φυναι, uti patet ex Hom. II. Z. 253, εν τ' αρα 'ου φυ χειρι, Od. Π. 21, παντα κυσεν περιφυς, Theocrit. Id. xiii. 47, ται δ' εν χειρι πασαι εφυσαν, et, quod rem conficit, ex Euripidis ipsius Ion. 891, λευκοις δ' εμψυσας καρποις χειρων." G. BURGESS, apud *Revue de Philologie*, vol. i. No. 5. p. 457.

honor, for the gratification is for a long time. But if thou sayest thou sufferest affliction, hear this in return from me. There are with us aged matrons, and hoary sires, not less wretched than thou art, and brides bereft of the noblest husbands, whose ashes this land of Troy conceals. Endure this. But we, if we injudiciously determine to honor the brave man, shall incur the charge of folly. But you barbarians neither consider your friends as friends, nor do you hold up to admiration those who have died honorably; thus shall Greece be prosperous, but you shall experience fortune corresponding to your counsels.

CHOR. Alas! alas! how wretched is the state of slavery, and to endure indignities compelled by superior force! (Note¹⁴.)

HEC. O daughter, my words respecting thy death are vanished in the air, set forth in vain; but thou, if thou hast greater powers [of persuasion] than thy mother, use all thy influence, uttering every note as the throat of the nightingale, that thou mayest not be deprived of life. But fall before the knees of Ulysses in all the eloquence of grief, and persuade him; thou hast a pretext, for he also hath children; so that he may be inclined to pity thy fortune.

POLYX. I see, Ulysses, that thou art hiding thy hand beneath thy robe, and turnest thy face away, that I may not touch thy beard. Be not afraid; thou hast avoided my suppliant Jove; for I will follow thee both on account of fate, and even wishing to die; but if I were not willing, I should appear base, and too fond of life. For wherefore should I live, whose father was monarch of all the Trojans; this my dawn of life. Then was I nurtured under fair hope, a bride for princes, having no small competition for my hand, to whose palace and hearth I should come. But I, wretched now, was mistress among the Trojan women, and conspicuous in the train of virgins, equal to goddesses, death only excepted. But now I am a slave; first of all the very name, not being familiar, persuades me to love death. Then perhaps I might meet with masters cruel in disposition, who will buy me for silver, the sister both of Hector and many other [heroes.] And imposing the task of making bread in his palace, will compel me, passing the day in misery, both to sweep the house, and stand at the loom. And some slave somewhere purchased will defile my bed, before wooed by princes. This never shall be. I will quit this light from mine eyes free, offering my body to Pluto. Lead on then, Ulysses, conduct me to death; for I see neither confidence of hope, nor of expectation, present to me that I can ever enjoy good fortune. But do thou, my mother, in no wise hinder me by your words or by your actions; but assent to my death before I meet with indignities unsuited to my rank. For one who has not been accustomed to taste misfortunes bears indeed, but grieves, to put his neck under the yoke. But he would be far more blessed in death than in life; for to live otherwise than honorably is a great burden.

CHOR. It is a great and distinguishing feature among men to be born of generous parents, and the name of nobility of birth among the illustrious, proceeds from great to greater still.

HEC. You have spoken honorably, my daughter, but in that honorable dwells grief. But if the son of Peleus must be gratified, and you must escape blame, Ulysses, kill not her; but leading me to the pyre of Achilles, strike me, spare me not; I brought forth Paris, who destroyed the son of Thetis, having pierced him with his arrows.

ULYSS. The phantom of Achilles did not demand that thou, O aged lady, but that thy daughter here should die.

HEC. Do thou then at least slay me with my daughter, and there will be twice the libation of blood for the earth, and the dead who makes this request.

ULYSS. Thy daughter's death suffices; one must not be heaped on another; would that we required not even this one.

HEC. There is a strong necessity for me to die with my daughter.

ULYSS. How so? for I am not aware of any master that I have.

HEC. As the ivy the oak, so will I clasp her.

¹⁴ We must, I think, read *τολμαιν*.

ULYSS. Not so; if you will take the advice of your superiors in knowledge.

HEC. Never will I willingly quit my child here.

ULYSS. Nor will I leave this place without the virgin.

POLYX. Mother, be persuaded; and thou, son of Laertes, be gentle to a parent with reason moved to anger. But thou, O wretched mother, contend not with conquerors. Dost thou wish to fall on the earth and to wound thy aged flesh dragged by violence, and to suffer the indignity of being torn by a youthful arm? which things you will suffer. Do not, I pray thee, for it is not seemly. But, my dear mother, give me thy beloved hand, and grant me to join cheek to cheek; since never hereafter, but now for the last time shall I behold the rays of the sun and his bright orb. Receive my last address, O mother! O thou that bearest me, I am going below.

HEC. And I, O daughter, shall be a slave in the light of day.

POLYX. Without the bridegroom, without the bridal song, which I ought to have obtained.

HEC. Mournful thou, my child; but I am a wretched woman.

POLYX. There shall I lie in darkness far from thee.

HEC. Alas me, what shall I do? where end my life?

POLYX. I shall die a slave, born of a free father.

HEC. But I bereft indeed of fifty children.

POLYX. What message shall I bear to Hector, and to thy aged husband?

HEC. Tell them that I am most miserable of all women.

POLYX. O ye breasts that tenderly nursed me.

HEC. O daughter of an untimely and unhappy fate.

POLYX. Farewell, O mother, farewell Cassandra too.

HEC. Others farewell, but this is not for thy mother.

POLYX. Farewell, my brother Polydore, among the warlike Thracians.

HEC. If he lives at least: but I doubt, so unfortunate am I in every thing.

POLTX. He lives, and shall close thy dying eye.

HEC. I am dead, before my death, beneath my ills.

POLYX. Lead me, Ulysses, having covered my face with a veil, since, before I am sacrificed indeed, I am melted in heart at my mother's complaints, her also I melt by my lamentations. O light, for yet it is allowed me to express thy name, but I have no share in thee, except during the time that I am going between the sword and the pyre of Achilles.

HEC. Ah me! I faint; and my limbs fail me. – O daughter, touch thy mother, stretch forth thy hand – give it me – leave me not childless – I am lost, my friends. Would that I might see the Spartan Helen, the sister of the twin sons of Jove, thus, for through her bright eyes that most vile woman destroyed the happy Troy.

CHOR. Gale, gale of the sea,¹⁵ which waftest the swift barks bounding through the waves through the surge of the ocean, whither wilt thou bear me hapless? To whose mansion shall I come, a purchased slave? Or to the port of the Doric or Phthian shore, where they report that Apidanus, the most beautiful father of floods, enriches the plains? or wilt thou bear me hapless urged by the maritime oar, passing a life of misery in my prison-house, to that island¹⁶ where both the first-born palm tree and the laurel shot forth their hallowed branches to their beloved Latona, emblem of the divine parturition? And with the Delian nymphs shall I celebrate in song the golden chaplet and bow of Diana? Or, in the Athenian city, shall I upon the saffron robe harness the steeds to the car of Minerva splendid in her chariot, representing them in embroidery upon the splendid looms of brilliant threads, or the race of Titans, which Jove the son of Saturn sends to eternal rest with his flaming lightning? Alas, my children! Alas, my ancestors, and my paternal land, which is overthrown, buried

¹⁵ λιμνη is used for the *sea* in Troades 444; as also in Iliad N. 21, and Odyssey Γ. 1. and in many other passages of Homer.

¹⁶ The construction is η πορευσεις με ενθα νασων; for εις εκεινην των νασων, ενθα.

in smoke, captured by the Argive sword! but I indeed am¹⁷ a slave in a foreign country, having left Asia the slave of Europe, having changed my bridal chamber for the grave.

TALTHYBIUS, HECUBA, CHORUS

TAL. Tell me, ye Trojan dames, where can I find Hecuba, late the queen of Troy?

CHOR. Not far from thee, O Talthybius, she is lying stretched on the ground, muffled in her robes.

TAL. O Jupiter, what shall I say? Shall I say that thou beholdest mortals? or that they have to no end or purpose entertained false notions, who suppose the existence of a race of Deities, and that fortune has the sovereign control over men? Was not this the queen of the opulent Phrygians? was not this the wife of the all-blest Priam? And now all her city is overthrown by the spear, but she a captive, aged, childless, lies on the ground defiling her ill-fated head with the dust. Alas! alas! I too am old, but rather may death be my portion before I am involved in any such debasing fortune; stand up, oh unhappy, raise thy side, and lift up thy hoary head.

HEC. Let me alone: who art thou that sufferest not my body to rest? why dost thou, whoever thou art, disturb me from my sadness?

TAL. I am here, Talthybius, the herald of the Greeks, Agamemnon having sent me for thee, O lady.

HEC. Hast thou come then, thou dearest of men, it having been decreed by the Greeks to slay me too upon the tomb? Thou wouldest bring dear news indeed. Then haste we, let us speed with all our might: lead on, old man.

TAL. I am here and come to thee, O lady, that thou mayest entomb thy dead daughter. Both the two sons of Atreus and the Grecian host send me.

HEC. Alas! what wilt thou say? Art thou not come for me as doomed to death, but to bring this cruel message? Thou art dead, my child, torn from thy mother; and I am childless as far as regards thee; oh! wretch that I am. But how did ye slay her? was it with becoming reverence? Or did ye proceed in your butchery as with an enemy, O old man? Tell me, though you will relate no pleasing tale.

TAL. Twice, O lady, thou desirest me to indulge in tears through pity for thy daughter; for both now while relating the mournful circumstance shall I bedew this eye, as did I then at the tomb when she perished. The whole host of the Grecian army was present before the tomb, at the sacrifice of thy daughter. But the son of Achilles taking Polyxena by the hand, placed her on the summit of the mound; but I stood near him: and there followed a chosen band of illustrious youths in readiness to restrain with their hands thy daughter's struggles; then the son of Achilles took a full-crowned goblet of entire gold, and poured forth libations to his deceased father; and makes signal to me to proclaim silence through all the Grecian host. And I standing forth in the midst, thus spoke: "Be silent, O ye Greeks, let all the people remain silent; silence, be still: " and I made the people perfectly still. But he said, "O son of Peleus, O my father, accept these libations which have the power of soothing, and which speed the dead on their way; and come, that thou mayest drink the pure purple blood of this virgin, which both the army and myself offer unto thee; but be propitious to us, and grant us to weigh anchor, and to loose the cables of our ships, and to return each to his country, having met with a prosperous return from Troy." Thus much he said, and all the army joined in the prayer. Then taking by the hilt his sword decked with gold, he drew it from its scabbard, and made signs to the chosen youths of the Greeks to hold the virgin. But she, when she perceived it,¹⁸ uttered this speech: "O Argives, ye that destroyed my city, I die willingly; let none touch my body; for I will offer my

¹⁷ κεκλημαι for εμει, not an unusual signification. Hippol. 2, θεα κεκλημαι Κυπρις.

¹⁸ *When she perceived it, εφρασθη, συνηκεν, εγω, ενοησεν. Hesych.*

neck to the sword with a good heart. But, by the Gods, let me go free while ye kill me, that I may die free, for to be classed as a slave among the dead, when a queen, is what I am ashamed of." But the people murmured assent, and king Agamemnon ordered the young men to quit the virgin; [but they, soon as they heard the last words of him who had the seat of chief authority among them, let go their hold,] and she, on hearing this speech of her lords, took her robe, and rent it, beginning from the top of her shoulder down to her waist: and showed her breasts and bosom beauteous, as a statue's, and bending her knee on the ground, spoke words the most piteous ever heard, "Lo! strike, if this bosom thou desirest, O youth; or wouldest thou rather under the neck, here is this throat prepared." But he at once resolved and unresolved through pity of the virgin, cuts with the sword the passage of her breath; and fountains of blood burst forth. But she, e'en in death, showed much care to fall decently, and to veil from the eyes of men what ought to be concealed. But after that she breathed forth her spirit under the fatal blow, not one of the Greeks exercised the same offices; but some scattered leaves from their hands on the dead; some heap the funeral pile, bringing whole trunks of pines: but he that would not bring, heard rebukes of this sort from him that was thus employed: "Standest thou idle, thou man of most mean spirit? Hast in thy hand no robe, no ornament for the maiden? Hast thou naught to give to her so exceeding brave in heart and most noble in soul?" These things I tell thee of the death of thy daughter, but I behold thee at once the most happy, at once the most unhappy of all women in thine offspring.

CHOR. Dreadful calamities have risen fierce against the house of Priam; such the hard fate of the Gods.

HEC. O daughter! which of my ills I shall first attend to, amidst such a multitude, I know not: for if I touch on any, another does not suffer me; and thence again some fresh grief draws me aside, succeeding miseries upon miseries. And now I can not obliterate from my mind thy sufferings, so as not to bewail them: but excess of grief hast thou taken away, having been reported to me as noble. Is it then no paradox, if land indeed naturally bad, when blest with a favorable season from heaven, bears well the ear; but good land, robbed of the advantages it ought to have, brings forth bad fruit: but ever among men, the bad by nature is nothing else but bad; the good always good, nor under misfortune does he degenerate from his nature, but is the same good man? Is it, that the parents cause this difference, or the education? The being brought up nobly hath indeed in it the knowledge and principles of goodness; but if one is acquainted well with this, he knows what is vicious, having already learned it by the rule of virtue. And this indeed has my mind been ejaculating in vain. But do thou go, and signify these things to the Greeks, that no one be suffered to touch my daughter, but bid them keep off the multitude. In so vast an army the rabble are riotous, and the sailors' uncontrolled insolence is fiercer than fire; and he is evil, who does not evil. But do thou, my old attendant, taking an urn, fill it with sea water, and bring it hither, that I may wash my girl in her last bath, the bride no bride now, and the virgin no longer a virgin, wash her, and lay her out; according to her merits – whence can I? This I can not; but as I can, I will, for what can I do! And collecting ornaments from among the captured women, who dwell beside me in these tents, if any one, unobserved by our new lords, has by her any stolen memorial of her home. O state of my house, O mansions once happy! O Priam, of vast wealth possessed, and supremely blest in thine offspring, and I too, this aged woman, the mother of such children! How have we come to nothing, bereft of our former grandeur! And yet still forsooth we are elated, one of us in his gorgeous palaces; another, when honored among his citizens. These are nothing. In vain the counsels of the mind, and the tongue's boast. He is most blest, to whom from day to day no evil happens.

CHORUS

Against me was it fated that calamity, against me was it fated that woe should spring, when Paris first hewed the pine in Ida's forest, preparing to cut his way over the ocean surge to the bed of

Helen, the fairest that the sun's golden beams shine upon. For toils, and fate more stern than toils, close us round: and from the folly of one came a public calamity fatal to the land of Simois, and woes springing from other woes: and when the dispute was decided, which the shepherd decided between the three daughters of the blessed Gods on Ida's top, for war, and slaughter, and the desolation of my palaces. And many a Spartan virgin at her home on the banks of the fair-flowing Eurotas sighs while bathed in tears: and many an aged matron strikes her hand against her hoary head, for her children who have perished, and tears her cheek making her nails all blood-stained with her wounds.

FEMALE ATTENDANT, CHORUS, HECUBA

ATT. O attendants, where, I pray, is the all-wretched Hecuba, who surpasses the whole race of man and woman kind in calamities? no one shall wrest from her the crown.

CHOR. But what dost thou want, O wretch, in thy words of ill omen? for thy messages of woe never rest.

ATT. I bring this grief to Hecuba; but in calamity 'tis no easy thing for men to speak words of good import.

CHOR. And see, she is coming out of the house, and appears in the right time for thy words.

ATT. O all-wretched mistress, and yet still more wretched than I can express in words, thou art undone, and no longer beholdest the light, childless, husbandless, cityless, entirely destroyed.

HEC. Thou has said nothing new, but hast reproached me who already know it: but why dost thou bring this corse of my Polyxena, whose sepulture was reported to me as in a state of active progress through the labors of all the Grecians?

ATT. She nothing knows, but, woe's me! laments Polyxena, nor does she apprehend her new misfortunes.

HEC. O wretched me! dost bring hither the body of the frantic and inspired Cassandra?

ATT. She whom thou mentionedst, lives; but thou dost not weep for him who is dead; but behold this corse cast naked [on the shore,] and look if it will appear to thee a wonder, and what thou little expectest.

HEC. Alas me! I do indeed see my son Polydore a corse, whom (*I fondly hoped*) the man of Thrace was preserving in his palace. Now am I lost indeed, I no longer exist. Oh my child, my child! Alas! I begin the Bacchic strain, having lately learned my woes from my evil genius.

ATT. Thou knowest then the calamity of thy son, O most unfortunate.

HEC. I see incredible evils, still fresh, still fresh: and my immeasurable woes follow one upon the other. No longer will a day without a tear, without a groan, have part with me.

CHOR. Dreadful, oh! dreadful are the miseries that we endure!

HEC. O child, child of a wretched mother, by what fate art thou dead, by what hap liest thou here? by the hand of what man?

ATT. I know not: on the wave-washed shore I found him.

HEC. Cast up from the sea, or fallen by the blood-stained spear? (Note¹⁹.)

ATT. The ocean's billow cast him up from the deep on the smooth sand.

HEC. Woe is me! Now understand I the dream, the vision of mine eyes; the black-winged phantom has not flitted by me in vain, which I saw concerning thee, my child, as being no longer in the light of day.

CHOR. But who slew him? canst thou, O skilled in dreams, declare him?

HEC. My friend, my friend, who curbs the steed in Thrace, where his aged father placed him for concealment.

¹⁹ Dindorf disposes these lines differently, but I prefer Porson's arrangement, as follows: ΕΚ. ἐκβλήτων, ἡ πῆς. φ. ὄρος; ΘΕΡ. ἐν ψαμαθῶι λευραὶ ποντοῦ νιν, κ.τ.λ.

CHOR. Ah me! what wilt thou say? Was it to possess his gold that he slew him!

HEC. Unutterable deeds, unworthy of a name, surpassing miracles, unhallowed, insufferable! Where are the laws of hospitality? O most accurst of men, how didst thou mar that skin, how sever with the cruel sword the poor limbs of this boy, nor didst feel pity?

CHOR. O hapless woman, how has the deity made thee by far the most wretched of mortals, whoever he be that presses heavy on thee! But, my friends, let us henceforward be silent, for I see our lord Agamemnon advancing.

AGAMEMNON, CHORUS, HECUBA

AGA. Why, Hecuba, delayest thou to come, and bury thy girl in her tomb, agreeably to what Talthybius told me, that no one of the Argives should be suffered to touch thy daughter. For our part we leave her alone, and touch her not; but thou art slow, whereat I am astonished. I am come therefore to fetch thee, for every thing there has been well and duly performed, if aught of well there be in this. Ah! what corse is this I see before the tent? some Trojan's too? for that it is no Grecian's, the robes that vest his limbs inform me.

HEC. (*aside*) Thou ill-starr'd wretch! myself I mean, when I say "thou." O Hecuba, what shall I do? Shall I fall at the knees of Agamemnon here, or bear my ills in silence?

AGA. Why dost lament turning thy back upon me, and sayest not what has happened? Who is this?

HEC. (*aside*) But should he, thinking me a slave, an enemy, spurn me from his knees, I should be adding to my present sufferings.

AGA. No prophet I, so as to trace, unless by hearing, the path of thy counsels.

HEC. (*aside*) Am I not rather then putting an evil construction on this man's thoughts, whereas he has no evil intention toward me?

AGA. If thou art willing that I should nothing of this affair, thou art of a mind with me, for neither do I wish to hear.

HEC. (*aside*) I can not without him take vengeance for my children. Why do I thus hesitate? I must be bold, whether I succeed, or fail. Agamemnon, by these knees, and by thy beard I implore thee, and by thy blessed hand —

AGA. What thy request? Is it to pass thy life in freedom? for this is easy for thee to obtain.

HEC. Not this indeed; but so that I avenge myself on the bad, I am willing to pass my whole life in slavery.

AGA. And for what assistance dost thou call on me?

HEC. In none of those things which thou imaginest, O king. Seest thou this corse, o'er which I drop the tear?

AGA. I see it; thy meaning however I can not learn from this.

HEC. Him did I once bring forth, him bore I in my bosom.

AGA. Is this indeed one of thy children, O unhappy woman?

HEC. It is, but not of the sons of Priam who fell under the walls of Troy.

AGA. Didst thou then bear any other besides those, O lady?

HEC. In vain, as it appears, this whom you see.

AGA. But where did he chance to be, when the city fell?

HEC. His father sent him out of the country, dreading his death.

AGA. Whither, having removed him alone of his children then alive?

HEC. To this country, where he was found a corse.

AGA. To him who is king over this state, to Polymestor?

HEC. Hither was he sent, the guardian of gold, which proved most destructive to him.

AGA. By whose hand then he is dead, and having met with what fate?

HEC. By whom else should he? The Thracian host slew him.

AGA. O wretch! was he so inflamed with the desire of obtaining the gold?

HEC. Even so, after he had heard of Troy's disasters.

AGA. And where didst thou find him, or who brought the body?

HEC. She, meeting with it on the sea-shore.

AGA. In quest of it, or occupied in some other employment?

HEC. She was going to bring from the sea wherewith to bathe Polyxena.

AGA. This friend then, as it seems, murdered him, and after that cast him out.

HEC. To toss upon the waves thus gashing his body.

AGA. O thou unhappy from thy unmeasured ills!

HEC. I perish, no woe is left, O Agamemnon.

AGA. Alas! alas! What woman was ever so unfortunate?

HEC. There is none, except you reckon Misfortune herself. But for what cause I fall at thy knees, now hear: if I appear to you to suffer these ills justly, I would be reconciled to them; but if otherwise, be thou my avenger on this man, this most impious of false friends; who revering neither the Gods beneath²⁰ the earth, nor the Gods above, hath done this most unholy deed, having often partaken of the same table with me, [and in the list of hospitality the first of my friends; and having met with whatever was due,²¹ and having received a full consideration for his services,²²] slew him, and deigned not to give him a tomb, *which he might have given*, although he purposed to slay him, but cast him forth at the mercy of the waves. We indeed are slaves, and perhaps weak; but the Gods are strong, and strong the law, which governs them; for by the law we judge that there are Gods, and we live having justice and injustice strictly defined; which if when referred to thee it be disregarded, and they shall suffer no punishment who slay their guests, or dare to pollute the hallowed statutes of the Gods, there is nothing equitable in the dealings of men. Beholding these things then in a base and proper light, reverence me; pity me, and, as the artist stands aside *to view a picture*, do thou view my living portrait, and see what woes I am enduring. Once was I a queen, but now I am thy slave; once was I blest in my children, but now aged, and at the same time childless, cityless, destitute, the most miserable of mortals. Alas me wretched! whither withdrawest from me thy foot? It seems²³ I shall make no impression, wretch that I am. Why then do we mortals toil after all other sciences, as a matter of duty, and dive into them, but least of all strive to learn thoroughly Persuasion, the sole mistress o'er the minds of men, giving a price for her knowledge, that at some time we may have it in our power at once to persuade and obtain what we wish? – How then can any one hereafter hope that he shall be fortunate? So many children that I had, and now not one is left to me. But I am perishing a captive in base servitude, and yet see the smoke there leaping aloft from the city. And however this part of my argument may perchance be vain, the bringing forward love; still nevertheless it shall be urged. My daughter is wont to sleep by thy side, that prophetess, whom the Trojans call Cassandra. Where wilt thou show that thy nights were nights of love, O king, or will my daughter receive any recompense for her most fond embraces, and I through her? [For from the secret shade, and from night's joys, the greatest delight is wont to spring to mortals.] Now then attend. Thou seest this corpse? Him assisting, thou wilt assist one joined to thee in affinity. One thing my speech wants yet. I would fain I had a voice in my arms, and hands, and in my hair, and in my footsteps, or by the skill of Dædalus, or some God, that each at once might hold thy knees, weeping, and imploring in all the strains of eloquence. O my lord. O greatest light of the Greeks, be persuaded; lend thy hand to avenge

²⁰ The Gods beneath he despised, by casting him out without a tomb; the Gods above, as the guardians of the rites of hospitality.

²¹ *Whatever was due*, either on the score of friendship, or as an equivalent for his care and protection.

²² Musgrave proposes to read *προμισθίαν* for *προμηθίαν*: the version above is in accordance with the scholiast and the paraphrast.

²³ See note on Medea 338.

this aged woman, although she is of no consequence, yet avenge her. For it belongs to a good man to minister justice, and always and in every case to punish the bad.

CHOR. It is strange, how every thing happens to mortals, and laws determine even the fates, making the greatest enemies friends, and enemies of those who before were on good terms.

AGA. I, O Hecuba, have pity both on thee and thy son, thy misfortunes, and thy suppliant touch, and I am willing in regard both to the Gods and to justice, that this impious host should give thee full revenge, provided a way could be found, that both you might be gratified, and I might in the eyes of the army not seem to meditate this destruction against the king of Thrace for Cassandra's sake. For there is a point in which apprehension hath reached me. This man the army deems a friend, the dead an enemy; but if he is dear to thee, this is a private feeling and does not affect the army. Wherefore consider, that thou hast me willing to labor with thee, and ready to assist thee, but backward, should I be murmured against among the Greeks.

HEC. Alas! no mortal is there who is free. For either he is the slave of money or of fortune; or the populace of the city or the dictates of the law constrain him to adopt manners not accordant with his natural inclinations. But since thou fearest, and payest too much regard to the multitude, I will liberate thee from this fear. For consent with me, if I meditate vengeance against the murderer of this youth, but do not act with me. But should any tumult or offer of assistance arise from out of the Greeks, when the Thracian feels the punishment he shall feel, suppress it, not appearing to do it for my sake: but of the rest be confident: I will dispose all things well.

AGA. How then? What wilt thou do? Wilt thou grasp the sword in thine aged hand, and strike the barbarian? or with poison wilt thou work, or with what assistance? What hand will conspire with thee? whence wilt thou procure friends?

HEC. These tents inclose a host of Trojan dames.

AGA. Meanest thou the captives, the booty of the Greeks?

HEC. With these will I avenge me of my murderer.

AGA. And how shall the victory over men be to women?

HEC. Numbers are powerful, with stratagem invincible.

AGA. Powerful, I grant; I mistrust however the race of women.

HEC. And why? Did not women slay the sons of Ægyptus,²⁴ and utterly extirpated the race of men from Lemnos?²⁵ But thus let it be. Give up this discussion. But grant this woman to pass in safety through the army. And do thou go to the Thracian host and tell him, "Hecuba, once queen of Troy, sends for you on business of no less importance to yourself than to her, and your sons likewise, since it is of consequence that your children also should hear her words." – And do thou, O Agamemnon, as yet forbear to raise the tomb over the newly-sacrificed Polyxena, that these two, the brother and the sister, the divided care of their mother, may, when reduced to ashes by one and the same flame, be interred side by side.

AGA. Thus shall it be. And yet, if the army could sail, I should not have it in my power to grant thy request: but now, for the deity breathes not prosperous gales, we must wait, watching for a calm voyage. But may things turn out well some way or other: for this is a general principle among all, both individuals in private and states, That the wicked man should feel vengeance, but the good man enjoy prosperity.

²⁴ The story of the daughters of Danaus is well known.

²⁵ Of this there are two accounts given in the Scholia. The one is, that the women of Lemnos being punished by Venus with an ill savor, and therefore neglected by their husbands, conspired against them and slew them. The other is found in Herodotus, Erato, chap. 138. see also Æsch. Choephoræ, line 627, ed. Schutz.

CHORUS

O thou, my country of Troy, no longer shall thou be called the city of the invincible, such a cloud of Grecians envelops thee, with the spear, with the spear having destroyed thee. And thou hast been shorn of thy crown of turrets, and thou hast been discolored by the dismal blackness of smoke; hapless city, no longer shall I tread my steps in thee.

In the midnight hour I perished, when after the feast sweet sleep is scattered over the eyes. And my husband, from the song and cheerful sacrifice retired, was sleeping peacefully in my bed, his spear on its peg, no more dreaming to behold the naval host of the Greeks treading the streets of Troy. But I was binding my braided hair with fillets fastened on the top of mine head, looking into the round polished surface of the golden mirror, that I might get into my bed prepared for me. On a sudden a tumultuous cry penetrated the city; and this shout of exhortation was heard in the streets of Troy, "When indeed, ye sons of Grecians, when, *if not now*, will ye return to your homes having overthrown the proud citadel of Ilium!" And having left my dear bed, in a single robe, like a Spartan virgin, flying for aid to the venerable shrine of Diana, I hapless fled in vain. And I am dragged, after having seen my husband slain, to the ocean waves; and casting a distant look back upon my city, after the vessel had begun her way in her return to Greece, and divided me from the land of Troy, I wretched fainted through anguish. And consigning to curses Helen, the sister of the Twin Brothers, and the Idean shepherd, the ruthless Paris, since his marriage, no marriage, but some Fury's hate hath utterly destroyed me far from my native land, and hath driven me from my home. Whom may the ocean refuse ever to bear back again; and may she never reach again her paternal home.

POLYMESTOR, HECUBA, CHORUS

POLY. O Priam, thou dearest of men, and thou most dear Hecuba, at thy sight I weep for thee, and thy city, and thy daughter who has lately died. Alas! there is nothing secure, neither glory, nor when one is faring well is there a certainty that he will not fare ill. But the Gods mingle these things promiscuously to and fro, making all confusion, so that we through ignorance may worship them. But wherefore should I utter these complaints, which in no way tend to free thee from thy former calamities. But thou, if thou hast aught to blame for my absence, forbear; for I chanced to be afar off in the middle of my Thracian territories, when thou camest hither; but soon as I returned, as I was already setting out from my house, this maid of thine met me for the self-same purpose, and delivered thy message, which when I had heard, I came.

HEC. O Polymestor, I am ashamed to look thee in the face, sunk as I am in such miseries; for before one who has seen me in prosperity, shame overwhelms me, being in the state in which I now am, nor can I look upon thee with unmoved eyes. But impute not this to any enmity I bear thee; but there are other causes, and in some degree this law; "that women ought not to gaze at men."

POLY. And 'tis indeed no wonder; but what need hast thou of me? for what purpose didst thou send for me to come from home?

HEC. I am desirous of communicating a private affair of my own to thee and thy children; but order thy attendants to retire from these tents.

POLY. Depart, for here to be alone is safe. Friendly thou art, this Grecian army too is friendly toward me, but it is for thee to signify, in what manner I, who am in good circumstances, ought to succor my friends in distress; since, on my part, I am ready.

HEC. First then tell me of my son Polydore, whom thou retainest, receiving him from mine, and from his father's hand, if he live; but the rest I shall inquire of thee afterward.

POLY. He lives, and in good health; as far as regards him indeed thou art happy.

HEC. O my best friend, how well thou speakest, and how worthily of thyself!

POLY. What dost thou wish then to inquire of me in the next place?

HEC. Whether he remembers at all me, his mother?

POLY. Yes: and he even sought to come to thee by stealth.

HEC. And is the gold safe, which he brought with him from Troy?

POLY. It is safe, at least it is guarded in my house.

HEC. Preserve it therefore, nor covet the goods of others.

POLY. Certainly not. May I enjoy what is mine own, O lady.

HEC. Knowest thou then, what I wish to say to thee and thy children?

POLY. I do not: this shalt thou signify by thy speech.

HEC. Be my son loved by thee, as thou art now loved of me.

POLY. What is it, that I and my sons must know?

HEC. The ancient buried treasures of the family of Priam.

POLY. Is it this thou wishest me to inform thy son of?

HEC. Yes, certainly; through thee at least, for thou art a pious man.

POLY. What necessity then is there for the presence of these children?

HEC. 'Tis better in case of thy death, that these should know.

POLY. Well hast thou thus said, and 'tis the wiser plan.

HEC. Thou knowest then where the temple of Minerva in Troy is —

POLY. Is the gold there! but what is the mark?

HEC. A black rock rising above the earth.

POLY. Hast any thing further to tell me of what is there?

HEC. No, but I wish thee to take care of some treasures, with which I came out of the city.

POLY. Where are they then? Hast thou them hidden beneath thy robes?

HEC. Amidst a heap of spoils they are preserved in this tent.

POLY. But where? These are the naval encampments of the Grecians.

HEC. The habitations of the captive women are private.

POLY. And is all secure within, and untenanted by men?

HEC. Not one of the Greeks is within, but we women only. But come into the tent, for the Greeks are desirous of loosing the sheets of their vessels homeward from Troy; so that, having done every thing that thou oughtest, thou mayest go with thy children to that place where thou hast given my son to dwell.

CHOR. Not yet hast thou suffered, but peradventure thou wilt suffer vengeance; as a man falling headlong into the gulf where no harbor is, shalt thou be hurled from thy dear heart, having lost thy life;²⁶ for where the rites of hospitality coincide²⁷ with justice, and with the Gods, *on the villain who dares to violate these* destructive, destructive indeed impends the evil. But thy hopes will deceive thee, which thou entertainedst from this journey, which has brought thee, thou wretched man, to the deadly mansions of Pluto; but thou shalt quit thy life by no warrior's hand.

POLYMESTOR, HECUBA, SEMICHORUS

POLY. Oh me! I wretch am deprived of the sight of mine eyes.

SEMI. Heard ye the shriek of the man of Thrace, my friends?

²⁶ Polymestor was guilty of two crimes, ἀδικίας and ασεβείας, for he had both violated the laws of men, and profaned the deity of Jupiter Hospitalis. Whence Agamemnon, v. 840, hints that he is to suffer on both accounts. και βουλομαι θεων θ' ουνεκ ανοσιον ξενον, και του δικαιον, τηνδε σοι δουναι δικην. The Chorus therefore says, Ubi contingit eundem et Justitiæ et Diis esse addictum, exitiale semper malum esse; or, as the learned Hemsterheuyse has more fully and more elegantly expressed, it, Ubi, id est, in quo, vel in quem cadit et concurrat, ut ob crimen commissum simul et humanæ justitiæ et Deorum vindictæ sit obnoxius, ac velut oppignoratus; illi certissimum exitium imminet. This sense the words give, if for ου, we read 'ου, i.e. in the sense of 'οπου. MUSGRAVE. Correct Dindorf's text to 'ου.

²⁷ συμπεσεειν in unum coire, coincidere. In this sense it is used also, Herod. Euterpe, chap. 49.

POLY. Oh me; there again – Oh my children, thy miserable butchery!

SEMI. My friends, some strange ills have been perpetrated within the tents.

POLY. But for all your nimble feet, ye never can escape me, for by my blows will I burst open the recesses of these tents.

SEMI. Behold, he uses violently the weapon of his heavy hand. Will ye that we fall on; since the instant calls on us to be present with assistance to Hecuba and the Trojan dames?

HEC. Dash on, spare nothing, break down the gates, for thou never shalt replace the clear sight in those pupils, nor shalt thou behold alive those children which I have slain.

SEMI. What! hast thou vanquished the Thracian? and hast thou got the mastery over this host, my mistress? and hast thou done such deeds, as thou sayest?

HEC. Thou wilt see him quickly before the house, blind, with blind wandering steps approaching, and the bodies of his two children, whom I have slain with these most valiant Trojan women; but he has felt my vengeance; but he is coming as thou seest from the tent. But I will retire out of his way, and make good my retreat from the boiling rage of this most desperate Thracian.

POLY. Alas me! whither can I go? where stand? whither shall I direct my way, advancing my steps like the four-footed mountain beast on my hands and on my feet in pursuit? What new path shall I take in this direction or in that, desirous of seizing these murderous Trojan dames, who have utterly destroyed me; O ye impious, impious Phrygian daughters! Ah the accursed, in what corner do they shrink from me in flight? Would that thou, O sun, could'st heal, could'st heal these bleeding lids of my eyes, and remove this gloomy-darkness. Ah, hush, hush! I hear the carefully-concealed step of these women. Whither shall I direct my course in order that I may glut myself on the flesh and bones of these, making the wild beasts' banquet, inflicting vengeance on them, in return for the injuries done me. Wretch that I am! Whither, whither am I borne, having left my children deserted, for these fiends of hell to tear piecemeal, a mangled, bleeding, savage prey to dogs, and a thing to cast out on the mountains? Where shall I stand? Whither turn? Whither go, as a ship setting her yellow canvas sails with her sea-washed palsers, rushing to this lair of death, the protector of my children?

CHOR. O miserable man, what intolerable evils have been perpetrated by thee! but on thee having done base deeds the God hath sent dreadful punishment, whoever he be that presses heavy on thee.

POLY. Alas! alas! O Thracian nation, brandishing the spear, warlike, bestriding the steed, nation ruled by Mars; O ye Greeks, sons of Atreus; I raise the cry, the cry, the cry; Come, come, hasten, I entreat you by the Gods. Does any hear, or will no one assist me? Why do ye delay? The women have destroyed me, the captive women. Horrible, horrible treatment have I suffered. Alas me for my ruin! Whither can I turn? Whither can I go? Shall I soar through the ethereal skies to the lofty mansions where Orion or Sirius dart from their eyes the flaming rays of fire: or shall I hapless rush to the gloomy shore of Pluto?

CHOR. It is pardonable, when any one suffers greater misfortunes than he can bear, for him to be desirous to quit a miserable life.

AGAMEMNON, POLYMESTOR, HECUBA, CHORUS

AGA. I came having heard the clamor: for Echo, the mountain's daughter, did not sound in gentle strains through the army, causing a disturbance. But did we not know that the Phrygian towers are fallen beneath the Grecian spear, this tumult might have caused no little terror.

POLY. O my dearest friend (for I know thee, Agamemnon, having heard thy voice), seest thou what I am suffering?

AGA. Ah! wretched Polymestor, who hath destroyed thee? who made thine eyes sightless, having drowned their orbs in blood? And who hath slain these thy children? Sure, whoe'er it was, felt the greatest rage against thee and thy sons.

POLY. Hecuba with the female captives hath destroyed me – nay, not destroyed me, but more than destroyed me.

AGA. What sayest thou? Hast thou done this deed, as he affirms? Hast thou, Hecuba, dared this inconceivable act of boldness?

POLY. Ah me! what wilt thou say? Is she any where near me? Show me, tell me where she is, that I may seize her in my hands, and tear piecemeal and mangle her body.

AGA. What ho! what are you doing?

POLY. By the Gods I entreat thee, suffer me to lay my raging hand upon her.

AGA. Forbear. And having banished this barbarous deed from thy thoughts, speak; that having heard both thee and her in your respective turns, I may decide justly, in return for what thou art suffering these ills.

POLY. I will speak then. There was a certain youth, the youngest of Priam's children, by name Polydore, the son of Hecuba; him his father Priam sent to me from Troy to bring up in my palace, already presaging²⁸ the capture of Troy. Him I put to death. But for what cause I put him to death, with what policy and prudent forethought, now hear. I feared, lest the boy being left an enemy to thee, should collect the scattered remnants of Troy, and again people the city. And lest the Greeks, having discovered that one of the sons of Priam was alive, should again direct an expedition against the Phrygian land, and after that should harass and lay waste the plains of Thrace; and it might fare ill with the neighbors of the Trojans, under which misfortune, O king, we are now laboring. But Hecuba, when she had discovered her son's death, by such treachery as this lured me hither, as about to tell me of treasure belonging to Priam's family concealed in Troy, and introduces me alone with my sons into the tent, that no one else might know it. And I sat, having reclined on the centre of the couch; but many Trojan damsels, some from the left hand, and others from the right, sat round me, as by an intimate friend, holding in their hands the Edonian looms, and praised these robes, looking at them in the light; but others, beholding with admiration my Thracian spear, deprived me of my double ornament. But as many as were mothers caressed my children in their arms in seeming admiration, that they might be farther removed from their father, successively handing them from one to another: and then, amidst their kind blandishments, what think you? in an instant, snatching from somewhere beneath their garments their daggers, they stab my children. But they having seized me in an hostile manner held my hands and feet; and if, wishing to succor my children, I raised my head, they held me by the hair: but if I attempted to move my hands, I wretched could effect nothing through the host of women. But at last, cruelty and worse than cruelty, they perpetrated dreadful things; for having taken their clasps they pierce and gore the wretched pupils of my eyes, then vanish in flight through the tent. But I, having leaped out, like some exasperated beast, pursue the blood-stained wretches, searching every wall, as the hunter, casting down, rending. This have I suffered, while studious to advance thy interest, Agamemnon, and having killed thine enemy. But that I may not extend my speech to a greater length, if any one of those of ancient times hath reviled women, or if any one doth now, or shall hereafter revile them, I will comprise the whole when I say, that such a race neither doth the sea nor the earth produce, but he who is always with them knows it best.

CHOR. Be not at all insolent, nor, in thy calamities, thus comprehending the female sex, abuse them all. For of us there are many, some indeed are envied *for their virtues*, but some are by nature in the catalogue of bad things.

HEC. Agamemnon, it never were fitting among men that the tongue should have greater force than actions. But if a man has acted well, well should he speak; if on the other hand basely, his words likewise should be unsound, and never ought he to be capable of speaking unjust things well. Perhaps indeed they who have brought these things to a pitch of accuracy are accounted wise, but they can

²⁸ The verbal adjective in τος is almost universally used in a passive sense; ὑποπτος, however, in this place is an exception to the rule, as are also, καλυπτης, Soph. Antig. 1011, μεμπτος, Trachin. 446.

not endure wise unto the end, but perish vilely, nor has any one yet escaped this. And this in my prelude is what I have to say to thee. Now am I going to direct my discourse to this man, and I will answer his arguments. Thou, that assertest, that in order to rid the Greeks of their redoubled toil, and for Agamemnon's sake that thou didst slay my son? But, in the first place, monstrous villain, never can the race of barbarians be friendly to the Grecians, never can this take place. But what favor wert thou so eagerly currying? wert thou about to contract an alliance, or was it that thou wert of kindred birth, or what pretext hadst thou? or were they about to ravage the crops of thy country, having sailed thither again? Whom, thinkest thou, wilt thou persuade of these things? The gold, if thou wert willing to speak truth, the gold destroyed my son, and thy base gains. For come, tell me this; how when Troy was prosperous, and a tower yet girt around the city, and Priam lived, and the spear of Hector was in its glory, why didst thou not then, if thou wert willing to lay him under this obligation, bringing up my child, and retaining him in thy palace, why didst thou not then slay him, or go and take him alive to the Greeks? But when we were no longer in the light of prosperity, and the city by its smoke showed that it was in the power of the enemy, thou slewest thy guest who had come to thy hearth. Now hear besides how thou wilt appear vile: thou oughtest, if thou wert the friend of the Greeks, to have given the gold, which thou confessedst thou hast, not thine, but his, distributing to those who were in need, and had long been strangers to their native land. But thou, even now, hast not courage to part with it from thy hand, but having it, thou still art keeping it close in thine house. And yet, in bringing up my child, as it was thy duty to bring him up, and in preserving him, thou hadst had fair honor. For in adversity friends are most clearly proved good. But good circumstances have in every case their friends. But if thou wert in want of money, and he in a flourishing condition, my son had been to thee a vast treasure; but now, thou neither hast him for thy friend, and the benefit from the gold is gone, and thy sons are gone, and thou art – as thou art. But to thee, Agamemnon, I say; if thou aidest this man, thou wilt appear to be doing wrong. For thou wilt be conferring a benefit on a host, who is neither pious, nor faithful to those to whom he ought, not holy, not just. But we shall say that thou delightest in the bad, if thus thou actest: but I speak no offense to my lords.

CHOR. Ah! Ah! How do good deeds ever supply to men the source of good words!

AGA. Thankless my office to decide on others' grievances; but still I must, for it brings disgrace on a man, having taken a thing in hand, to give it up. But to me, be assured, thou neither appearest for my sake, nor for the sake of the Grecians, to have killed this man thy guest, but that thou mightest possess the gold in thy palace. But thou talkest of thy advantage, when thou art in calamities.²⁹ Perhaps with you it is a slight thing to kill your guests; but with us Grecians this thing is abhorred. How then, in giving my decision that thou hast not injured, can I escape blame? I can not; but as thou hast dared to do things dishonorable, endure now things unpleasant.

POLY. Alas me! worsted, as it seems, by a woman who is a slave, I shall submit to the vengeance of my inferiors.

AGA. Will it not then be justly, seeing thou hast acted wrong?

POLY. Alas me! wretched on account of these children and on account of my eyes.

HEC. Thou sufferest? but what do I? Thinkest thou I suffer not for my child?

POLY. Thou rejoicest in insulting me, O thou malicious woman.

HEC. For ought not I to rejoice on having avenged myself on thee?

POLY. But thou wilt not soon, when the liquid wave —

HEC. Shall bear me, *dost thou mean*, to the confines of the Grecian land?

POLY. — shall cover thee, having fallen from the shrouds.

HEC. From whom meeting with this violent leap?

POLY. Thyself shalt climb with thy feet up the ship's mast.

²⁹ Perhaps the preferable way is to make *κακοισιν* agree with *ανθρωποις* understood; that the sense may be, *You are a bad man to talk of your advantage as a plea for having acted thus.*

HEC. Having wings on my back, or in what way?

POLY. Thou shalt become a dog with a fiery aspect.

HEC. But how dost thou know of this my metamorphose?

POLY. Dionysius the Thracian prophet told it me.

HEC. But did he not declare to thee any of the evils which thou sufferest?

POLY. No: for, *if he had*, thou never wouldst thus treacherously have taken me.

HEC. ³⁰Thence shall I conclude my life in death, or still live on?

POLY. Thou shalt die. But the name of thy tomb shall be —

HEC. Dost thou speak of it as in any way correspondent to my shape?

POLY. ³¹The tomb of the wretched dog, a mark to mariners.

HEC. I heed it not, since thou at least hast felt my vengeance.

POLY. And it is fated too for thy daughter Cassandra to die.

HEC. I renounce these prophecies; I give them for thyself to bear.

POLY. Him shall his wife slay, a cruel guardian of his house.

HEC. Never yet may the daughter of Tyndarus have arrived at such madness.

POLY. Even this man himself, having lifted up the axe.

AGA. What ho! thou art mad, and art desirous of obtaining greater ills.

POLY. Kill me, for the murderous bath at Argos awaits thee.

AGA. Will ye not, slaves, forcibly drag him from my presence?

POLY. Thou art galled at what thou hearest.

AGA. Will ye not stop his mouth?

POLY. Stop it: for the word is spoken.

AGA. Will ye not as quick as possible cast him out on some desert island, since he is thus, and past endurance insolent? But do thou, wretched Hecuba, go and bury thy two dead: and you, O Trojan dames, must approach your masters' tents, for I perceive that the gales are favorable for wafting us to our homes. And may we sail in safety to our native country, and behold our household and families in prosperity, having found rest from these toils.

CHOR. Come, my friends, to the harbor, and the tents, to undergo the tasks imposed by our masters. For necessity is relentless.

³⁰ Θανουσα δ' η ζωσ' ενθαδ' εκπλησω βιον; a similar expression occurs in the Anthologia. σιγων παρερχου τον ταλαιπωρον βιον, αυτος σιωπηι τον χρονον μιμουμενος, λαθων δε και βιωσον. ει δε μη, θανων.

³¹ The place of her burial was called Cynosema, a promontory of the Thracian Chersonese. It was here that the Athenians gained a naval victory over the Peloponnesians and Syracusans, in the twenty-first year of the Peloponnesian war. Thucydides, book viii.

ORESTES

PERSONS REPRESENTED

ELECTRA.
HELEN.
HERMIONE.
CHORUS.
ORESTES.
MENELAUS.
TYNDARUS.
PYLADES.
A PHRYGIAN.
APOLLO.

THE ARGUMENT

Orestes, in revenge for the murder of his father, took off Ægisthus and Clyætmnestra; but having dared to slay his mother, he was instantly punished for it by being afflicted with madness. But on Tyndarus, the father of her who was slain, laying an accusation against him, the Argives were about to give a public decision on this question, "What ought he, who has dared this impious deed, to suffer?" By chance Menelaus, having returned from his wanderings, sent in Helen indeed by night, but himself came by day, and being entreated by Orestes to aid him, he rather feared Tyndarus the accuser: but when the speeches came to be spoken among the populace, the multitude were stirred up to kill Orestes. * * * * But Pylades, his friend, accompanying him, counseled him first to take revenge on Menelaus by killing Helen. As they were going on this project, they were disappointed of their hope by the Gods snatching away Helen from them. But Electra delivered up Hermione, when she made her appearance, into their hands, and they were about to kill her. When Menelaus came, and saw himself bereft by them at once of his wife and child, he endeavored to storm the palace; but they, anticipating his purpose, threatened to set it on fire. Apollo, however, having appeared, said that he had conducted Helen to the Gods, and commanded Orestes to take Hermione to wife, and Electra to dwell with Pylades, and, after that he was purified of the murder, to reign over Argos.

The scene of the piece is laid at Argos; But the chorus consists of Argive women, intimate associates of Electra, who also come on inquiring about the calamity of Orestes. The play has a catastrophe rather suited to comedy. The opening scene of the play is thus arranged. Orestes is discovered before the palace of Agamemnon, fatigued, and, on account of his madness, lying on a couch on which Electra is sitting by him at his feet. A difficulty has been started, why does not she sit at his head? for thus would she seem to watch more tenderly over her brother, if she sat nearer him. The poet, it is answered, seems to have made this arrangement on account of the Chorus; for Orestes, who had but just then and with difficulty gotten to sleep, would have been awakened, if the women that constituted the Chorus had stood nearer to him. But this we may infer from what Electra says to the Chorus, "Σιγα, σιγα, λεπτον ιχνος αρβυληις." It is probable then that the above is the reason of this arrangement.

The play is among the most celebrated on the stage, but infamous in its morals; for, with the exception of Pylades, all the characters are bad persons.

ORESTES

ELECTRA

There is no word so dreadful to relate, nor suffering, nor heaven-inflicted calamity, the burden of which human nature may not be compelled to bear. For Tantalus, the blest, (and I am not reproaching his fortune, *when I say this*,) the son of Jupiter, as they report, trembling at the rock which impends over his head, hangs in the air, and suffers this punishment, as they say indeed, because, although being a man, yet having the honor of a table in common with the Gods upon equal terms, he possessed an ungovernable tongue, a most disgraceful malady. He begat Pelops, and from him sprung Atreus, for whom the Goddess having carded the wool³² spun the thread of contention, *and doomed him* to make war on Thyestes his relation; (why must I commemorate things unspeakable?) But Atreus then³³ killed his children – and feasted him. But from Atreus, for I pass over in silence the misfortunes which intervened, sprung Agamemnon, the illustrious, (if he was indeed illustrious,) and Menelaus; their mother Aërope of Crete. But Menelaus indeed marries Helen, the hated of the Gods, but King Agamemnon *obtained* Clytæmnestra's bed, memorable throughout the Grecians: from whom we virgins were born, three from one mother; Chrysothemis, and Iphigenia, and myself Electra; and Orestes the male part of the family, from a most unholy mother, who slew her husband, having covered him around with an inextricable robe; the reason however it is not decorous in a virgin to tell; I leave this undeclared for men to consider as they will. But why indeed must I accuse the injustice of Phœbus? Yet persuaded he Orestes to kill that mother that brought him forth, a deed which gained not a good report from all men. But nevertheless he did slay her, as he would not be disobedient to the God. I also took a share in the murder, but such as a woman ought to take. As did Pylades also who perpetrated this deed with us. From that time wasting away, the wretched Orestes is afflicted with a grievous malady, but falling on his couch there lies, but his mother's blood whirls him to frenzy (for I dread to mention those Goddesses, the Eumenides, who persecute him with terror). Moreover this is the sixth day since his slaughtered mother was purified by fire as to her body. During which he has neither taken any food down his throat, he has not bathed his limbs, but covered beneath his cloak, when indeed his body is lightened of its disease, on coming to his right mind he weeps, but at another time starts suddenly from his couch, as a colt from his yoke. But it has been decreed by this city of Argos, that no one shall receive us who have slain a mother under their roof, nor at their fire, and that none shall speak to us; but this is the appointed day, in the which the city of the Argives will pronounce their vote, whether it is fitting that we should die being stoned with stones, or having whet the sword, should plunge it into our necks. But I yet have some hope that we may not die, for Menelaus has arrived at this country from Troy, and filling the Nauplian harbor with his oars is mooring his fleet off the shore, having been lost in wanderings from Troy a long time: but the much-afflicted Helen has he sent before to our palace, having taken advantage of the night, lest any of those, whose children died under Ilium, when they saw her coming, by day, might go so far as to stone her; but she is within bewailing her sister, and the calamity of her family. She has however some consolation in her woes, for the virgin Hermione, whom Menelaus bringing from Sparta, left at our palace, when he sailed to Troy, and gave as a charge to my mother to bring up, in her she rejoices, and forgets her miseries. But I am looking at each avenue when I shall see Menelaus present, since,

³² στεμματα, ερια, *Schol.* "eo quod colum cingant seu coronant," Scapula explains it.

³³ "Then" is not to be considered as signifying point of time, but it is meant to express *ovv*, *continuativam*. See Hoogveen de Particula *ovv*, Sect. ii. § 6.

for the rest, we ride on slender power,³⁴ if we receive not some succor from him; the house of the unfortunate is an embarrassed state of affairs.

ELECTRA. HELEN

HEL. O daughter of Clytæmnestra and Agamemnon, O Electra, thou that hast remained a virgin a long time. How are ye, O wretched woman, both you, and your brother, the wretched Orestes (he was the murderer of his mother)? For by thy converse I am not polluted, transferring, as I do, the blame to Phœbus. And yet I groan the death of Clytæmnestra, whom, after that I sailed to Troy, (how did I sail, urged by the maddening fate of the Gods!) I saw not, but of her bereft I lament my fortune.

ELEC. Helen, why should I inform thee of things thou seest thyself here present, the race of Agamemnon in calamities. I indeed sleepless sit companion to the wretched corse, (for he is a corse, in that he breathes so little,) but at his fortune I murmur not. But thou a happy woman, and thy husband a happy man, have come to us, who fare most wretchedly.

HEL. But what length of time has he been lying on his couch?

ELEC. Ever since he shed his parent's blood.

HEL. Oh wretched, and his mother too, that thus she perished!

ELEC. These things are thus, so that he is unable to speak for misery.

HEL. By the Gods wilt thou oblige me in a thing, O virgin?

ELEC. As far as I am permitted by the little leisure I have from watching by my brother.

HEL. Wilt thou go to the tomb of my sister?

ELEC. My mother's tomb dost thou desire? wherefore?

HEL. Bearing the first offerings of my hair, and my libations.

ELEC. But is it not lawful for thee to go to the tomb of thy friends?

HEL. No, for I am ashamed to show myself among the Argives.

ELEC. Late art thou discreet, then formerly leaving thine home disgracefully.

HEL. True hast thou spoken, but thou speakest not pleasantly to me.

ELEC. But what shame possesses thee among the Myceneans?

HEL. I fear the fathers of those who are dead under Ilium.

ELEC. For this is a dreadful thing; and at Argos thou art declaimed against by every one's mouth.

HEL. Do thou then grant me this favor, and free me from this fear.

ELEC. I can not look upon the tomb of my mother.

HEL. And yet it is disgraceful for servants to bear these.

ELEC. But why not send thy daughter Hermione?

HEL. It is not well for virgins to go among the crowd.

ELEC. And yet she might repay the dead the care of her education.

HEL. Right hast thou spoken, and I obey thee, O virgin, and I will send my daughter, for thou sayest well. Come forth, my child Hermione, before the house, and take these libations in thine hand, and my hair, and, going to the tomb of Clytæmnestra, leave there this mixture of milk and honey, and the froth of wine, and standing on the summit of the mound, say thus: "Helen, thy sister, presents thee with these libations, in fear herself to approach thy tomb, and afraid of the populace of Argos: " and bid her hold kind intentions toward me, and thyself, and my husband, and toward these two miserable persons whom the God has destroyed. But promise all the offerings to the manes, whatever it is fitting that I should perform for a sister. Go, my child, hasten, and when thou hast offered the libations at the tomb, remember to return back as speedily as possible.

³⁴ The original Greek phrase was ελπίδος λεπτής, which Euripides has changed to ασθενους ῥωμης, though the other had equally suited the metre. But Euripides is fond of slight alterations in proverbs. PORSON.

ELEC. [*alone*] O Nature, what a great evil art thou among men, and the safeguard of those who possess thee, with virtue! For see, how she has shorn off the extremities of her hair, in order to preserve her beauty; but she is the same woman she always was. May the Gods detest thee, for that thou hast destroyed me, and this man, and the whole state of Greece: oh wretch that I am! But my dear friends that accompany me in my lamentations are again present; perhaps they will disturb the sleeper from his slumber, and will melt my eyes in tears when I behold my brother raving.

ELECTRA, CHORUS

ELEC. O most dear woman, proceed with a gentle foot, make no noise, let there be heard no sound. For your friendliness is very kind, but to awake him will be a calamity to me. Hush, hush – gently advance the tread of thy sandal, make no noise, let there be heard no sound. Move onward from that place – onward from before the couch.

CHOR. Behold, I obey.

ELEC. St! st! Speak to me, my friend, as the breathing of the soft reed pipe.

CHOR. See, I utter a voice low as an under note.

ELEC. Ay, thus come hither, come hither, approach quietly – go quietly: tell me, for what purpose, I pray, are ye come? For he has fallen on his couch, and been sleeping some time.

CHOR. How is he? Give us an account of him, my friend.

ELEC. What fortune can I say of him? and what his calamities? still indeed he breathes, but sighs at short intervals.

CHOR. What sayest thou? Oh, the unhappy man!

ELEC. You will kill him if you move his eyelids, now that he is taking the sweetest enjoyment of sleep.

CHOR. Unfortunate on account of these most angry deeds from heaven! oh! wretched on account of thy sufferings!

ELEC. Alas! alas! Apollo himself unjust, then spoke unjust things, when at the tripod of Themis he commanded the unhallowed, inauspicious murder of my mother.

CHOR. Dost thou see? he moves his body in the robes that cover him.

ELEC. You by your cries, O wretch, have disturbed him from his sleep.

CHOR. I indeed think he is sleeping yet.

ELEC. Will you not depart from us? will you not bend your footsteps back from the house, ceasing this noise?

CHOR. He sleeps.

ELEC. Thou sayest well.

CHOR. Venerable, venerable Night, thou that dispensest sleep to languid mortals, come from Erebus; come, come, borne on thy wings to the house of Agamemnon; for by our griefs and by our sufferings we are quite undone, undone.

ELEC. Ye were making a noise.

CHOR. No. (Note³⁵.)

ELEC. Silently, silently repressing the high notes of your voice, apart from his couch, you will enable him to have the tranquil enjoyment of sleep.

CHOR. Tell us; what end to his miseries awaits him?

ELEC. Death, death; what else can? for he has no appetite for food.

CHOR. Death then is manifestly before him.

³⁵ But Dindorf reads κτυπου η ηγαγετ'. ουχι; interrogatively, thus: "Ye were making a noise. Will ye not ... enable him," etc.?

ELEC. Phœbus offered us as victims, when he commanded³⁶ the dreadful, abhorred murder of our mother, that slew our father.

CHOR. With justice indeed, but not well.

ELEC. Thou hast died, thou hast died, O mother, O thou that didst bring me forth, but hast killed the father, and the children of thy blood. We perish, we perish, even as two corpses. For thou art among the dead, and the greatest part of my life is passed in groans, and wailings, and nightly tears; marriageless, childless, behold, how like a miserable wretch do I drag out my existence forever!

CHOR. O virgin Electra, approach near, and look that thy brother has not died unobserved by thee; for by this excessive quiet he doth not please me.

ORESTES, ELECTRA, CHORUS

ORES. O precious balm of sleep, thou that relievest my malady, how pleasant didst thou come to me in the time of need! O divine oblivion of my sufferings, how wise thou art, and the goddess to be supplicated by all in distress! – whence, in heaven's name, came I hither? and how brought? for I remember not things past, bereaved, as I am, of my senses.

ELEC. My dearest brother, how didst thou delight me when thou didst fall asleep! wilt thou I touch thee, and raise thy body up?

ORES. Raise me then, raise me, and wipe the clotted foam from off my wretched mouth, and from my eyes.

ELEC. Behold, the task is sweet, and I refuse not to administer to a brother's limbs with a sister's hand.

ORES. Lay thy side by my side, and remove the squalid hair from my face, for I see but imperfectly with my eyes.

ELEC. O wretched head, sordid with ringlets, how art thou disordered from long want of the bath!

ORES. Lay me on the couch again; when my fit of madness gives me a respite, I am feeble and weak in my limbs.

ELEC. Behold, the couch is pleasant to the sick man, an irksome thing to keep, but still a necessary one.

ORES. Again raise me upright – turn my body.

CHOR. Sick persons are hard to be pleased from their feebleness.

ELEC. Wilt thou set thy feet on the ground, putting forward thy long-discontinued³⁷ step? In all things change is sweet.

ORES. Yes, by all means; for this has a semblance of health, but the semblance is good, though it be distant from the truth.

ELEC. Hear now therefore, O my brother, while yet the Furies suffer thee to have thy right faculties.

ORES. Wilt thou tell any news? and if good indeed, thou art conferring pleasure; but if it pertain at all to mischief – I have enough distress.

ELEC. Menelaus has arrived, the brother of thy father, but his ships are moored in the Nauplian bay.

ORES. How sayest? Is he come, a light in mine and thy sufferings, a man of kindred blood, and that hath received benefits from our father?

³⁶ δους – δυναται δε και αποδους. SCHOL.

³⁷ Perhaps this interpretation of χρονιον is better than "slow," for the considerate Electra would hardly go to remind her brother of his infirmities.

ELEC. He is come; take this a sure proof of my words, bringing with him Helen from the walls of Troy.

ORES. Had he been saved alone, he had been more blest. But if he brings his wife, he has arrived with a mighty evil.

ELEC. Tyndarus begat an offspring of daughters, a conspicuous mark for blame, and infamous throughout Greece.

ORES. Do thou then be unlike the bad, for it is in thy power. And not only say, but also hold these sentiments.

ELEC. Alas! my brother, thine eye rolls wildly; quick art thou changed to madness, so late in thy senses.

ORES. O mother, I implore thee, urge not on me those Furies gazing blood, horrid with snakes, for these, these are leaping around me.

ELEC. Remain, O wretched man, calmly on thy couch, for thou seest none of those things, which thou fanciest thou seest plainly.

ORES. O Phœbus, these dire Goddesses in the shape of dogs will kill me, these gorgon-visaged ministers of hell.

ELEC. I will not let thee go, but, putting my arm around thee, will stop thy starting into those unfortunate convulsions.

ORES. Loose me. Thou art one of my Furies, and seizest me by the middle, that thou mayest hurl me into Tartarus.

ELEC. Oh! wretched me! what assistance can I obtain, since we have on us the vengeful wrath of heaven!

ORES. Give me my bow of horn, the gift of Phœbus, with which Apollo said I should repel the Fiends, if they appalled me by their maddened raging.

ELEC. Shall any God be wounded by mortal hand? (Note³⁸.)

ORES. *Yes. She shall*, if she will not depart from my sight... Hear ye not – see ye not the winged shafts impelled from the distant-wounding bow? Ha! ha! Why tarry ye yet? Skim the high air with your wings, and impeach the oracles of Phœbus. – Ah! why am I thus disquieted, heaving my panting breath from my lungs? Whither, whither have I wandered from my couch? For from the waves again I see a calm. – Sister, why weepest, hiding thine eyes beneath thy vests, I am ashamed to have thee a partner in my sufferings, and to give a virgin trouble through my malady. Pine not away on account of my miseries: for thou indeed didst assent to this, but the shedding of my mother's blood was accomplished by me: but I blame Apollo, who, after having instigated me to a most unholy act, with words indeed consoled me, but not with deeds. But I think that my father, had I, beholding him, asked him if it were right for me to slay my mother, would have put forth many supplications, beseeching me by this beard not to impel my sword to the slaughter of her who bore me, if neither he thereby could be restored to life, and I thus wretched must go through such miseries. And now then unveil thyself, my sister, and cease from tears, even though we be very miserable: but when thou seest me desponding, do thou restrain my distraction, and that which preys upon my mind, and console me; but when thou groanest, it becomes my duty to come to thee, and suggest words of comfort. For these are the good offices friends ought to render each other. But go thou into the house, O unfortunate sister, and, stretched at full length, compose thy sleepless eyelids to sleep, and take refreshment, and pour the bath upon thy fair skin. For if thou forsake me, or gettest any illness by continually sitting by me, we perish; for thee I have my only succor, by the rest, as thou seest, abandoned.

ELEC. This can not be: with thee will I choose to die, with thee to live; for it is the same: for if then shouldst die, what can I do, a woman? how shall I be preserved, alone and destitute? without a brother, without a father, without a friend: but if it seemeth good to thee, these things it is my duty to

³⁸ Dindorf would continue this verse to Orestes.

do: but recline thy body on the bed, and do not to such a degree conceive to be real whatever frightens and startles thee from the couch, but keep quiet on the bed strewn for thee. For though thou be not ill, but only seem to be ill, still this even is an evil and a distress to mortals. (Note³⁹.)

CHORUS. Alas! alas! O swift-winged, raving⁴⁰ Goddesses, who keep up the dance, not that of Bacchus, with tears and groans. You, dark Eumenides, you, that fly through the wide extended air, executing vengeance, executing slaughter, you do I supplicate, I supplicate: suffer the offspring of Agamemnon to forget his furious madness; alas! for his sufferings. What were they that eagerly grasping at, thou unhappy perishest, having received from the tripod the oracle which Phœbus spake, on that pavement, where are said to be the recesses in the midst of the globe! O Jupiter, what pity is there? what is this contention of slaughter that comes persecuting thee wretched, to whom some evil genius casts tear upon tear, transporting to thy house the blood of thy mother which drives thee frenzied! Thus I bewail, I bewail. Great prosperity is not lasting among mortals; but, as the sail of the swift bark, some deity having shaken him, hath sunk him in the voracious and destructive waves of tremendous evils, as in the waves of the ocean. For what other⁴¹⁶⁸⁸ family ought I to reverence yet before that sprung from divine nuptials, sprung from Tantalus? – But lo! the king! the prince Menelaus, is coming! but he is very easily discernible from the elegance of his person, as king of the house of the Tantalidæ.

O thou that didst direct the army of a thousand vessels to Asia's land, hail! but thou comest hither with good fortune, having obtained the object of thy wishes from the Gods.

MENELAUS, ORESTES, CHORUS

MEN. O palace, in some respect indeed I behold thee with pleasure, coming from Troy, but in other respect I groan when I see thee. For never yet saw I any other house more completely encircled round with lamentable woes. For I was made acquainted with the misfortune that befell Agamemnon, [and his death, by what death he perished at the hands of his wife,]⁴² when I was landing my ships at Malea; but from the waves the prophet of the mariners declared unto me, the foreboding Glaucus the son of Nereus, an unerring God, who told me thus in evident form standing by me. "Menelaus, thy brother lieth dead, having fallen in his last bath, which his wife prepared." But he filled both me and my sailors with many tears; but when I come to the Nauplian shore, my wife having already landed there, expecting to clasp in my friendly embraces Orestes the son of Agamemnon, and his mother, as being in prosperity, I heard from some fisherman⁴³ the unhallowed murder of the daughter of Tyndarus. And now tell me, maidens, where is the son of Agamemnon, who dared these terrible deeds of evil? for he was an infant in Clytæmnestra's arms at that time when I left the palace on my way to Troy, so that I should not know him, were I to see him.

ORES. I, Menelaus, am Orestes, whom thou seekest, I of my own accord will declare my evils. But first I touch thy knees in supplication, putting up prayers from my mouth, not using the sacred branch:⁴⁴ save me. But thou art come in the very season of my sufferings.

MEN. O ye Gods, what do I behold! whom of the dead do I see!

ORES. Ay! well thou sayest the dead; for in my state of suffering I live not; but see the light.

MEN. Thou wretched man, how disordered thou art in thy squalid hair!

³⁹ Dindorf supposes something to be wanting after vs. 314.

⁴⁰ Ποτνιαδες. The Furies have this epithet from Potnia, a town in Bœotia, where Glaucus's horses, having eaten of a certain herb and becoming mad, tore their own master in pieces. SCHOL.

⁴¹ Note⁶⁸⁸.

⁶⁸⁸ The use of αλλος ἕτερος is learnedly illustrated by Dindorf.

⁴² Dindorf would omit this verse.

⁴³ ἀλιτυπων, ἄλιεων, ὅι ταις κωπαις τυπτοῦσι τὴν θαλασσαν. SCHOL.

⁴⁴ ἀφυλλου. Alluding to the branch, which the ancients used to hold in token of supplication.

ORES. Not the appearance, but the deeds torment me.
MEN. But thou glarest dreadfully with thy shriveled eyeballs.
ORES. My body is vanished, but my name has not left me.
MEN. Alas, thy uncomeliness of form which has appeared to me beyond conception!
ORES. I am he, the murderer of my wretched mother.
MEN. I have heard; but spare a little the recital of thy woes.
ORES. I spare it; but in woes the deity is rich to me.
MEN. What dost thou suffer? What malady destroys thee?
ORES. The conviction that I am conscious of having perpetrated dreadful deeds.
MEN. How sayest thou? Plainness, and not obscurity, is wisdom.
ORES. Sorrow is chiefly what destroys me, —
MEN. She is a dreadful goddess, but sorrow admits of cure.
ORES. And fits of madness in revenge for my mother's blood.
MEN. But when didst first have the raging? what day was it then?
ORES. That day in which I heaped the tomb on my mother.
MEN. What? in the house, or sitting at the pyre?
ORES. As I was guarding by night lest any one should bear off her bones.⁴⁵
MEN. Was any one else present, who supported thy body?
ORES. Pylades, who perpetrated with me the vengeance and death of my mother.
MEN. But by what visions art thou thus afflicted?
ORES. I appear to behold three virgins like the night.
MEN. I know whom thou meanest, but am unwilling to name them.
ORES. Yes: for they are awful; but forbear from speaking such high polished words.⁴⁶
MEN. Do these drive thee to distraction on account of this kindred murder?
ORES. Alas me for the persecutions, with which wretched I am driven!
MEN. It is not strange that those who do strange deeds should suffer them.
ORES. But we have whereto we may transfer the criminality⁴⁷ of the mischance.
MEN. Say not the death *of thy father*; for this is not wise.
ORES. Phœbus who commanded us to perpetrate the slaying of our mother.
MEN. Being more ignorant than to know equity, and justice.
ORES. We are servants of the Gods, whatever those Gods be.
MEN. And then does not Apollo assist thee in thy miseries?
ORES. He is always about to do it, but such are the Gods by nature.
MEN. But how long a time has thy mother's breath gone from her?
ORES. This is the sixth day since; the funeral pyre is yet warm.
MEN. How quickly have the Goddesses come to demand of thee thy mother's blood!
ORES. I am not wise, but a true friend to my friends.
MEN. But what then doth the revenge of thy father profit thee?
ORES. Nothing yet; but I consider what is in prospect in the same light as a thing not done.
MEN. But regarding the city how standest thou, having done these things?
ORES. We are hated to that degree, that no one speaks to us.
MEN. Nor hast thou washed thy blood from thy hands according to the laws?
ORES. *How can I?* for I am shut out from the houses, whithersoever I go.

⁴⁵ "κατα την νυκτα πεπονθα τηρων την αναηρεσιν, και την αναληψιν των οσσεων, τουτεστιν, 'ινα μη τις αφεληται ταυτα."
PARAPH. Heath translates it, *watchfully observing, till her bones were collected.*

⁴⁶ The old reading was *παυδευτα*. The meaning of the present reading seems to be, "Yes, they are awful 'tis true, but still however you need not be so very scrupulous about naming them."

⁴⁷ *αναφορα* was a legal term, and signified the line of defense adopted by the accused, when he transferred the charge brought against himself to some other person. — See Demosthenes in Timocr.

MEN. Who of the citizens thus contend to drive thee from the land?

ORES. *Æax*,⁴⁸ imputing to my father the hatred which arose on account of Troy.

MEN. I understand. The death of Palamede takes its vengeance on thee.

ORES. In which at least I had no share – but I perish by the three.

MEN. But who else? Is it perchance one of the friends of *Ægisthus*?

ORES. They persecute me, whom now the city obeys.

MEN. But does the city suffer thee to wield Agamemnon's sceptre?

ORES. How should they? who no longer suffer us to live.

MEN. Doing what, which thou canst tell me as a clear fact?

ORES. This very day sentence will be passed upon us.

MEN. To be exiled from this city? or to die? or not to die?

ORES. To die, by being stoned with stones by the citizens.

MEN. And dost thou not fly then, escaping beyond the boundaries of the country?

ORES. *How can we?* for we are surrounded on every side by brazen arms.

MEN. By private enemies, or by the hand of Argos?

ORES. By all the citizens, that I may die – the word is brief.

MEN. O unhappy man! thou art come to the extreme of misfortune.

ORES. On thee my hope builds her escape from evils, but, thyself happy, coming among the distressed, impart thy good fortune to thy friends, and be not the only man to retain a benefit thou hast received, but undertake also services in thy turn, paying their father's kindness to those to whom thou oughtest. For those friends have the name, not the reality, who are not friends in adversity.

CHOR. And see the Spartan Tyndarus is toiling hither with his aged foot, in a black vest, and shorn, his locks cut off in mourning for his daughter.

ORES. I am undone, O Menelaus! Lo! Tyndarus is coming toward us, to come before whose presence, most of all men's, shame covereth me, on account of what has been done. For he used to nurture me when I was little, and satiated me with many kisses, dandling in his arms Agamemnon's boy, and Leda with him, honoring me no less than the twin-born of Jove. For which, O my wretched heart and soul, I have given no good return: what dark veil can I take for my countenance? what cloud can I place before me, that I may avoid the glances of the old man's eyes?

TYNDARUS, MENELAUS, ORESTES, CHORUS

TYND. Where, where can I see my daughter's husband Menelaus? For as I was pouring my libations on the tomb of Clytæmnestra, I heard that he was come to Nauplia with his wife, safe through a length of years. Conduct me, for I long to stand by his hand and salute him, seeing my friend after a long lapse of time.

MEN. O hail! old man, who sharest thy bed with Jove.

TYND. O hail! thou also, Menelaus my dear relation, – ah! what an evil is it not to know the future! This dragon here, the murderer of his mother, glares before the house his pestilential gleams – the object of my detestation – Menelaus, dost thou speak to this unholy wretch?

MEN. Why not? he is the son of a father who was dear to me.

TYND. What! was he sprung from him, being such as he is?

MEN. He was; but, though he be unfortunate, he should be respected.

TYND. Having been a long time with barbarians, thou art thyself turned barbarian.

MEN. Nay! it is the Grecian fashion always to honor one of kindred blood.

TYND. *Yes*, and also not to wish to be above the laws.

⁴⁸ *Æax* was Palamede's brother.

MEN. Every thing proceeding from necessity is considered as subservient to her⁴⁹ among the wise.

TYND. Do thou then keep to this, but I'll have none of it.

MEN. *No*, for anger joined with thine age, is not wisdom.

TYND. With this man what controversy can there be regarding wisdom? If what things are virtuous, and what are not virtuous, are plain to all, what man was ever more unwise than this man? who did not indeed consider justice, nor applied to the common existing law of the Grecians. For after that Agamemnon breathed forth his last, struck by my daughter on the head, a most foul deed (for never will I approve of this), it behooved him indeed to lay against her a sacred charge of bloodshed, following up the accusation, and to cast his mother from out of the house; and he would have taken the wise side in the calamity, and would have kept to law, and would have been pious. But now has he come to the same fate with his mother. For with justice thinking her wicked, himself has become more wicked in slaying his mother.

But thus much, Menelaus, will I ask thee; If the wife that shared his bed were to kill him, and his son again kills his mother in return, and he that is born of him shall expiate the murder with murder, whither then will the extremes of these evils proceed? Well did our fathers of old lay down these things; they suffered not him to come into the sight of their eyes, not to their converse, who was under an attainder⁵⁰ of blood; but they made him atone by banishment; they suffered however none to kill him in return. For always were one about to be attainted of murder, taking the pollution last into his hands. But I hate indeed impious women, but first among them my daughter, who slew her husband. But never will I approve of Helen thy wife, nor would I speak to her, neither do I commend⁵¹ thee for going to the plain of Troy on account of a perfidious woman. But I will defend the law, as far at least as I am able, putting a stop to this brutish and murderous practice, which is ever destructive both of the country and the state. – For what feelings of humanity hadst thou, thou wretched man, when she bared her breast in supplication, thy mother? I indeed, though I witnessed not that scene of misery, melt in my aged eyes with tears through wretchedness. One thing however goes to the scale of my arguments; thou art both hated by the Gods, and sufferest vengeance of thy mother, wandering about with madness and terrors; why must I hear by the testimony of others, what it is in my power to see? That thou mayest know then *once for all*, Menelaus, do not things contrary to the Gods, through thy wishes to assist this man. But suffer him to be slain by the citizens with stones, or set not thy foot on Spartan ground. But my daughter in dying met with justice, but it was not fitting that she should die by him.⁵² In other respects indeed have I been a happy man, except in my daughters, but in this I am not happy.

CHOR. He is enviable, who is fortunate in his children, and has not on him some notorious calamities.

ORES. O old man, I tremble to speak to thee, wherein I am about to grieve thee and thy mind. But I am unholy in that I slew my mother; but holy at least in another point of view, having avenged my father. Let then thine age, which hinders me through fear from speaking, be removed out of the way of my words, and I will go on in a direct path; but now do I fear thy gray hairs. What could I do? for oppose the facts, two against two. My father indeed begat me, but thy daughter brought me forth, a field receiving the seed from another; but without a father there never could be a child. I reasoned therefore with myself, that I should assist the prime author of my birth rather than the aliment which under him produced me. But thy daughter (I am ashamed to call her mother), in secret

⁴⁹ And therefore we are not to impeach the *man*. Some would have δούλον to bear the sense of δούλοποιον, enslaves, and therefore can not be avoided.

⁵⁰ εχω for ενοχος ειμι.

⁵¹ Ζηλω, το μακαριζω. ενταυθα δε αντι του επαινω. SCHOL.

⁵² Conf. Ter. Eun. Act. v. Sc. 2. Non dedignum, Chærea, Fecisti; nam si ego digna hac contumelia Sum maxime, at tu indignus, qui faceres, tamen.

and unchaste nuptials, had approached the bed of another man; of myself, if I speak ill of her, shall I be speaking, but yet will I tell it. Ægisthus was her secret husband in her palace. Him I slew, and after him I sacrificed my mother, doing indeed unholy things, but avenging my father. But as touching those things for which thou threatenest that I must be stoned, hear, how I shall assist all Greece. For if the women shall arrive at such a pitch of boldness as to murder the men, making good their escape with regard to their children, seeking to captivate their pity by their breasts, it would be as nothing with them to slay their husbands, having any pretext that might chance; but I having done dreadful things (as thou sayest), have put a stop to this law, but hating my mother deservedly I slew her, who betrayed her husband absent from home in arms, the generalissimo of the whole land of Greece, and kept not her bed undefiled. But when she perceived that she had done amiss, she inflicted not vengeance on herself, but, that she might not suffer vengeance from her husband, punished and slew my father. By the Gods, (in no good cause have I named the Gods, pleading against a charge of murder,) had I by my silence praised my mother's actions, what then would the deceased have done to me? To my mother indeed the Furies are present as allies, but would they not be present to him, who has received the greater injury? Would he not, detesting me, have haunted me with the Furies? Thou then, O old man, by begetting a bad daughter, hast destroyed me; for through her boldness deprived of my father, I became a matricide. Dost see? Telemachus slew not the wife of Ulysses, for she married not a husband on a husband, but her marriage-bed remains unpolluted in the palace. Dost see? Apollo, who, dwelling in his habitation in the midst of the earth, gives the most clear oracles to mortals, by whom we are entirely guided, whatever he may say, on him relying slew I my mother. 'Twas he who erred, not I: what could I do? Is not the God sufficient for me, who transfer *the deed* to him, to do away with the pollution? Whither then can any fly for succor, unless he that commanded me shall deliver me from death? But say not these things have been done "not well;" but say "not fortunately" for us who did them. But to whatsoever men their marriages are well established, there is a happy life, but to those to whom they fall not out well, with regard to their affairs both at home and abroad they are unfortunate.

CHOR. Women were born always to be in the way of what may happen to men, to the making of things unfortunate.

TYND. Since thou art bold, and yieldest not to my speech, but thus answerest me so as to grieve my mind, thou wilt rather inflame me to urge thy death. But this I shall consider a handsome addition to those labors for which I came, *namely*, to deck my daughter's tomb. For going to the multitude of the Argives assembled, I will rouse the state willing and not unwilling, to pass the sentence⁵³⁶⁸⁹ of being stoned on thee and on thy sister; but she is worthy of death rather than thee, who irritated thee against her mother, always pealing in thine ear words to increase thy hatred, relating dreams she had of Agamemnon, and this also, that the infernal Gods detested the bed of Ægisthus; for even here *on earth* it were hard *to be endured*; until she set the house in flames with fire more strong than Vulcan's. – Menelaus, but to thee I speak this, and will moreover perform it. If thou regard my hate, and my alliance, ward not off death from this man in opposition to the Gods; but suffer him to be slain by the citizens with stones, or set not thy foot on Spartan ground. Thus much having heard, depart, nor choose the impious for thy friends, passing over the pious. – But O attendants, conduct us from this house.

ORES. Depart, that the remainder of my speech may reach this man uninterrupted by the clamors of thy age: Menelaus, whither dost thou roam in thought, entering on a double path of double care?

⁵³ Note⁶⁸⁹.

⁶⁸⁹ Elmsley, on Heracl. 852, more simply regards the datives σοι σῆι τ' ἀδελφῆι as dependent upon ἐπισησῶ, understanding ὥστε δούναι δικήν. This is better than to suppose (with Porson) that δούναι δικήν can mean to *inflict* punishment.

MEN. Suffer me; having some thoughts with myself, I am perplexed to which side of fortune to turn me.

ORES. Do not make up thy opinion, but having first heard my words, then deliberate.

MEN. Say on; for thou hast spoken rightly; but there are seasons where silence may be better than talking, and there are seasons where talking may be better than silence.

ORES. I will speak then forthwith: Long speeches have the preference before short ones, and are more plain to hear. Give thou to me nothing of what thou hast, O Menelaus, but what thou hast received from my father, return; I mean not riches – yet riches, which are the most dear of what I possess, if thou wilt preserve my life. Say I am unjust, I ought to receive from thee, instead of this evil, something contrary to what justice demands; for Agamemnon my father having collected Greece in arms, in a way justice did not demand, went to Troy, not having erred himself, but in order to set right the error, and injustice of thy wife. This one thing indeed thou oughtest to give me for one thing, but he, as friends should for friends, of a truth exposed his person for thee toiling at the shield, that thou mightest receive back thy wife. Repay me then this kindness for that which thou receivedst there, toiling for one day in standing as my succor, not completing ten years. But the sacrifice of my sister, which Aulis received, this I suffer thee to have; do not kill Hermione, *I ask it not*. For, I being in the state in which I now am, thou must of necessity have the advantage, and I must suffer it to be so. But grant my life to my wretched father, and my sister's, who has been a virgin a long time. For dying I shall leave my father's house destitute. Thou wilt say "impossible: " this is the very thing *I have been urging*, it behooves friends to help their friends in misfortunes. But when the God gives prosperity, what need is there of friends? For the God himself sufficeth, being willing to assist. Thou appearest to all the Greeks to be fond of thy wife; (and this I say, not stealing under thee imperceptibly with flattery;) by her I implore thee; O wretched me for my woes, to what have I come? but why must I suffer thus? For in behalf of the whole house I make this supplication. O divine brother of my father, conceive that the dead man beneath the earth hears these things, and that his spirit is hovering over thee, and speaks what I speak. These things have I said, with tears, and groans, and miseries,⁵⁴ and have prayed earnestly, looking for preservation, which all, and not I only, seek.

CHOR. I too implore thee, although a woman, yet still I implore thee to succor those in need, but thou art able.

MEN. Orestes, I indeed reverence thy person, and I am willing to labor with thee in thy misfortunes. For thus it is right to endure together the misfortunes of one's relations, if the God gives the ability, even so far as to die, and to kill the adversary; but this ability again I want from the Gods. For I am come having my single spear unaided by allies, having wandered with infinite labors with small assistance of friends left me. In battle therefore we can not come off superior to Pelasgian Argos; but if we can by soft speeches, to that hope are we equal. For how can any one achieve great actions with small means? For when the rabble is in full force falling into a rage, it is equally difficult to extinguish as a fierce fire. But if one quietly yields to it as it is spreading, and gives in to it, watching well his opportunity, perhaps it may spend its rage, but when it has remitted from its blast, you may without difficulty have it your own way, as much as you please. For there is inherent in them pity, but there is inherent also vehement passion, to one who carefully watches his opportunity a most excellent advantage. But I will go and endeavor to persuade Tyndarus, and the city, to use their great power in a becoming manner. For a ship, the main sheet stretched out to a violent degree, is wont to pitch, but stands upright again, if you slacken the main sheet. For the God hates too great vehemence, and the citizens hate it; but I must (I speak as I mean) save thee by wisdom, not by opposing my superiors. But I can not by force, as perchance thou thinkest, preserve thee; for it is no easy matter to erect from one

⁵⁴ Of this passage the Scholiast gives two interpretations; either it may mean μετα δακρυων και γωων ειπον: ορ, ειπον ταυτα εις δακρυα και γοους, και ξυμφορας, ηγουν ινα μη τυχω, τουτων: τευξομαι δε, ει πετρωθηναι με εασις.

single spear trophies from the evils, which are about thee. For never have we approached the land of Argos by way of supplication; but now there is necessity for the wise to become the slaves of fortune.

ORESTES, CHORUS

ORES. O thou, a mere cipher in other things except in warring for the sake of a woman; O thou most base in avenging thy friends, dost thou fly, turning away from me? But all Agamemnon's services are gone: thou wert then without friends, O my father, in thy affliction. Alas me! I am betrayed, and there no longer are any hopes, whither turning I may escape death from the Argives. For he was the refuge of my safety. But I see this most dear of men, Pylades, coming with hasty step from the Phocians, a pleasing sight, a man faithful in adversity, more grateful to behold than the calm to the mariners.

PYLADES, ORESTES, CHORUS

PYL. I came through the city with a quicker step than I ought, having heard of the council of state assembled, and seeing it plainly myself, against thee and thy sister, as about to kill you instantly. – What is this? how art thou? in what state, O most dear to me of my companions and kindred? for all these things art thou to me.

ORES. We are gone – briefly to show thee my calamities.

PYL. Thou wilt have ruined me too; for the things of friends are common.

ORES. Menelaus has behaved most basely toward me and my sister.

PYL. It is to be expected that the husband of a bad wife be bad.

ORES. He is come, and has done just as much for me as if he had not come.

PYL. What! is he in truth come to this land?

ORES. After a long season; but nevertheless he was very soon discovered to be too base to his friends.

PYL. And has he brought in his ship with him his most infamous wife?

ORES. Not he her, but she brought him hither.

PYL. Where is she, who, beyond any woman,⁵⁵ destroyed most of the Grecians?

ORES. In my palace, if I may indeed be allowed to call this mine.

PYL. But what words didst thou say to thy father's brother?

ORES. *I requested him* not to suffer me and my sister to be slain by the citizens.

PYL. By the Gods, what said he to this request; this I wish to know.

ORES. He declined, from motives of prudence, as bad friends act toward their friends.

PYL. Going on what ground of excuse? This having learned, I am in possession of every thing.

ORES. The father himself came, he that begat such excellent daughters.

PYL. Tyndarus you mean; perhaps enraged with thee on account of his daughter.

ORES. You are right: be paid more attention to his ties with him, than to his ties with my father.

PYL. And dared he not, being present, to take arms against thy troubles?

ORES. *No*: for he was not born a warrior, but brave among women.

PYL. Thou art then in the greatest miseries, and it is necessary for thee to die.

ORES. The citizens must pass their vote on us for the murder *we have committed*.⁵⁶

PYL. Which vote what will it decide? tell me, for I am in fear.

ORES. Either to die or live; not many words on matters of great import.

PYL. Come fly, and quit the palace with thy sister.

⁵⁵ "Beyond any woman," γυνή μου, this is a mode of expression frequently met with in the Attic writers, especially in Xenophon.

⁵⁶ ἐπι τῷ φονῶνι, τούτεστι δια τὸν φόνον, ὄν ἐργασασαμεθα. PARAPH.

ORES. Seest thou not? we are watched by guards on every side,

PYL. I saw the streets of the city lined with arms.

ORES. We are invested as to our persons, as a city by the enemy.

PYL. Now ask me also, what I suffer; for I too am undone.

ORES. By whom? This would be an evil added to my evils.

PYL. Strophius, my father, being enraged, hath driven me an exile from his house.

ORES. Bringing against thee some private charge, or one in common with the citizens?

PYL. Because I perpetrated with thee the murder of thy mother, he banished me, calling me unholy.

ORES. O thou unfortunate! it seems that thou also sufferest for my evils.

PYL. We have not Menelaus's manners – this must be borne.

ORES. Dost thou not fear lest Argos should wish to kill thee, as it does also me?

PYL. We do not belong to these to punish, but to the land of the Phocians.

ORES. The populace is a terrible thing, when they have evil leaders.

PYL. But when they have good ones, they always deliberate good things.

ORES. Be it so: we must speak on our common business.

PYL. On what affair of necessity?

ORES. Supposing I should go to the citizens, and say —

PYL. – that thou hast acted justly?

ORES. Ay, avenging my father:

PYL. I fear they might not receive thee gladly.

ORES. But shall I die then shuddering in silence!

PYL. This were cowardly.

ORES. How then can I do?

PYL. Hast thou any chance of safety, if thou remainest?

ORES. I have none.

PYL. But going, is there any hope of thy being preserved from thy miseries?

ORES. Should it chance well, there might be.

PYL. Is not this then better than remaining?

ORES. Shall I go then?

PYL. Dying thus, at least thou wilt die more honorably.

ORES. And I have a just cause.

PYL. Only pray for its appearing so.

ORES. Thou sayest well: this way I avoid the imputation of cowardice.

PYL. More than by tarrying here.

ORES. And some one perchance may pity me —

PYL. Yes; for thy nobleness of birth is a great thing.

ORES. – indignant at my father's death.

PYL. All this in prospect.

ORES. Go I must, for it is not manly to die ingloriously.

PYL. These sentiments I praise.

ORES. Shall we then tell these things to my sister?

PYL. No, by the Gods.

ORES. Why, there might be tears.

PYL. This then is a great omen.

ORES. Clearly it is better to be silent.

PYL. Thou art a gainer by delay.

ORES. This one thing only opposes me.

PYL. What new thing again is this thou sayest?

ORES. I fear lest the goddesses should stop me with their torments.

PYL. But I will take care of thee.

ORES. It is a difficult and dangerous task to touch a man thus disordered.

PYL. Not for me to touch thee.

ORES. Take care how thou art partner of my madness.

PYL. Let not this be thought of.

ORES. Wilt thou not then be timid to assist me?

PYL. No, for timidity is a great evil to friends.

ORES. Go on now, the helm of my foot.

PYL. Having a charge worthy of a friend.

ORES. And guide me to my father's tomb.

PYL. To what end is this?

ORES. That I may supplicate him to save me.

PYL. This at least is just.

ORES. But let me not see my mother's monument.

PYL. For she was an enemy. But hasten, that the decree of the Argives condemn thee not before thou goest; leaning thy side, weary with disease, on mine: since I will conduct thee through the city, little caring for the multitude, nothing ashamed; for where shall I show myself thy friend, if I assist thee not when thou art in perilous condition?

ORES. This it is to have companions, not relationship alone; so that a man who is congenial in manners, though a stranger in blood, is a better friend for a man to have, than ten thousand relatives.

CHORUS

The great happiness, and the valor high sounding throughout Greece, and by the channels of the Simois, has again withdrawn from the fortune of the Atridæ, as of old, from the ancient calamity of the house, when the strife of the golden lamb⁵⁷ arose among the descendants of Tantalus; most shocking feasts, and the slaughter of noble children; from whence murder responsive to murder fails not to attend on the two sons of Atreus. What seems good is not good, to gash the parents' skin with a fierce hand, and brandish the sword black-stained with blood in the sunbeams. But, on the other hand, to act wickedly⁵⁸ is mad impiety, and the folly of evil-minded men.

But the wretched daughter of Tyndarus in the fear of death shrieked out, "My son, thou darest impious deeds, killing thy mother; do not, attending to the gratification of thy father, kindle an everlasting disgrace."

What malady, or what tears, or what pity on earth is greater, than to imbrue one's hand in a mother's blood? What a deed, what a deed having performed, does the son of Agamemnon rave with madness, a prey to the Eumenides, marked for death, giddy with his rolling eyes! O wretched on account of his mother, when though seeing the breast bared from the robe of golden texture, he stabbed the mother in retaliation for the father's sufferings.

⁵⁷ Thyestes and Atreus, having a dispute about their father Pelops's kingdom, agreed, that whichever should discover the first prodigy should have possession of the throne. There appeared in Atreus's flock a golden lamb, which, however, Ærope his wife secretly had conveyed to Thyestes to show before the judges. Atreus afterward invited Thyestes to a feast, and served up before him Aglæis, Orchomenus, and Calceus, three sons he had by his intrigues with Ærope.

⁵⁸ Alluding to the murder of Agamemnon by Clytæmnestra. This is the interpretation and explanation of the Scholiast; but it is perhaps better translated, "*but on the other hand to play the coward is great impiety, and the error of cowardly-minded men;*" the chorus meaning, that this might have been said of Orestes, had he not avenged his father.

ELECTRA, CHORUS

ELEC. Ye virgins, has the wretched Orestes, overcome with heaven-inflicted madness, rushed any where from this house?

CHOR. By no means; but he is gone to the Argive people, to undergo the trial proposed regarding life, by which you must either live or die.

ELEC. Alas me! what thing has he done? but who persuaded him?

CHOR. Pylades. – But this messenger seems soon about to inform us of what has passed there concerning thy brother.

MESSENGER, ELECTRA, CHORUS

MESS. O wretched hapless daughter of the chief Agamemnon, revered Electra, hear the unfortunate words which I am come to bring.

ELEC. Alas! alas! we are undone; this thou signifyest by thy speech. For thou comest, as it seems, a messenger of woes.

MESS. It has been carried by the vote of the Pelasgians, that thy brother and thou must die this day.

ELEC. Ah me! the expected event has come, which long since fearing, I pined away with lamentations on account of what was in prospect. – But what was the debate? What arguments among the Argives condemned us, and confirmed our sentence of death? Tell me, old man, whether by the hand raised to stone me, or by the sword must I breathe out my soul, having this calamity in common with my brother?

MESS. I chanced indeed to be entering the gates from the country, anxious to hear both what regarded thee, and what regarded Orestes; for at all times I had a favorable inclination toward thy father: and thy house fed me, poor indeed, but noble in my conduct toward friends. But I see the crowd going and sitting down on an eminence; where they say Danaus first collected the people to a common council, when he suffered punishment at the hands of Ægyptus. But seeing this concourse, I asked one of the citizens, "What new thing is stirring in Argos? Has any message from hostile powers roused the city of the Danaids?" But he said, "Seest thou not this Orestes walking near us, who is about to run in the contest of life and death?" But I see an unexpected sight, which oh that I had never seen! Pylades and thy brother walking together, the one indeed broken with sickness, but the other, like a brother, sympathizing with his friend, tending his weakened state with fostering care. But when the assembly of the Argives was full, a herald stood forth and said, "Who wishes to speak *on the question*, whether it is right that Orestes, who has killed his mother, should die, or not?" And on this Talthybius rises, who, in conjunction with thy father, laid waste the Phrygians. But he spoke words of divided import, being the constant slave of those in power; struck with admiration indeed at thy father, but not commending thy brother (speciously mixing up words of bad import), because he laid down no good laws toward his parents: but he was continually casting a smiling glance on Ægisthus's friends. For such is this kind; heralds always dance attendance on the prosperous; but that man is their friend, whoever may chance to have power in the state, and to be in office. But next to him prince Diomed harangued; he indeed was for suffering them to kill neither thee nor thy brother, but *bid them* observe piety by punishing you with banishment. But some indeed murmured their assent, that he spoke well, but others praised him not.⁵⁹ And after him rises up some man, intemperate in

⁵⁹ That is, *blamed him*. So St. Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 21, επαινεσω ὑμας εν τούτοις; ουκ επαينو. Ter. And. Act. II. Sc. 6. "Et, quod dicendum hic siet, Tu quoque perparce nimium, non laudo."

speech, powerful in boldness, an Argive, yet not an Argive,⁶⁰ forced upon us, relying both on the tumult, and on ignorant boldness, prompt by persuasion to involve them in some mischief. (For when a man, sweet in words, holding bad sentiments, persuades the multitude, it is a great evil to the city. But as many as always advise good things with understanding, although not at the present moment, eventually are of service to the state: but the intelligent leader ought to look to this, for the case is the same with the man who speaks words, and the man who approves them.) Who said, that they ought to kill Orestes and thee by stoning. But Tyndarus was privily making up such sort of speeches for him who wished your death to speak. But another man stood up, and spoke in opposition to him, in form indeed not made to catch the eye; but a man endued with the qualities of a man, rarely polluting the city, and the circle of the forum; one who farmed his own land,⁶¹ which class of persons⁶² alone preserve the country, but prudent, and wishing the tenor of his conduct to be in unison with his words, uncorrupted, one that had conformed to a blameless mode of living; he proposed to crown Orestes the son of Agamemnon,⁶³⁶⁹⁰ who was willing to avenge his father by slaying a wicked and unholy woman, who took this out of the power of men, and would no one have been the cause of arming the hand for war, nor undertaking an expedition, leaving his home, if those who are left destroy what is intrusted to their charge in the house, disgracing their husbands' beds. And to right-minded men at least he appeared to speak well: and none spoke besides, but thy brother advanced and said, "O inhabitants of the land of Inachus, avenging you no less than my father, I slew my mother, for if the murder of men shall become licensed to women, ye no longer can escape dying, or ye must be slaves to your wives. But ye do the contrary to what ye ought to do. For now she that was false to the bed of my father is dead; but if ye do indeed slay me, the law has lost its force, and no man can escape dying, forasmuch as there will be no lack of this audacity."

But he persuaded not the people, though appearing to speak well. But that villain, who spoke among the multitude, overcomes him, he that harangued for the killing of thy brother and thee. But scarcely did the wretched Orestes persuade them that he might not die by stoning; but he promised that this day he would quit his life by self-slaughter together with thee: – but Pylades is conducting him from the council, weeping: but his friends accompany him bewailing him, pitying him; but he is coming a sad spectacle to thee, and a wretched sight. But prepare the sword, or the noose for thy neck, for thou must die, but thy nobleness of birth hath profited thee nothing, nor the Pythian Phœbus who sits on the tripod, but hath destroyed thee.

CHOR. O unhappy virgin! how art thou dumb, casting thy muffled countenance toward the ground, as though about to run into a strain of groans and lamentations!

ELEC. I begin the lament, O land of Greece, digging my white nail into my cheek, sad bleeding woe, and dashing my head, which⁶⁴ the lovely⁶⁵ goddess of the manes beneath the earth has to her share. And let the Cyclopiian land⁶⁶ howl, applying the steel to their head cropped of hair over the calamity of our house. This pity, this pity, proceeds for those who are about to die, who once were the princes of Greece. For it is gone, it is gone, the entire race of the children of Pelops has perished, and the happiness which once resided in these blest abodes. Envy from heaven has now seized it,

⁶⁰ An Argive as far as he was born there, and therefore ηναγκασμενος; not an Argive, inasmuch as his parents were not of that state. This is supposed to allude to Cleophon. SCHOL. See Dindorf.

⁶¹ This is the interpretation of one Scholiast; another explains it οικειαις χερσιν εργαζομενος. Grotius translates it *agricola*.

⁶² The same construction occurs in the Supplicants, 870. φιλοις δ' αληθης ην φιλος, παρουσι τε και μη παρουσιν: 'ων (of which sort of men) αριθμος ου πολυς. PORSON.

⁶³ See Note⁶⁹⁰.

⁶⁹⁰ Dindorf (in his notes) agrees with Porson in omitting the following verse.

⁶⁴ Which, κτυπον namely: ονυχα and κτυπον are each governed by τιθεισα; but it is not easy to find a single verb in English that should be transitive to both these substantives.

⁶⁵ καλλιπαις, *lovely*, not lovely in her children: so in Phœn. 1634. ευτεκνος ξυνωρις.

⁶⁶ Argos, so called from the Cyclopes, a nation of Thrace, who, being called in as allies, afterward settled here.

and the harsh decree of blood in the state. Alas! alas! O race of mortals that endure for a day, full of tears, full of troubles, behold how contrary to expectation fate comes. But in the long lapse of time each different man receives by turns his different sufferings.⁶⁷ But the whole race of mortals is unstable and uncertain.

Oh! could I go to that rock stretched from Olympus in its loftiness midst heaven and earth by golden chains, that mass of clay borne round with rapid revolutions, that in my complaints I might cry out to my ancient father Tantalus; who begat the progenitors of my family, who saw calamities, what time in the pursuing of steeds, Pelops in his car drawn by four horses perpetrated, as he drove, the murder of Myrtilus, *by casting him* into the sea, hurling him down to the surge of the ocean, as he guided his car on the shore of the briny sea by Geræstus foaming with its white billows. Whence the baleful curse came on my house since, by the agency of Maia's son,⁶⁸ there appeared the pernicious, pernicious prodigy of the golden-fleeced lamb, a birth which took place among the flocks of the warlike Atreus. On which both Discord drove back the winged chariot of the sun, directing it from the path of heaven leading to the west toward Aurora borne on her single horse.⁶⁹ And Jupiter drove back the course of the seven moving Pleiads another way: and from that period⁷⁰ he sends deaths in succession to deaths, and "the feast of Thyestes," so named from Thyestes. And the bed of the Cretan Ærope deceitful in a deceitful marriage has come as a finishing stroke on me and my father, to the miserable destruction of our family.

CHOR. But see, thy brother is advancing, condemned by the vote of death, and Pylades the most faithful of all, a man like a brother, supporting the enfeebled limbs of Orestes, walking by his side⁷¹ with the foot of tender solicitude.

ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, CHORUS

ELEC. Alas me! for I bewail thee, my brother, seeing thee before the tomb, and before the pyre of thy departed shade: alas me! again and again, how am I bereft of my senses, seeing with my eyes the very last sight of thee.

ORES. Wilt thou not in silence, ceasing from womanish groans, make up thy mind to what is decreed? These things indeed are lamentable, but yet we must bear our present fate.

ELEC. And how can I be silent? We wretched no longer are permitted to view this light of the God.

ORES. Do not thou kill me; I, the unhappy, have died enough already under the hands of the Argives; but pass over our present ills.

ELEC. O Orestes! oh wretched in thy youth, and thy fate, and thy untimely death, then oughtest thou to live, when thou art no more.

ORES. Do not by the Gods throw cowardice around me, bringing the remembrance of my woes so as to cause tears.

ELEC. We shall die; it is not possible not to groan our misfortunes; for the dear life is a cause of pity to all mortals.

⁶⁷ ἑτεροῖς may perhaps seem to make the construction plainer than ἑτεροῦς; but Porson has received the latter into his text on account of the metre.

⁶⁸ Myrtilus was the son of Mercury, who therefore sowed this dissension between the two brothers in revenge for his death by Pelops. See note at line 802.

⁶⁹ Some would understand by μονοπωλον not that Aurora was borne on one horse, but that this alteration in the course of nature took place for one day. SCHOL.

⁷⁰ και απο τωνδε, ητοι μετα ταυτα. PARAPH.

⁷¹ παρασειρος is used to signify a loose horse tied abreast of another in the shaft, and is technically termed "the outrigger." The metaphorical application of it to Pylades, who voluntarily attached himself to the misfortunes of his friend, is extremely beautiful.

ORES. This is the day appointed for us! but we must either fit the suspended noose, or whet the sword with our hand.

ELEC. Do thou then kill me, my brother; let none of the Argives kill me, putting a contumely on the offspring of Agamemnon.

ORES. I have enough of thy mother's blood, but thee I will not slay; but die by thine own hand in whatever manner thou wilt.

ELEC. These things shall be; I will not be deserted by thy sword;⁷² but I wish to clasp my hands around thy neck.

ORES. Thou enjoyest a vain gratification, if this be an enjoyment, to throw thy hands around those who are hard at death's door.

ELEC. Oh thou most dear! oh thou that hast the desirable and most sweet name, and one soul with thy sister!

ORES. Thou wilt melt me; and still I wish to answer thee in the endearment of encircling arms, for why am I any longer ashamed? O bosom of my sister, O dear object of my caresses, these embraces are allowed to us miserable beings instead of children and the bridal bed.

ELEC. Alas! How can the same sword (if this request be lawful) kill us, and one tomb wrought of cedar receive us?

ORES. This would be most sweet; but thou seest how destitute we are, in respect to being able to share our sepulture.

ELEC. Did not Menelaus speak in behalf of thee, taking a decided part against thy death, the base man, the deserter of my father? [Note⁷³.]

ORES. He showed it not even in his countenance, but keeping his hopes on the sceptre, he was cautious how he saved his friends. But let be, he will die acting in a manner nobly, and most worthily of Agamemnon. And I indeed will show my high descent to the city, striking home to my heart with the sword; but thee, on the other hand, it behooveth to act in concert with my bold attempts. But do thou, Pylades, be the umpire of our death, and well compose the bodies of us when dead, and bury us together, bearing us to our father's tomb. And farewell – but I am going to the deed, as thou seest.

PYL. Hold. This one thing indeed first I bring in charge against thee – Dost thou think that I can wish to live when thou diest?⁷⁴

ORES. For how does it concern thee to die with me?

PYL. Dost ask? But how does it to live without thy company?

ORES. Thou didst not slay my mother, as I did, a wretch.

PYL. With thee I did at least; I ought also to suffer these things in common with thee.

ORES. Take thyself back to thy father, do not die with me. For thou indeed hast a city (but I no longer have), and the mansion of thy father, and a great harbor of wealth. But thou art frustrated in thy marriage with this unhappy virgin, whom I betrothed to thee, revering thy friendship. Nevertheless do thou, contracting other nuptials, be a blest father, but the connection between me and thee no longer subsists, But thou, O darling name of my converse, farewell, be happy, for this is not allowed me, but it is to thee; for we, the dead, are deprived of happiness.

PYL. Surely thou art wide astray from my purposes. Nor may the fruitful plain receive my blood, nor the bright air, if ever I betraying thee, having freed myself, forsake thee; for I committed the slaughter with thee (I will not deny it), and I planned all things, for which now thou sufferest vengeance. Die then I must with thee and her together, for her, whose marriage I have courted, I consider as my wife; for what good excuse ever shall I give, going to the Delphian land to the citadel of the Phocians, I, who was present with you, your friend, before indeed you were unfortunate, but

⁷² Or, "I will not be at all behind thy slaughter."

⁷³ Dindorf's text and punctuation must be altered.

⁷⁴ εὖ in this passage *interrogat oblique*, see Hoogveen, xvi. § 1. 15.

now, when you are unfortunate, am no longer thy friend? It is not possible – but these things are my care also. But since we are about to die, let us come to a common conference, how Menelaus may be involved in our calamity.

ORES. O thou dearest man: for would I see this and die.

PYL. Be persuaded then, but defer the slaughtering sword.

ORES. I will defer, if any how I can avenge myself on my enemy.

PYL. Be silent then, for I have but small confidence in women.

ORES. Do not at all fear these, for they are friends that are present.

PYL. Let us kill Helen, which will cause great grief to Menelaus.

ORES. How? for the will is here, if it can be done with glory.

PYL. Stabbing her; but she is lurking in thy house.

ORES. Yes indeed, and is putting her seal on all my effects.

PYL. But she shall seal no more, having Pluto for her bridegroom.

ORES. And how can this be? for she has a train of barbarian attendants.

PYL. Whom? for I would be afraid of no Phrygian.

ORES. Such men as should preside over mirrors and scents.

PYL. For has she brought hither her Trojan fineries?

ORES. *Oh yes!* so that Greece is but a cottage for her.

PYL. A race of slaves is a mere nothing against a race that will not be slaves.

ORES. In good truth, this if I could achieve, I shrink not from two deaths.

PYL. But neither do I indeed, if I could revenge thee at least.

ORES. Disclose thy purpose, and go through it as thou sayest.

PYL. We will enter then the house, as men about to die.

ORES. Thus far I comprehend, but the rest I do not comprehend.

PYL. We will make our lamentation to her of the things we suffer.

ORES. So that she shall weep, though joyed within her heart.

PYL. And the same things will be for us to do afterward, which she does then.

ORES. Then how shall we finish the contest?

PYL. We will wear our swords concealed beneath our robes.

ORES. But what slaughter can there be before her attendants?

PYL. We will bolt them out, scattered in different parts of the house.

ORES. And him that is not silent we must kill.

PYL. Then the circumstances of the moment will point out what steps to take.

ORES. To kill Helen, I understand the sign.

PYL. Thou seest: but hear on what honorable principles I meditate it. For, if we draw our sword on a more modest woman, the murder will blot our names with infamy. But in the present instance, she shall suffer vengeance for the whole of Greece, whose fathers she slew, and made the brides bereaved of their spouses; there shall be a shout, and they will kindle up fire to the Gods, praying for many blessings to fall to thee and me, inasmuch as we shed the blood of a wicked woman. But thou shalt not be called the matricide, when thou hast slain her, but dropping this name thou shalt arrive at better things, being styled the slayer of the havoc-dealing Helen. It never, never were right that Menelaus should be prosperous, and that thy father, and thou, and thy sister should die, and thy mother; (this I forbear, for it is not decorous to mention;) and that he should seize thy house, having recovered his bride by the means of Agamemnon's valor. For may I live no longer, if I draw not my black sword upon her. But if then we do not compass the murder of Helen, having fired the palace we will die, for we shall have glory, succeeding in one of these two things, nobly dying, or nobly rescued.

CHOR. The daughter of Tyndarus is an object of detestation to all women, being one that has given rise to scandal against the sex.

ORES. Alas! There is no better thing than a real friend, not riches, not kingdoms; but the popular applause becomes a thing of no account to receive in exchange for a generous friend. For thou contrivedst the destruction that befell Ægisthus, and wast close to me in my dangers. But now again thou givest me to revenge me on mine enemies, and art not out of the way – but I will leave off praising thee, since there is some burden even in this "to be praised to excess." But I altogether in a state of death, wish to do something to my foes and die, that I may in turn destroy those who betrayed me, and those may groan who also made me unhappy. I am the son of Agamemnon, who ruled over Greece by general consent; no tyrant, but yet he had the power as it were of a God, whom I will not disgrace, suffering a slavish death, but breathe out my soul in freedom, but on Menelaus will I revenge me. For if we could gain this one thing, we should be prosperous, if from any chance safety should come unhopd for on the slayers *then*, not the slain: this I pray for. For what I wish is sweet to delight the mind without fear of cost, though with but fleeting words uttered through the mouth.

ELEC. I, O brother, think that this very thing brings safety to thee, and thy friend, and in the third place to me.

ORES. Thou meanest the providence of the Gods: but where is this? for I know that there is understanding in thy mind.

ELEC. Hear me then, and thou too give thy attention.

ORES. Speak, since the existing prospect of good affords some pleasure.

ELEC. Art thou acquainted with the daughter of Helen? Thou knowest her of whom I ask.

ORES. I know her, Hermione, whom my mother brought up.

ELEC. She is gone to Clytæmnestra's tomb.

ORES. For what purpose? what hope dost thou suggest?

ELEC. To pour libations on the tomb in behalf of her mother.

ORES. And what is this, thou hast told me of, that regards our safety?

ELEC. Seize her as a pledge as she is coming back.

ORES. What remedy for the three friends is this thou sayest?

ELEC. When Helen is dead, if Menelaus does any harm to thee or Pylades, or me (for this firm of friendship is all one), say that thou wilt kill Hermione; but thou oughtest to draw thy sword, and hold it to the neck of the virgin. And if indeed Menelaus save thee, anxious that the virgin may not die; when he sees Helen's corse weltering in blood, give back the virgin for her father to enjoy; but should he, not governing his angry temper, slay thee, do thou also plunge the sword into the virgin's neck, and I think that he, though at first he come to us very big, will after a season soften his heart; for neither is he brave nor valiant: this is the fortress of our safety that I have; my arguments on the subject have been spoken.

ORES. O thou that hast indeed the mind of a man, but a form among women beautiful, to what a degree art thou more worthy of life than death! Pylades, wilt thou miserably be disappointed of such a woman, or dwelling with her obtain this happy marriage?

PYL. For would it could be so! and she could come to the city of the Phocians meeting with her deserts in splendid nuptials!

ORES. But when will Hermione come to the house? Since for the rest thou saidst most admirably, if we could succeed in taking the whelp of the impious father.

ELEC. Even now I guess that she must be near the house, for *with this supposition* the space itself of the time coincides.

ORES. It is well; do thou therefore, my sister Electra, waiting before the house, meet the arrival of the virgin. And watch, lest any one, either some ally, or the brother of my father, should be beforehand with us coming to the palace: and make some noise toward the house, either knocking at the doors, or sending thy voice within. But let us, O Pylades (for thou undertakest this labor with me), entering in, arm our hands with the sword to one last attempt. O my father, that inhabitest the realms of gloomy night, Orestes thy son invokes thee to come a succor to thy suppliants; for on thy account

I wretched suffer unjustly, and am betrayed by thy brother, myself having acted justly: whose wife I wish to take and destroy; but be thou our accomplice in this affair.

ELEC. O father, come then, if beneath the earth thou hearest thy children calling, who die for thee.

PYL. O thou relation⁷⁵ of my father, give ear, O Agamemnon, to my prayers also, preserve thy children.

ORES. I slew my mother.

PYL. But I directed the sword.

ELEC. But I at least incited you, and freed you from delay.

ORES. Succoring thee, my father.

ELEC. Neither did I forsake thee.

PYL. Wilt thou not therefore, hearing these things that are brought against thee,⁷⁶ defend thy children?

ORES. I pour libations on thee with my tears.

ELEC. And I with lamentations.

PYL. Cease, and let us haste forth to the work, for if prayers penetrate under the earth, he hears; but, O Jove our ancestor, and thou revered deity of justice, grant us to succeed, him, and myself, and this virgin, for over us three friends one hazard, one cause impends, either for all to live, or all to die!

ELECTRA, CHORUS

ELEC. O dear Mycenian virgins, who have the first place at the Pelasgian seat of the Argives; —

CHOR. What voice art thou uttering, my respected mistress? for this appellation awaits thee in the city of the Danaids.

ELEC. Arrange yourselves, some of you in this beaten way, and some there, in that other path, to guard the house.

CHOR. But on what account dost thou command this, tell me, my friend.

ELEC. Fear possesses me, lest any one being in the palace, on account of this murderous deed, should contrive evils on evils.

SEMICHOR. Go, let us hasten, I indeed will guard this path, that tends toward where the sun flings his first rays.

SEMICHOR. And I indeed this, which leads toward the west.

ELEC. Now turn the glances of your eyes around in every position, now here, now there, then take some other view.

CHOR. We are, as thou commandest.

ELEC. Now roll your eyelids over your pupils, glance them every way through your ringlets.

SEMICHOR. Is this any one here appearing in the path? — Who is this rustic that is standing about thy palace?

ELEC. We are undone then, my friends; he will immediately show to the enemy the lurking beasts of prey armed with their swords.

SEMICHOR. Be not afraid, the path is clear, which thou thinkest not.

ELEC. But what? — does all with you remain secure? Give me some good report, whether the space before the hall be empty?

SEMICHOR. All here at least is well, but look to thy province, for no one of the Danaids is approaching toward us.

⁷⁵ Strophius, the father of Pylades, married Anaxibia, Agamemnon's sister.

⁷⁶ ονειδη, των ευεργεσιων τας υπομνησεις. SCHOL. Ter. And. i. 1. "isthæc commemoratio quasi exprobratio est immemoris benefici."

SEMICHOR. Thy report agrees with mine, for neither is there a disturbance here.

ELEC. Come now, – I will listen at the door: why do ye delay, ye that are within, to sacrifice the victim, now that ye are in quiet? – They hear not: Alas me! wretched in misery! Are the swords then struck dumb at her beauty? Perhaps some Argive in arms rushing in with the foot of succor will approach the palace. – Now watch more carefully; it is no contest that admits delay; but turn *your eyes* some this way, and some that.

CHOR. I turn each different way, looking about on all sides.

HELEN. (*within*) Oh! Pelasgian Argos! I am miserably slain!

ELEC. Heard ye? The men are employing their head in the murder. – It is the shriek of Helen, as I may conjecture.

SEMICHOR. O eternal might of Jove, come to assist my friends in every way.

HEL. Menelaus, I die! But thou art at hand, and dost not help me!

ELEC. Kill, strike, slay, plunging with your hands the two double-edged swords into the deserter of her father, the deserter of her husband, who destroyed numbers of the Grecians perishing by the spear at the river, whence tears fell into conjunction with tears, fell on account of the iron weapons around the whirlpools of Scamander.

CHOR. Be still, be still: I heard the sound of some one coming along the path around the palace.

ELEC. O most dear women, in the midst of the slaughter behold Hermione is present; let us cease from our clamor, for she comes about to fall into the meshes of our toils. A goodly prey will she be, if she be taken. Again to your stations with a calm countenance, and with a color that shall not give evidence of what has been done. I too will preserve a pensive cast of countenance, as though perfectly unacquainted with what has happened.

HERMIONE, ELECTRA, CHORUS

ELEC. O virgin, art thou come from crowning Clytæmnestra's tomb, and pouring libations to her manes?

HERM. I am come, having obtained her good services; but some terror has come upon me, on account of the noise in the palace, which I hear being a far distance off the house.

ELEC. But why? There have happened to us things worthy of groans.

HERM. Speak good words; but what news dost thou tell me?

ELEC. It has been decreed by this land, that Orestes and I die.

HERM. No, I hope not so; you, who are my relations.

ELEC. It is fixed; but we stand under the yoke of necessity.

HERM. Was the noise then in the house on this account?

ELEC. For falling down a suppliant at the knees of Helen, he cries out —

HERM. Who? for I know no more, except thou tellest me.

ELEC. The wretched Orestes, that he may not die, and in behalf of me.

HERM. For a just reason then the house lamented.

ELEC. For on what other account should one rather cry out? But come, and join in supplication with thy friends, falling down before thy mother, the supremely blest, that Menelaus will not see us perish. But, O thou, that receivedst thy education at the hands of my mother, pity us, and alleviate our sufferings. Come hither to the trial; but I will lead the way, for thou alone hast the ends of our preservation.

HERM. Behold I direct my footstep toward the house. Be preserved, as far as lies in me.

ELEC. O ye in the house, my dear warriors, will ye not take your prey?

HERM. Alas me! who are these I see?

ORES. (*advancing*) Thou must be silent; for thou art come to preserve us, not thyself.

ELEC. Hold her, hold her; and pointing a sword to her neck be silent, that Menelaus may know, that having found men, not Phrygian cowards, he has treated them in a manner he should treat cowards. What ho! what ho! my friends, make a noise, a noise, and shout before the palace, that the murder that is perpetrated spread not a dread alarm among the Argives, so that they run to assist to the king's palace, before I plainly see the slaughtered Helen lying weltering in her blood within the house, or else we hear the report from some of her attendants. For part of the havoc I know, and part not accurately.

CHOR. With justice came the vengeance of the Gods on Helen. For she filled the whole of Greece with tears on account of the ruthless, ruthless Idean Paris, who brought the Grecian state to Ilium. But be silent, for the bolts of the royal mansion resound, for some one of the Phrygians comes forth, from whom we shall hear of the affairs within the house, in what state they are.

PHRYGIAN, CHORUS

PHRY. I have escaped from death by the Argive sword in these barbaric slippers, *climbing* over the cedar beams of the bed and the Doric triglyphs, by the flight of a barbarian.⁷⁷ Thou art gone, thou art gone, O my country, my country! Alas me! whither can I escape, O strangers, flying through the hoary air, or the sea, which the Ocean, with head in shape like a bull's, rolling with his arms encircles the earth?

CHOR. But what is the matter, O attendant of Helen, thou man of Ida?

PHRY. O Ilium, Ilium! alas me! O thou fertile Phrygian city, thou sacred mount of Ida, how do I lament for thee destroyed, a sad,⁷⁸ sad strain for my barbaric voice, on account of that form of the hapless, hapless Helen, born from a bird, the offspring of the beautiful Leda in shape of a swan, the fiend of the splendid Apollonian Pergamus! Alas! Oh! lamentations! lamentations! O wretched Dardania, warlike school⁷⁹ of Ganymede, the companion of Jove!

CHOR. Relate to us clearly each circumstance that happened in the house, for I do not understand your former account, but merely conjecture.

PHRY. Αιλινον, αιλινον, the Barbarians begin the song of death in the language of Asia, Alas! alas! when the blood of kings has been poured on the earth by the ruthless swords of death. There came to the palace (that I may relate each circumstance) two Grecians, lions, of the one the leader of the Grecian host was said to be the father, the other the son of Strophius, a man of dark design; such was Ulysses, secretly treacherous, but faithful to his friends, bold in battle, skilled in war, cruel as the dragon. May he perish for his deep concealed design, the worker of evil! But they having advanced within her chamber, whom the archer Paris had as his wife, their eyes bathed with tears, they sat down in humble mien, one on each side of her, on the right and on the left, armed with swords. And around her knees did they both fling their suppliant hands, around the knees of Helen did they fling them. But the Phrygian attendants sprung up, and fled in amazement: and one called out to another in terror, *See*, lest there be treachery. To some indeed there appeared no danger; but to others the dragon stained with his mother's blood appeared bent to infold in his closest coils the daughter of Tyndarus.

CHOR. But where wert thou then, or hadst thou long before fled through fear?

PHRY. After the Phrygian fashion I chanced with the close circle of feathers to be fanning the gale, *that sported* in the ringlets of Helen, before her cheek, after the barbaric fashion. But she was winding with her fingers the flax round the distaff, but what she had spun she let fall on the ground, desirous of making from the Phrygian spoils a robe of purple as an ornament for the tomb, a gift to Clytæmnestra. But Orestes entreated the Spartan girl; "O daughter of Jove, here, place thy footstep

⁷⁷ i. e. being a barbarian, and therefore not knowing whither to go.

⁷⁸ ἄρματειον, such a strain as that raised over Hector, ἔλκομενω, δια του ἄρματος. See two other explanations in the Scholia.

⁷⁹ ἰπποσυνα, ἥτις ὑπηρχες ἰππηλασια του Γ. BRUNCK.

on the ground, rising from thy seat, come to the place of our ancestor Pelops, the ancient altar, that thou mayest hear my words." And he leads her, but she followed, not dreaming of what was about to happen. But his accomplice, the wicked Phocian, attended to other points. "Will ye not depart from out of the way, but are the Phrygians always vile?" and he bolted us out scattered in different parts of the house, some in the stables of the horses, and some in the outhouses, and some here and there, dispersing them some one way, some another, afar from their mistress.

CHOR. What calamity took place after this?

PHRY. O powerful, powerful Idean mother, alas! alas! the murderous sufferings, and the lawless evils, which I saw, I saw in the royal palace! From beneath their purple robes concealed having their drawn swords in their hands, they turned each his eye on either side, lest any one might chance to be present. But like mountain boars standing over against the lady, they say, "Thou shalt die, thou shalt die! thy vile husband kills thee, having given up the offspring of his brother to die at Argos." But she shrieked out, Ah me! ah me! and throwing her white arm on her breast inflicted on her head miserable blows, and, her feet turned to flight, she stepped, she stepped with her golden sandals; but Orestes thrusting his fingers into her hair, outstripping her flight,⁸⁰ bending back her neck over his left shoulder, was about to plunge the black sword into her throat.

CHOR. Where then were the Phrygians, who dwell under the same roof, to assist her?

PHRY. With a clamor having burst by means of bars the doors and cells where we were waiting, we run to her assistance, each to different parts of the house, one bringing stones, another spears, another having a long-handled sword in his hand. But Pylades came against us, impetuous, like as the Phrygian Hector or Ajax in his triple-crested helmet, whom I saw, I saw at the gates of Priam: but we clashed together the points of our swords: then indeed, then did the Phrygians give clear proof how inferior we were in the force of Mars to the spear of Greece. One indeed turning away, a fugitive, but another wounded, and another deprecating the death that threatened him: but under favor of the darkness we fled: and the corpses fell, but some staggered, and some lay prostrate. But the wretched Hermione came to the house at the time when her murdered mother fell to the ground, that unhappy woman that gave her birth. And running upon her as Bacchanals without their thyrsus, as a heifer in the mountains they bore her away in their hands, and again eagerly rushed upon the daughter of Jove to slay her. But she vanished altogether from the chamber through the palace. O Jupiter and O earth, and light, and darkness! or by her enchantments, or by the art of magic, or by the stealth of the Gods. But of what followed I know no farther, for I sped in stealth my foot from the palace. But Menelaus having endured many, many severe toils, has received back from Troy the violated rites of Helen to no purpose.

CHOR. And see something strange succeeds to these strange things, for I see Orestes with his sword drawn walking before the palace with agitated step,

ORESTES, PHRYGIAN, CHORUS

ORES. Where is he that fled from my sword out of the palace?

PHRY. I supplicate thee, O king, falling prostrate before thee after the barbaric fashion.

ORES. The case before us is not in Ilium, but the Argive land.

PHRY. In every region to live is sweeter than to die, in the opinion of the wise.

ORES. Didst thou not raise a cry for Menelaus to come with succor?

PHRY. I indeed am present on purpose to assist thee; for thou art the more worthy.

ORES. Perished then the daughter of Tyndarus justly?

PHRY. Most justly, even had she three lives for vengeance.

ORES. With thy tongue dost thou flatter, not having these sentiments within?

⁸⁰ Literally, *her Mycenian slipper*.

PHRY. For ought she not? She who utterly destroyed Greece as well as the Phrygians themselves?

ORES. Swear, I will kill thee else, that thou art not speaking to curry favor with me.

PHRY. By my life have I sworn, which I should wish to hold a sacred oath.

ORES. Was the steel thus dreadful to all the Phrygians at Troy also?

PHRY. Remove thy sword, for being so near me it gleams horrid slaughter.

ORES. Art thou afraid, lest thou shouldst become a rock, as though looking on the Gorgon?

PHRY. Lest I should become a corse, but I know not of the Gorgon's head.

ORES. Slave as thou art, dost thou fear death, which will rid thee from thy woes?

PHRY. Every one, although a man be a slave, rejoices to behold the light.

ORES. Thou sayest well; thy understanding; saves thee, but go into the house.

PHRY. Thou wilt not kill me then?

ORES. Thou art pardoned.

PHRY. This is good word thou hast spoken.

ORES. Yet we may change our measures.

PHRY. But this thou sayest not well.

ORES. Thou art a fool, if thou thinkest I could endure to defile me by smiting thy neck, for neither art thou a woman, nor oughtest thou to be ranked among men. But that thou mightest not raise a clamor came I forth out of the house: for Argos, when it has heard a noise, is soon roused, but we have no dread in meeting Menelaus, as far as swords go; but let him come exulting with his golden ringlets flowing over his shoulders, for if he collects the Argives, and brings them against the palace seeking revenge for the death of Helen, and is not willing to let me be in safety, and my sister, and Pylades my accomplice in this affair, he shall see two corses, both the virgin and his wife.

CHORUS

Alas! alas! O fate, the house of the Atridæ again falls into another, another fearful struggle.

SEMICHOR. What shall we do? shall we carry these tidings to the city, or shall we keep in silence?

SEMICHOR. This is the safer plan, my friends.

SEMICHOR. Behold before the house, behold this smoke leaping aloft in the air portends *something*.

SEMICHOR. They are lighting the torches, as about to burn down the mansion of Tantalus, nor do they forbear from murder.

CHOR. The God rules the events that happen to mortals, whichsoever way he wills. But some vast power by the instigation of the Furies has struck, has struck these palaces to the shedding of blood on account of the fall of Myrtilus from the chariot.

But lo! I see Menelaus also here approaching the house with a quick step, having by some means or other perceived the calamity which now is present. Will ye not anticipate him by closing the gates with bolts, O ye children of Atreus, who are in the palace? A man in prosperity is a terrible thing to those in adversity, as now them art in misery, Orestes.

MENELAUS *below*, ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, HERMIONE *above*, CHORUS

MEN. I am present, having heard the horrid and atrocious deeds of the two lions, for I call them not men. For I have now heard of my wife, that she died not, but vanished away, this that I heard was empty report, which one deceived by fright related; but these are the artifices of the matricide, and much derision. Open some one the door, my attendants I command to burst open these gates here,

that my child at least we may deliver from the hand of these blood-polluted men, and may receive my unhappy, my miserable lady, with whom those murderers of my wife must die by my hand.

ORES. What ho there! Touch not these gates with thine hands: to Menelaus I speak, that thou towerest in thy boldness, or with this pinnacle will I crush thy head, having rent down the ancient battlement, the labor of the builders. But the gates are made fast with bolts, which will hinder thee from thy purpose of bringing aid, so that thou canst not pass within the palace.

MEN. Ha! what is this? I see the blaze of torches, and these stationed on the battlements, on the height of the palace, and the sword placed over the neck of my daughter to guard her.

ORES. Whether is it thy will to question, or to hear me?

MEN. I wish neither, but it is necessary, as it seems, to hear thee.

ORES. I am about to slay thy daughter if thou wish to know.

MEN. Having slain Helen, dost thou perpetrate murder on murder?

ORES. For would I had gained my purpose not being deluded, as I was, by the Gods.

MEN. Thou hast slain her, and deniest it, and speakest these things to insult me.

ORES. It is a denial that gives me pain, for would that —

MEN. Thou had done what deed? for thou callest forth alarm.

ORES. I had hurled to hell the fury of Greece.

MEN. Give back the body of my wife, that I may bury her in a tomb.

ORES. Ask her of the Gods; but I will slay thy daughter.

MEN. The matricide contrives murder on murder.

ORES. The avenger of his father, whom thou gavest up to die.

MEN. Was not the blood of thy mother formerly shed sufficient for thee?

ORES. I should not be weary of slaying wicked women, were I to slay them forever.

MEN. Art thou also, Pylades, a partaker in this murder?

ORES. By his silence he assents, but if I speak, it will be sufficient.

MEN. But not with impunity, unless indeed thou fliest on wings.

ORES. We will not fly, but will set fire to the palace?

MEN. What! wilt thou destroy thy father's mansion?

ORES. Yes, that thou mayest not possess it, will I, having stabbed this virgin here over the flames.

MEN. Slay her; since having slain thou shalt at least give me satisfaction for these deeds.

ORES. It shall be so then.

MEN. Alas! on no account do this!

ORES. Be silent then; but bear to suffer evil justly.

MEN. What! is it just for thee to live?

ORES. Yes, and to rule over the land.

MEN. What land!

ORES. Here, in Pelasgian Argos.

MEN. Well wouldst thou touch the sacred lavers!

ORES. And pray why not?

MEN. And wouldst slaughter the victim before the battle!

ORES. And thou wouldst most righteously.

MEN. Yes, for I am pure as to my hands.

ORES. But not thy heart.

MEN. Who would speak to thee?

ORES. Whoever loves his father.

MEN. And whoever reveres his mother.

ORES. — Is happy.

MEN. Not thou at least.

ORES. For wicked women please me not.

MEN. Take away the sword from my daughter.

ORES. Thou art false in thy expectations.

MEN. But wilt thou kill my daughter?

ORES. Thou art no longer false.

MEN. Alas me! what shall I do?

ORES. Go to the Argives, and persuade them.

MEN. With what persuasion?

ORES. Beseech the city that we may not die.⁸¹

MEN. Otherwise ye will slay my daughter?

ORES. The thing is so.

MEN. O wretched Helen! —

ORES. And am I not wretched?

MEN. I brought thee hither from the Trojans to be a victim.

ORES. For would this were so!

MEN. Having endured ten thousand toils.

ORES. Except on my account.

MEN. I have met with dreadful treatment.

ORES. For then, *when thou oughtest*, thou wert of no assistance.

MEN. Thou hast me.

ORES. Thou at least hast caught thyself. But, ho there! set fire to the palace, Electra, from beneath: and thou, Pylades, the most true of my friends, light up these battlements of the walls.

MEN. O land of the Danai, and inhabitants of warlike Argos, will ye not, ho there! come in arms to my succor? For this man here, having perpetrated the shocking murder of his mother, brings destruction on your whole city, that he may live.

APOLLO

Menelaus, cease from thy irritated state of mind; I Phœbus the son of Latona, in thy presence, am addressing thee. Thou too, Orestes, who standest over that damsel with thy sword drawn, that thou mayest know what commands I bring with me. Helen indeed, whom thou minded to destroy, working Menelaus to anger, didst fail of thy purpose, she is here, whom ye see wrapt in the bosom of the sky, preserved, and not slain by thy hands. Her I preserved, and snatched from thy sword, commanded by my father Jove. For being the daughter of Jove, it is right that she should live immortal. And she shall have her seat by Castor and Pollux in the bosom of the sky, the guardian of mariners. But take to thyself another bride, and lead her home, since for the beauty of this woman the Gods brought together the Greeks and Trojans, and caused deaths, that they might draw from off the earth the pride of mortals, who had become an infinite multitude. Thus is it with regard to Helen; but thee, on the other hand, Orestes, it behooveth, having passed beyond the boundaries of this land, to inhabit the Parrhasian plain during the revolution of a year, and it shall be called by a name after thy flight, so that the Azanes and Arcadians shall call it Oresteum: and thence having departed to the city of the Athenians, undergo the charge of shedding thy mother's blood laid by the three Furies. But the Gods the arbiters of the cause shall pass on thee most sacredly their decree on the hill of Mars, in which it behooveth thee to be victorious. But Hermione, to whose neck thou art holding the sword, it is destined for thee, Orestes, to wed, but Neoptolemus, who thinks to marry her, shall never marry her. For it is fated to him to die by the Delphic sword, as he is demanding of me satisfaction for his father Achilles. But to Pylades give thy sister's hand, as thou didst formerly agree, but a happy life

⁸¹ Read *θαυετιν* with Pors. Dind.

now coming on awaits him. But, O Menelaus, suffer Orestes to reign over Argos. But depart and rule over the Spartan land, having it as thy wife's dowry, who exposing thee to numberless evils always was bringing thee to this. But what regards the city I will make all right for him, I, who compelled him to slay his mother.

ORES. O Loxian prophet, thou wert not then a false prophet in thine oracles, but a true one. And yet a fear comes upon me, that having heard one of the Furies, I might think that I have been hearing thy voice. But it is well fulfilled, and I will obey thy words. Behold I let go Hermione from slaughter, and approve her alliance, whenever her father shall give her.

MEN. O Helen, daughter of Jove, hail! but I bless thee inhabiting the happy mansions of the Gods. But to thee, Orestes, do I betroth my daughter at Phœbus's commands, but illustrious thyself marrying from an illustrious family, be happy, both thou and I who give her.

APOL. Now depart each of you whither we have appointed, and dissolve your quarrels.

MEN. It is our duty to obey.

ORES. I too entertain the same sentiments, and I receive with friendship thee in thy sufferings, O Menelaus, and thy oracles, O Apollo.

APOL. Go now, each his own way, honoring the most excellent goddess Peace; but I will convey Helen to the mansions of Jove, passing through the pole of the shining stars, where sitting by Juno, and Hercules's Hebe, a goddess, she shall ever be honored by mortals with libations, in conjunction with the Tyndaridæ, the sons of Jove, presiding over the sea to the benefit of mariners.

CHOR. O greatly glorious Victory, mayest thou uphold my life, and cease not from crowning me!

THE PHŒNICIAN VIRGINS

PERSONS REPRESENTED

JOCASTA.
TUTOR.
ANTIGONE.
CHORUS OF PHŒNICIAN VIRGINS.
POLYNICES.
ETEOCLES.
CREON.
MENŒCEUS.
TIRECIAS.
MESSENGERS.
ŒDIPUS.

The Scene is in the Court before the royal palace at Thebes

THE ARGUMENT

Eteocles having gotten possession of the throne of Thebes, deprived his brother Polynices of his share; but he having come as an exile to Argos, married the daughter of the king Adrastus; but ambitious of returning to his country, and having persuaded his father-in-law, he assembled a great army for Thebes against his brother. His mother Jocasta made him come into the city, under sanction of a truce, and first confer with his brother respecting the empire. But Eteocles being violent and fierce from having possessed the empire, Jocasta could not reconcile her children. – Polynices, prepared as against an enemy, rushed out of the city. Now Tiresias prophesied that victory should be on the side of the Thebans, if Menœceus the son of Creon would give himself up to be sacrificed to Mars. Creon refused to give his son to the city, but the youth was willing, and, his father pointing out to him the means of flight and giving him money, he put himself to death. – The Thebans slew the leaders of the Argives. Eteocles and Polynices in a single combat slew each other, and their mother having found the corpses of her sons laid violent hands on herself; and Creon her brother received the kingdom. The Argives defeated in battle retired. But Creon, being morose, would not give up those of the enemy who had fallen at Thebes, for sepulture, and exposed the body of Polynices without burial, and banished Œdipus from his country; in the one instance disregarding the laws of humanity, in the other giving way to passion, nor feeling pity for him after his calamity.

THE PHŒNICIAN VIRGINS

JOCASTA

O thou that cuttest thy path through the constellations⁸² of heaven, and art mounted on thy golden-joined seats, thou sun, whirling thy flame with⁸³ thy swift steeds, how inauspicious didst thou dart thy ray on that day when Cadmus came to this land having left the sea-washed coast of Phœnicia; who in former time having married Harmonia, daughter of Venus, begat Polydorus; from him they say sprung Labdacus, and from him Laius. But I am⁸⁴ the daughter of Menœceus, and Creon my brother was born of the same mother; me they call Jocasta (for this name⁸⁵ my father gave me), and Laius takes me for his wife; but after that he was childless, for a long time sharing my bed in the palace, he went and inquired of Apollo, and at the same time demands the mutual offspring of male children in his family; but the God said, "O king of Thebes renowned for its chariots, sow not for such a harvest of children against the will of the Gods, for if thou shalt beget a son, he that is born shall slay thee, and the whole of thy house shall wade through blood." But having yielded to pleasure, and having fallen into inebriety, he begot to us a son, and having begot him, feeling conscious of his error and the command of the God, gives the babe to some herdsmen to expose at the meads of Juno and the rock of Cithæron, having bored sharp-pointed iron through the middle of his ankles, from which circumstance Greece gave him the name of Œdipus. But him the grooms who attend the steeds of Polybus find and carry home, and placed him in the arms of their mistress. But she rested beneath her bosom him that gave me a mother's pangs, and persuades her husband that she had brought forth. But now my son showing signs of manhood in his darkening cheek, either having suspected it by instinct, or having learned it from some one, went to the temple of Apollo, desirous of discovering his parents; at the same time went Laius my husband, seeking to gain intelligence of his son who had been exposed, if he were no longer living; and both met at the same point of the road at Phocis where it divides itself; and the charioteer of Laius commands him, "Stranger, withdraw out of the way of princes;" but he moved slowly, in silence, with haughty spirit; but the steeds with their hoof dyed with blood the tendons of his feet. At this (but why need I relate each horrid circumstance besides the deed itself?) the son kills his father, and having taken the chariot, sends it as a present to his foster-father Polybus. Now at this time the sphinx preyed vulture-like⁸⁶ upon the city with rapacity, my husband now no more, Creon my brother proclaims that he will give my bed as a reward to him who would solve the enigma of the crafty virgin. But by some chance or other Œdipus my son happens to discover the riddle of the sphinx, [and he receives as a prize the sceptre of this land,]⁸⁷ and marries me, his mother, wretched he not knowing it, nor knew his mother that she was lying down with her son. And I bear children to my child, two sons, Eteocles and the illustrious Polynices, and two daughters, one her father named Ismene, the elder I called Antigone. But Œdipus, after having gone through all sufferings, having discovered in my bed the marriage with his mother, he perpetrated a deed of horror on his own eyes, having drenched in blood their pupils with his golden buckles. But after that the cheek of my children grows dark with manly

⁸² That is, through the signs of the zodiac: αστηρ differs from αστρον, the former signifying a single star, the latter many.

⁸³ The preposition συν is omitted, as in Homer, Αυτηι κεν γαιηι ερυσσαιμι. The same omission occurs in the Bacchæ, αυτηισιν ελαταις, and again in the Hippolytus. It is an Atticism.

⁸⁴ See note on Hecuba, 478.

⁸⁵ The word τουνομα must be supplied after τουτο, which is implied in the verb καλουσιν.

⁸⁶ The ζαρος is a bird of prey of the vulture species. The sphinx was represented as having the face of a woman, the breast and feet of a lion, and the wings of a bird.

⁸⁷ Dindorf would omit this verse.

down, they hid their father confined with bolts that his sad fortune might be forgotten, which indeed required the greatest policy. He is still living in the palace, but sick in mind through his misfortunes he imprecates the most unhallowed curses on his children, that they may share this house with the sharpened sword. But these two, dreading lest the Gods should bring to completion these curses,⁸⁸ should they dwell together, in friendly compact determined that Polynices the younger son should first go a willing exile from this land, but that Eteocles remaining here should hold the sceptre for a year, changing in his turn; but after that he sat on the throne of power, he moves not from his seat, but drives Polynices an exile from this land. But he having fled to Argos, and having contracted an alliance with Adrastus, assembles together and leads a vast army of Argives; and having marched to these very walls with seven gates he demands his father's sceptre and his share of the land. But I to quell this strife persuaded my son to come to his brother, confiding in a truce before he grasped the spear. And the messenger who was sent declares that he will come. But, O thou that inhabitest the shining clouds of heaven, Jove, preserve us, give reconciliation to my children; it becomes thee, if thou art wise, not to suffer the same man always to be unfortunate.

TUTOR, ANTIGONE

TUT. O thou fair bud in thy father's house, Antigone, since thy mother has permitted thee to leave the virgin's apartments for the extreme chamber⁸⁹ of the mansion, in order to view the Argive army in compliance with thy entreaties, yet stay, until I shall first investigate the path, lest any citizen should appear in the pass, and to me taunts should come as a slave, and to thee as a princess: and I who well know each circumstance will tell you all that I saw or heard from the Argives, when I went bearing the offer of a truce to thy brother, from this place thither, and again to this place from him. But no citizen approaches this house; come, ascend with thy steps these ancient stairs of cedar, and survey the plains, and by the streams of Ismenus and Dirce's fount how great is the host of the enemy.

ANT. Stretch forth now, stretch forth thine aged hand from the stairs to my youth, raising up the steps of my feet.

TUT. Behold, join thy hand, virgin, thou hast come in lucky hour, for the Pelasgian host is now in motion, and they are separating the bands from one another.

ANT. O awful daughter of Latona, Hecate, the field all brass⁹⁰ gleaming like lightning.

TUT. For Polynices hath not come tamely to this land, raging with host of horsemen, and ten thousand shields.

ANT. Are the gates fastened with bars, and is the brazen bolt fitted to the stone-work of Amphion's wall?

TUT. Take courage; as to the interior the city is safe, But view the first chief, if thou desirest to know.

ANT. Who is he with the white-plumed helmet, who commands in the van of the army, moving lightly round on his arm his brazen shield?

TUT. He is a leader, lady.

ANT. Who is he? From whom sprung? Speak, aged man, what is he called by name?

TUT. He indeed is called by birth a Mycenæan, and he dwells at the streams of Lerna,⁹¹ the king Hippomedon.

⁸⁸ *αραι* and *αρασθαι* are often used by the poets in a good sense for prayers, *ευχαι* and *ευχεσθαι* for curses and imprecations.

⁸⁹ *διηρες ὑπερωον, η κλιμαξ.* HESYCHIUS.

⁹⁰ Milton, *Par. Regained*, b. iii. l. 326. The field, all iron, cast a gleaming brown.

⁹¹ Lerna, a country of Argolis celebrated for a grove and a lake where the Danaides threw the heads of their murdered husbands. It was there also that Hercules killed the famous Hydra.

ANT. Ah! how haughty, how terrible to behold! like to an earth-born giant, starlike in countenance amidst his painted devices,⁹² he corresponds not with the race of mortals.

TUT. Dost thou not see him now passing the stream of Dirce, a general?

ANT. Here is another, another fashion of arms. But who is he?

TUT. He is the son of Ceneus, Tydeus, and bears on his breast the Ætolian Mars.

ANT. Is this the prince, O aged man, who is husband to the sister of my brother's wife?⁹³ In his arms how different of color, of barbaric mixture!

TUT. For all the Ætolians, my child, bear the target, and hurl with the lance, most certain in their aim.

ANT. But how, O aged man, dost thou know these things so perfectly?

TUT. Having seen the devices of the shields, then I remarked them, when I went to bear the offer of a truce to thy brother, beholding which, I recognize the warriors.

ANT. But who is this, who is passing round the tomb of Zethus, with clustering locks, in his eyes a Gorgon to behold, in appearance a youth?

TUT. A general he is. [See Note⁹⁴.]

ANT. How a crowd in complete armor attends him behind!⁹⁵

TUT. This is Parthenopæus, son of Atalanta.

ANT. But, may Diana who rushes over the mountains with her mother destroy him, having subdued him with her arrows, who has come against my city to destroy it.

TUT. May it be so, my child, nevertheless they are come with justice to this land; wherefore also I fear lest the Gods should judge rightly.

ANT. Where, but where is he who was born of one mother with me in hard fate, O dearest old man; tell me, where is Polynices?

TUT. He is standing near the tomb of the seven virgin daughters of Niobe, close by Adrastus. Seest thou him?

ANT. I see indeed, but not distinctly; but somehow I see the resemblance of his form, and his shape shadowed out. Would that with my feet I could perform the journey of the winged cloud through the air to my brother, then would I fling my arms round his dearest neck, after so long a time a wretched exile. How splendid is he, O old man, in his golden armor, glittering like the morning rays of the sun.

TUT. He will come to this house confiding in the truce, so as to fill thee with joy.

ANT. But who, O aged man, is this, who guides his milk-white steeds seated in his chariot?

TUT. The prophet Amphiaraus this, O my mistress, and with him the victims, the libations of the earth delighting in blood.

AST. O thou daughter of the brightly girded sun, thou moon, golden-circled light, applying what quiet and temperate blows to his steeds does he direct his chariot! But where is he who utters such dreadful insults against this city, Capaneus?

TUT. He is scanning the approach to the towers, measuring the walls both from their foundation to the top.

ANT. O vengeance, and ye loud-roaring thunders of Jove, and thou blasting fire of the lightning, do thou quell this more-than-mortal arrogance. This is he who will with his spear give to Mycenæ, and to the streams of Lernæan Triæna,⁹⁶ and to the Amymonian⁹⁷ waters of Neptune, the Theban

⁹² This alludes to the figure of Argus engraved on his shield. See verse 1130.

⁹³ Tydeus married Deipyle, Polynices Argia, both daughters of Adrastus, king of Argos.

⁹⁴ "Signum interrogandi non post νεανιας, sed post λοχαγος ponendum. λοχαγος in libris pedagogo tribuitur: quod correxit Hermannus." DINDORF.

⁹⁵ Some suppose ὑστερωι ποδι to mean with their last steps, that is, with steps which are doomed never to return again to their own country.

⁹⁶ Triæna was a place in Argolis, where Neptune stuck his trident in the ground, and immediately water sprung up. SCHOL.

women, having invested them with slavery. Sever, O awful Goddess, never, O daughter of Jove, with golden clusters of ringlets, Diana, may I endure servitude.

TUT. My child, enter the palace, and at home remain in thy virgin chambers, since thou hast arrived at the indulgement of thy desire, as to what you were anxious to behold. For, since confusion has entered the city, a crowd of women is advancing to the royal palace. The race of women is prone to complaint, and if they find but small occasion for words, they add more, and it is a sort of pleasure to women, to speak nothing well-advised one of another.⁹⁸

CHORUS

I have come, having left the Tyrian wave, the first-fruits of Loxias, from the sea-washed Phœnicia, a slave for the shrine of Apollo, that I might dwell under the snowy brows of Parnassus, having sped my way over the Ionian flood by the oar, the west wind with its blasts riding over the barren plains of waters⁹⁹ which flow round Sicily, the sweetest murmur in the heavens. Chosen out from my city the fairest present to Apollo, I came to the land of the Cadmeans, the illustrious descendants of Agenor, sent hither to these kindred towers of Laius. And I am made the slave of Apollo in like manner with the golden-framed images. Moreover the water of Castalia awaits me, to lave the virgin pride of my tresses, in the ministry of Apollo. O blazing rock, the flame of fire that seems¹⁰⁰ double above the Dionysian heights of Bacchus, and thou vine, who distildest the daily nectar, producing the fruitful cluster from the tender shoot; and ye divine caves of the dragon,¹⁰¹ and ye mountain watch-towers of the Gods, and thou hallowed snowy mountain, would that I were the chorus of the immortal God free from alarms encompassing thee around, by the caves of Apollo in the centre of the earth, having left Dirce. But now impetuous Mars having advanced before the walls lights up against this city, which may the Gods avert, hostile war; for common are the misfortunes of friends, and common is it, if this land defended by its seven turrets should suffer any calamity, to the Phœnician country, alas! alas! common is the affinity,¹⁰² common are the descendants of Io bearing horns; of which woes I have a share. But a thick cloud of shields glares around the city, the likeness of gory battle, bearing which destruction from the Furies to the children of Œdipus Mars shall quickly advance. O Pelasgian Argos, I dread thy power, and vengeance from the Gods, for he rushes not his arms to this war unjustly, who seeks to recover his home.

POLYNICES, CHORUS

POL. The bolts indeed of the gate-keepers have with ease admitted me, that I might come within the walls; wherefore also I fear, lest, having caught me within their nets, they let¹⁰³ not my body go without bloodshed. On which account my eye must be turned about on every side, both that way and this, lest there be treachery. But armed in my hand with this sword, I will give myself confidence

⁹⁷ Amymone was daughter of Danaus and Europa; she was employed, by order of her father, in supplying the city of Argos with water, in a great drought. Neptune saw her in this employment, and was enamored of her. He carried her away, and in the place where she stood he raised a fountain, which has been called Amymone. See Propert. ii. El. 20. v. 47.

⁹⁸ ἀλλήλας λεγουσιν is, *they say one of another*; ἀλλήλας λεγουσιν, *they say among themselves*.

⁹⁹ By πεδίων ακαρπιστων is to be understood the sea. The construction πεδίων περιρρυτον Σικελιας, that is, ἅ Σικελιαν περιρρει. The same construction is found in Sophocles, Œd. Tyr. l. 885. δικας αφοβητος. L. 969. αφανστος εγγους. See also Horace, Lib. iv. Od. 4. 43. Ceu flamma per tædas, vel Eurus Per Siculas equitavit undas.

¹⁰⁰ The fire was on that head of Parnassus which was sacred to Apollo and Diana; to those below it appeared double, being divided to the eye by a pointed rock which rose before it. SCHOL.

¹⁰¹ The Python which Apollo slew.

¹⁰² Libya the daughter of Epaphus bore to Neptune Agenor and Belus. Cadmus was the son of Agenor, and Antiope the daughter of Belus.

¹⁰³ But Dind. εκφρωσ'. See his note.

of daring. Ha! Who is this; or do we fear a noise? Every thing appears terrible even to the bold, when his foot shall pass across a hostile country. I trust however in my mother, at the same time I scarce trust, who persuaded me to come hither confiding in a truce. But protection is nigh; for the hearths of the altars are at hand, and houses not deserted. Come. I will let go my sword into its dark scabbard, and will question these who they are, that are standing at the palace. Ye female strangers, tell me, from what country do ye approach Grecian habitations?

CHOR. The Phœnician is my paternal country, she that nurtured me: and the descendants of Agenor sent me hither from the spoils, the first-fruits to Apollo. And while the renowned son of Œdipus was preparing to send me to the revered shrine, and to the altars of Phœbus, in the mean time the Argives marched against the city. But do thou in turn answer me, who thou art, who hast come to this bulwark of the Theban land with its seven gates?

POL. My father is Œdipus the son of Laius; Jocasta daughter of Menœceus brought me forth; the Theban people call me Polynices.

CHOR. O thou allied to the sons of Agenor, my lords, by whom I was sent, I fall at thy knees in lowly posture, O king, preserving my country's custom. Thou hast come, thou hast come, after a length of time, to thy paternal land. O venerable matron, come forth quickly, open the doors; dost thou hear, O mother, that producedst this hero? why dost thou delay to leave thy lofty mansion, and to embrace thy child with thine arms?

JOCASTA, POLYNICES, CHORUS

JOC. Hearing the Phœnician tongue, ye virgins, within this mansion, I drag my steps trembling with age. Ah! my son, after length of time, after numberless days, I behold thy countenance; clasp thy mother's bosom in thine arms, throw around her¹⁰⁴ thy kisses, and the dark ringlets of thy clustering hair, shading my neck. Ah! scarce possible is it that thou appearest in thy mother's arms so un hoped for, and so unexpected. How shall I address thee? how shall I perform all? how shall I, walking in rapture around thee on that side and this, both with my hands and words, reap the varied pleasure, the delight of my former joys? O my son, thou hast left thy father's house deserted, sent away an exile by wrongful treatment from thy brother. How longed for by thy friends! how longed for by Thebes! From which time I am both shorn of my hoary locks, letting them fall with tears, with wailing;¹⁰⁵ deprived, my child, of the white robes, I receive in exchange around me these dark and dismal weeds. But the old man in the palace deprived of sight, always preserving with tears regret for the unanimity of the brothers which is separated from the family, has madly rushed on self-destruction with the sword and with the noose above the beams of the house, bewailing the curse imprecated on his children; and with cries of woe he is always hidden in darkness. But thou, my child, I hear, art both joined in marriage, and hast the joys of love in a foreign family, and cherishest a foreign alliance; intolerable to this thy mother and to the aged Laius, the woe of a foreign marriage brought upon us. But neither did I light the torch of fire for you, as is customary in the marriage rites, as befits the happy mother; nor was Ismenus careful of the bridal rites in the luxury of the bath: and the entrance of thy bride was made in silence through the Theban city. May these ills perish, whether the sword, or discord, or thy father is the cause, or whether fate has rushed with violence upon the house of Œdipus; for the weight of these sorrows has fallen upon me.

¹⁰⁴ The construction is, ἀμφιβαλλε μοι το των παρηϊδων σου ορεγμα: that is, *genarum ad oscula porrectionem*. It can not be translated literally. The verb ἀμφιβαλλε is to be supplied before ορεγμα, and before πλοκαμων. See Orestes, 950.

¹⁰⁵ Locus videtur corruptus. PORSON. Valckenaer proposes to read δακρυοεσσο' ανιεισα κ.τ.λ. Markland would supply φωνην after 'τεισα. Another reading proposed is, δακρυοεσσο' ενιεισα πενθηρη κονιν. *Lacrymabunda, lugubrem cinerem injiciens*. Followed by Dindorf.

CHOR. Parturition with the attendant throes has a wonderful effect on women;¹⁰⁶ and somehow the whole race of women have strong affection toward their children.

POL. My mother, determining wisely, and yet not determining wisely, have I come to men my foes; but it is necessary that all must be enamored of their country; but whoever says otherwise, pleases himself with vain words, but has his heart there. But so far have I come to trouble and terror, lest any treachery from my brother should slay me, so that having my hand on my sword I proceeded through the city rolling round my eye; but one thing is on my side, the truce and thy faith, which has brought me within my paternal walls: but I have come with many tears, after a length of time beholding the courts and the altars of the Gods, and the schools wherein I was brought up, and the fount of Dirce, from which banished by injustice, I inhabit a foreign city, having a stream of tears flowing through my eyes. But, for from one woe springs a second, I behold thee having thy head shorn of its locks, and these sable garments; alas me! on account of my misfortunes. How dreadful a thing, mother, is the enmity of relations, having means of reconciliation seldom to be brought about! For how fares the old man my father in the palace, vainly looking upon darkness; and how fare my two sisters? Are they indeed bewailing my wretched banishment?

JOC. Some God miserably destroys the race of Ædipus; for thus began it, when I brought forth children in that unhallowed manner, and thy father married me in evil hour, and thou didst spring forth. But why relate these things? What is sent by the Gods we must bear. But how I may ask the questions I wish, I know not, for I fear lest I wound at all thy feelings; but I have a great desire.

POL. But inquire freely, leave nothing out. For what you wish, my mother, this is dear to me.

JOC. I ask thee therefore, first, for the information that I wish to obtain. What is the being deprived of one's country, is it a great ill?

POL. The greatest: and greater is it in deed than in word.

JOC. What is the reason of that? What is that so harsh to exiles?

POL. One thing, and that the greatest, not to have the liberty of speaking.

JOC. This that you have mentioned belongs to a slave, not to give utterance to what one thinks.

POL. It is necessary to bear with the follies of those in power.

JOC. And this is painful, to be unwise with the unwise.

POL. But for interest we must bend to slavery contrary to our nature.

JOC. But hopes support exiles, as report goes.

POL. They look upon them with favorable eyes, at least, but are slow of foot.

JOC. Hath not time shown them to be vain?

POL. They have a certain sweet delight to set against misfortunes.

JOC. But whence wert thou supported, before thou foundest means of sustenance by thy marriage?

POL. At one time I had food for the day, at another I had not.

JOC. And did the friends and hosts of your father not assist you?

POL. Be prosperous, *and thou shalt have friends*:¹⁰⁷ but friends are none, should one be in adversity.

JOC. Did not thy noble birth raise thee to great distinction?

POL. To want is wretched; high birth fed me not.

JOC. Their own country, it appears, is the dearest thing to men.

POL. You can not express by words how dear it is.

JOC. But how camest thou to Argos? What intention hadst thou?

POL. Apollo gave a certain oracle to Adrastus.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Æsch. Prom. 39. το συγγενες τοι δεινον 'η θ' ὀμιλια, where consult Schutz.

¹⁰⁷ See Porson's note. A similar ellipse is to be found in Luke xiii. 9. Καιν μεν ποιηση καρπον: ει δε μηγε, εις το μελλον εκκοψεις αυτην: which is thus translated in our version; "And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down." See also Iliad, A. 135. Aristoph. Plut. 468. ed. Kuster.

JOC. What is this thou hast mentioned? I am unable to discover.

POL. To unite his daughters in marriage with a boar and lion.

JOC. And what part of the name of beasts belongs to you, my son.

POL. I know not. The God called me to this fortune.

JOC. For the God is wise. But in what manner didst thou obtain her bed?

POL. It was night; but I came to the portals of Adrastus.

JOC. In search of a couch to rest on, as a wandering exile?

POL. This was the case, and then indeed there came a second exile.

JOC. Who was this? how unfortunate then was he also!

POL. Tydeus, who they say sprung from Ceneus his sire.

JOC. In what then did Adrastus liken you to beasts?

POL. Because we came to blows for lodging.

JOC. In this the son of Talaus understood the oracle.

POL. And gave in marriage to us two his two virgin daughters.

JOC. Art thou fortunate then in thy marriage alliance, or unfortunate?

POL. My marriage can not be found fault with up to this day.

JOC. But how didst thou persuade an army to follow you hither?

POL. Adrastus swore this oath to his two sons-in-law, that he would replace both in their own country, but me first. And many princes of the Argives and Mycenæans are at hand, rendering to me a sad, but necessary favor; for I am leading an army against this my own city; but I have called the Gods to witness how unwillingly I have raised the spear against my dearest parents. But the dissolution of these ills extends to thee, my mother, that having reconciled the friendly brothers, you may free from toil me and thyself, and the whole city. It is a proverb long ago chanted, but nevertheless I will repeat it; wealth is honored most of all things by men, and has the greatest influence of any thing among men. In pursuit of which I am come, leading hither ten thousand spears: for a nobly-born man in poverty is nothing.

CHOR. And see Eteocles here comes to this mediation; thy business it is, O Jocasta, being their mother, to speak words, with which thou shalt reconcile thy children.

ETEOCLES, POLYNICES, JOCASTA, CHORUS

ETEO. Mother, I am present; giving this grace to thee, I have come; what must I do? Let some one begin the conference. Since arranging also around the walls the chariots of the bands, I restrained the city, that I may hear from thee the common terms¹⁰⁸ of reconciliation, for which thou hast permitted this man to come within the walls under sanction of a truce, having persuaded me.

JOC. Stay; precipitate haste has not justice; but slow counsels perform most deeds in wisdom. But repress that fierce eye and those blasts of rage; for thou art not looking on the Gorgon's head cut off at the neck, but thou art looking on thy brother who is come to thee. And do thou again, Polynices, turn thy face toward thy brother; for looking at the same point with thine eyes, thou wilt both speak better, and receive his words better. But I wish to give you a wise piece of advice. When a friend is enraged with a man his friend, having met him face to face, let him fix his eyes on his friend's eyes, this only ought he to consider, the end for which he is come, but to have no recollection of former grievances. Thy words then first, my son, Polynices; for thou art come leading an army of Argives, having suffered injustice, as thou sayest; and may some God be umpire and the reconciler of your strife.

¹⁰⁸ Βραβεύς, properly, is the judge in a contest, who confers the prizes, and on whose decision the awarding of the prizes depends: βραβευτής is the same. Βραβειον is the prize. Βραβεια, and in the plural βραβεια, the very act of deciding the contest.

POL. The speech of truth is simple, and those things which are just need not wily interpretations; for they have energy themselves; but the unjust speech, unsound in itself, requires cunning preparations to glose it. But I have previously considered for my father's house, and my own advantage and that of this man; desiring to escape the curses, which Œdipus denounced formerly against us, I myself of my own accord departed from this land, having given him to rule over his own country for the space of a year, so that I myself should have the government again, having received it in turn, and not having come into enmity and bloodshed with this man to perform some evil deed, and to suffer what is now taking place. But he having assented to this, and having brought the Gods to witness his oaths, has performed nothing of what he promised, but himself holds the regal power and my share of the palace. And now I am ready, having received my own right, to send the army away from out of this land, and to regulate my house, having received it in my turn, and to give it up again to this man for the same space of time, and neither to lay my country waste, nor to apply to its towers the means of ascent by the firmly-fixed ladders. Which, should I not meet with justice, will I endeavor to put in execution: and I call the Gods as witnesses of this, that acting in every thing with justice, I am without justice deprived of my country in the most unrighteous manner. These individual circumstances, mother, not having collected together intricacies of argument, have I declared, but both to the wise and to the illiterate just, as appears to me.

CHOR. To me indeed, although we have not been brought up according to the Grecian land, nevertheless to me thou appearest to speak with judgment.

ETEO. If the same thing were judged honorable alike by all, and at the same time wise, there would not be doubtful strife among men. But now nothing is similar, nothing the same among mortals, except in names; but the sense is not the same, for I, my mother, will speak having kept nothing back; I would mount to the rising of the stars, and sink beneath the earth, were I able to perform this, so that I might possess the greatest of the Goddesses, kingly power.¹⁰⁹ This prize then, my mother, I am not willing rather to give up to another, than to preserve for myself. For it implies cowardice in him, whoever having lost the greater share, hath received the less; but in addition to this I feel ashamed, that this man having come with arms, and laying the country waste, should obtain what he wishes; for to Thebes this would be a reproach, if through fear of the Mycenæan spear I should give up my sceptre for this man to hold. But he ought, my mother, to effect a reconciliation, not by arms: for speech does every thing which even the sword of the enemy could do. But if he is desirous of inhabiting this land in any other way, it is in his power; but the other point I will never give up willingly. When it is in my power to rule, ever to be a slave to him? Wherefore come fire, come sword, yoke thy steeds, fill the plains with chariots, since I will not give up my kingly power to this man. For if one must be unjust, it is most glorious to be unjust concerning empire, but in every thing else one should be just.

CHOR. It is not right to speak well, where the deeds are not glorious; for this is not honorable, but galling to justice.

JOC. My son, Eteocles, not every ill is added to age, but experience has it in its power to evince more wisdom than youth.¹¹⁰ Why, my child, dost thou so desirously court ambition, the most baneful of the deities? do not thou; the Goddess is unjust. But she hath entered into many families and happy states and hath come forth again, to the destruction of those who have to do with her. Of whom thou art madly enamored. This is more noble, my son, to honor equality, which ever links friends with friends, and states with states, and allies with allies: for equality is sanctioned by law among men. But the lesser share is ever at enmity with the greater, and straight begins the day of hatred. For equality arranged also among mortals measures, and the divisions of weights, and defined numbers. And the dark eye of night, and the light of the sun, equally walk their annual round, and

¹⁰⁹ So Hotspur, of honor:By heaven, methinks, it were an easy leap,To pluck bright honor from the pale-faced moon:Or dive into the bottom of the deep,Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,And pluck up drowned honor by the locks;So he, that doth redeem her thence, might wear,Without corival, all her dignities.Hen. IV. P. i. A. i. Sc. 3.

¹¹⁰ See Ovid. Met. vi. 28. Non omnia grandior ætas, Quæ fugiamus, habet; seris venit usus ab annis.

neither of them being overcome hath envy of the other. Thus the sun and the night are subservient to men, but wilt not thou brook having an equal share of government, and give his share to him? Then where is justice? Why dost thou honor so unboundedly that prosperous injustice, royalty, and think so highly of her? Is the being conspicuous honorable? At least, it is empty honor. Or dost thou desire to labor much, possessing much in thy house? but what is superfluity? It possesses but a name; since a sufficiency indeed to the temperate is abundance. Neither do men enjoy riches as their own, but having the property of the Gods do we cherish them. And when they list, again do they take them away. Come, if I ask thee, having proposed together two measures, whether it is thy wish to reign, or save the city? Wilt thou say, to reign? But should he conquer thee, and the Argive spears overcome the Cadmæan forces, thou wilt behold this city of the Thebans vanquished, thou wilt behold many captive maidens with violence ravished by men your foes. Bitter then to Thebes will be the power which thou seekest to hold; but yet thou art ambitious of it. To thee I say this: but to thee, Polynices, say I, that Adrastus hath conferred an unwise favor on thee; and foolishly hast thou also come to destroy this city. Come, if thou wilt subdue this land (may which never happen), by the Gods, how wilt thou erect trophies of thy spear? And how again wilt thou sacrifice the first-fruits, having conquered thy country? and how wilt thou engrave upon the spoils by the waters of Inachus, "Having laid Thebes in ashes, Polynices consecrated these shields to the Gods?" Never, my son, may it come to thee to receive such glory from the Greeks. But again, shouldest thou be conquered, and should the arms of the other prevail, how wilt thou return to Argos having left behind ten thousand dead? Surely some one will say, O! unfortunate marriage alliance! O Adrastus, who placed them on us, through the nuptials of one bride we are lost! Thou art hastening two ills, my son, to be deprived of those, and to fail in this. Give up your too great ardor, give it up; the follies of two when they clash together in the same point, are the most hateful ill.

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