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CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY, W.

ERECHTHEUS.





# ERECHTHEUS:

A TRAGEDY.

BY

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

ὦ τὰ λιπαρὰ καὶ ἰστέφανοι καὶ ἀοίδιμοι,  
Ἑλλάδος ἔρεισμα, κλεινὰ Ἀθῆναι, δαιμόνιον πτολίεθρον.  
PIND. *Fr.* 47.

AT. τίς δὲ ποιμάνωρ ἔπεστι κἀπιδεσπόζει στρατοῦ;  
XO. οὐτινος δοῦλοι κέκληνται φωτὸς οὐδ' ὑπηκόοι.  
ÆSCH. *Pers.* 241-2.

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1876.

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AND CHARING CROSS.

TO

MY MOTHER.



PERSONS.

ERECHTHEUS.

CHORUS OF ATHENIAN ELDERS.

PRAXITHEA.

CHTHONIA.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

MESSENGER.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

ATHENA.



# ERECHTHEUS.

ERECHTHEUS.

MOTHER of life and death and all men's days,  
Earth, whom I chief of all men born would bless,  
And call thee with more loving lips than theirs  
Mother, for of this very body of thine  
And living blood I have my breath and live,  
Behold me, even thy son, me crowned of men,  
Me made thy child by that strong cunning God  
Who fashions fire and iron, who begat  
Me for a sword and beacon-fire on thee,  
Me fosterling of Pallas, in her shade 10  
Reared, that I first might pay the nursing debt,  
Hallowing her fame with flower of third-year feasts,  
And first bow down the bridled strength of steeds  
To lose the wild wont of their birth, and bear  
Clasp of man's knees and steerage of his hand,

Or fourfold service of his fire-swift wheels  
That whirl the four-yoked chariot ; me the king  
Who stand before thee naked now, and cry,  
O holy and general mother of all men born,  
But mother most and motherliest of mine,                   20  
Earth, for I ask thee rather of all the Gods,  
What have we done ? what word mistimed or work  
Hath winged the wild feet of this timeless curse  
To fall as fire upon us ? Lo, I stand  
Here on this brow's crown of the city's head  
That crowns its lovely body, till death's hour  
Waste it ; but now the dew of dawn and birth  
Is fresh upon it from thy womb, and we  
Behold it born how beauteous ; one day more  
I see the world's wheel of the circling sun                   30  
Roll up rejoicing to regard on earth  
This one thing goodliest, fair as heaven or he,  
Worth a God's gaze or strife of Gods ; but now  
Would this day's ebb of their spent wave of strife  
Sweep it to sea, wash it on wreck, and leave  
A costless thing contemned ; and in our stead,  
Where these walls were and sounding streets of men,  
Make wide a waste for tongueless water-herds



And spoil of ravening fishes ; that no more  
Should men say, Here was Athens. This shalt thou  
Sustain not, nor thy son endure to see, 41  
Nor thou to live and look on ; for the womb  
Bare me not base that bare me miserable,  
To hear this loud brood of the Thracian foam  
Break its broad strength of billowy-beating war  
Here, and upon it as a blast of death  
Blowing, the keen wrath of a fire-souled king,  
A strange growth grafted on our natural soil,  
A root of Thrace in Eleusinian earth  
Set for no comfort to the kindly land, 50  
Son of the sea's lord and our first-born foe,  
Eumolpus ; nothing sweet in ears of thine  
The music of his making, nor a song  
Toward hopes of ours auspicious ; for the note  
Rings as for death oracular to thy sons  
That goes before him on the sea-wind blown  
Full of this charge laid on me, to put out  
The brief light kindled of mine own child's life,  
Or with this helmsman hand that steers the state  
Run right on the under shoal and ridge of death 60  
The populous ship with all its fraughtage gone

And sails that were to take the wind of time  
Rent, and the tackling that should hold out fast  
In confluent surge of loud calamities  
Broken, with spars of rudders and lost oars  
That were to row toward harbour and find rest  
In some most glorious haven of all the world  
And else may never near it : such a song  
The Gods have set his lips on fire withal  
Who threatens now in all their names to bring 70  
Ruin ; but none of these, thou knowest, have I  
Chid with my tongue or cursed at heart for grief,  
Knowing how the soul runs reinless on sheer death  
Whose grief or joy takes part against the Gods.  
And what they will is more than our desire,  
And their desire is more than what we will.  
For no man's will and no desire of man's  
Shall stand as doth a God's will. Yet, O fair  
Mother, that seest me how I cast no word  
Against them, plead no reason, crave no cause, 80  
Boast me not blameless, nor bewEEP me wronged,  
By this fair wreath of towers we have decked thee  
with,  
This chaplet that we give thee woven of walls,

This girdle of gate and temple and citadel  
 Drawn round beneath thy bosom, and fast linked  
 As to thine heart's root—this dear crown of thine,  
 This present light, this city—be not thou  
 Slow to take heed nor slack to strengthen her,  
 Fare we so short-lived howsoe'er, and pay  
 What price we may to ransom thee thy town, 90  
 Not me my life ; but thou that diest not, thou,  
 Though all our house die for this people's sake,  
 Keep thou for ours thy crown our city, guard  
 And give it life the lovelier that 'we died.

## CHORUS.

Sun, that hast lightened and loosed by thy might  
 Ocean and Earth from the lordship of night,  
 Quickening with vision his eye that was veiled,  
 Freshening the force in her heart that had failed,  
 That sister fettered and blinded brother  
 Should have sight by thy grace and delight of each  
     other, 100  
 Behold now and see  
 What profit is given them of thee ;

What wrath has enkindled with madness of mind  
 Her limbs that were bounden, his face that was  
     blind,

To be locked as in wrestle together, and lighten  
 With fire that shall darken thy fire in the sky,  
 Body to body and eye against eye

    In a war against kind,

Till the bloom of her fields and her high hills whiten  
     With the foam of his waves more high.      110

For the sea-marks set to divide of old  
 The kingdoms to Ocean and Earth assigned,  
 The hoar sea-fields from the cornfields' gold,  
 His wine-bright waves from her vineyards' fold,  
     Frail forces we find

To bridle the spirit of Gods or bind

    Till the heat of their hearts wax cold.

But the peace that was stablished between them to  
     stand

Is rent now in twain by the strength of his hand,  
 Who stirs up the storm of his sons overbold      120  
 To pluck from fight what he lost of right,  
 By council and judgment of Gods that spake  
 And gave great Pallas the strife's fair stake,

The lordship and love of the lovely land,  
The grace of the town that hath on it for crown  
    But a headband to wear  
    Of violets one-hued with her hair :  
For the vales and the green high places of earth  
    Hold nothing so fair,  
And the depths of the sea bear no such birth   130  
    Of the manifold births they bear.  
Too well, too well was the great stake worth  
A strife divine for the Gods to judge,  
A crowned God's triumph, a foiled God's grudge,  
Though the loser be strong and the victress wise  
Who played long since for so large a prize,  
The fruitful immortal anointed adored  
Dear city of men without master or lord,  
Fair fortress and fostress of sons born free,  
Who stand in her sight and in thine, O sun,   140  
Slaves of no man, subjects of none ;  
A wonder enthroned on the hills and sea,  
A maiden crowned with a fourfold glory  
That none from the pride of her head may rend,  
Violet and olive-leaf purple and hoary,  
Song-wreath and story the fairest of fame,

Flowers that the winter can blast not or bend ;

A light upon earth as the sun's own flame,

A name as his name,

Athens, a praise without end. 150

A noise is arisen against us of waters; [Str. 1.

A sound as of battle come up from the sea.

Strange hunters are hard on us, hearts without pity ;

They have staked their nets round the fair young  
city,

That the sons of her strength and her virgin  
daughters

Should find not whither alive to flee.

And we know not yet of the word unwritten, [Ant. 1.

The doom of the Pythian we have not heard ;

From the navel of earth and the veiled mid altar

We wait for a token with hopes that falter, 160

With fears that hang on our hearts thought-smitten

Lest her tongue be kindled with no good word.

O thou not born of the womb, nor bred [Str. 2.

In the bride-night's warmth of a changed God's bed,

But thy life as a lightning was flashed from the light  
of thy father's head,

O chief God's child by a motherless birth,  
If aught in thy sight we indeed be worth,  
Keep death from us thou, that art none of the Gods  
of the dead under earth.

Thou that hast power on us, save, if thou wilt ; [*Ant.* 2.  
Let the blind wave breach not thy wall scarce built ;  
But bless us not so as by bloodshed, impute not for  
grace to us guilt, 171

Nor by price of pollution of blood set us free ;  
Let the hands be taintless that clasp thy knee,  
Nor a maiden be slain to redeem for a maiden her  
shrine from the sea.

O earth, O sun, turn back [*Str.* 3.

Full on his deadly track

Death, that would smite you black and mar your  
creatures,

And with one hand disroot

All tender flower and fruit,

With one strike blind and mute the heaven's fair  
features, 180

Pluck out the eyes of morn, and make

Silence in the east and blackness whence the bright  
songs break.

Help, earth, help, heaven, that hear      [Ant. 3.  
 The song-notes of our fear,  
 Shrewd notes and shrill, not clear or joyful-sounding ;  
 Hear, highest of Gods, and stay  
 Death on his hunter's way,  
 Full on his forceless prey his beagles hounding ;  
 Break thou his bow, make short his hand,  
 Maim his fleet foot whose passage kills the living  
 land.      190  
 Let a third wave smite not us, father,      [Str. 4.  
 Long since sore smitten of twain,  
 Lest the house of thy son's son perish  
 And his name be barren on earth.  
 Whose race wilt thou comfort rather  
 If none to thy son remain ?  
 Whose seed wilt thou choose to cherish  
 If his be cut off in the birth ?  
 For the first fair graft of his grafting      [Ant. 4.  
 Was rent from its maiden root      200  
 By the strong swift hand of a lover  
 Who fills the night with his breath ;  
 On the lip of the stream low-laughing  
 Her green soft virginal shoot



Was plucked from the stream-side cover  
By the grasp of a love like death.  
For a God's was the mouth that kissed her [Str. 5.  
Who speaks, and the leaves lie dead,  
When winter awakes as at warning  
To the sound of his foot from Thrace. 210  
Nor happier the bed of her sister  
Though Love's self laid her abed  
By a bridegroom beloved of the morning  
And fair as the dawn's own face.  
For Procris, ensnared and ensnaring [Ant. 5.  
By the fraud of a twofold wile,  
With the point of her own spear stricken  
By the gift of her own hand fell.  
Oversubtle in doubts, overdaring  
In deeds and devices of guile, 220  
And strong to quench as to quicken,  
Blind Love, they have named thee well.  
By thee was the spear's edge whetted [Str. 6.  
That laid her dead in the dew,  
In the moist green glens of the midland  
By her dear lord slain and thee.  
And him at the cliff's end fretted

By the grey keen waves, him too  
     Thine hand from the white-browed headland  
         Flung down for a spoil to the sea.           230  
 But enough now of griefs grey-growing           [*Ant.* 6.  
     Have darkened the house divine,  
         Have flowered on its boughs and faded,  
             And green is the brave stock yet.  
 O father all-seeing and all-knowing,  
     Let the last fruit fall not of thine  
         From the tree with whose boughs we are  
             shaded,  
         From the stock that thy son's hand set.

## ERECHTHEUS.

O daughter of Cephisus, from all time  
 Wise have I found thee, wife and queen, of heart   240  
 Perfect ; nor in the days that knew not wind  
 Nor days when storm blew death upon our peace  
 Was thine heart swoln with seed of pride, or bowed  
 With blasts of bitter fear that break men's souls  
 Who lift too high their minds toward heaven, in  
     thought

Too godlike grown for worship; but of mood  
Equal, in good time reverent of time bad,  
And glad in ill days of the good that were.  
Nor now too would I fear thee, now misdoubt  
Lest fate should find thee lesser than thy doom, 250  
Chosen if thou be to bear and to be great  
Haply beyond all women; and the word  
Speaks thee divine, dear queen, that speaks thee dead,  
Dead being alive, or quick and dead in one  
Shall not men call thee living? yet I fear  
To slay thee timeless with my proper tongue,  
With lips, thou knowest, that love thee; and such work  
Was never laid of Gods on men, such words  
No mouth of man learnt ever, as from mine  
Most loth to speak thine ear most loth shall take 260  
And hold it hateful as the grave to hear.

*PRAXITHEA.*

That word there is not in all speech of man,  
King, that being spoken of the Gods and thee  
I have not heart to honour, or dare hold  
More than I hold thee or the Gods in hate

Hearing ; but if my heart abhor it heard  
 Being insubmissive, hold me not thy wife  
 But use me like a stranger, whom thine hand  
 Hath fed by chance and finding thence no thanks  
 Flung off for shame's sake to forgetfulness. 270

## ERECHTHEUS.

O, of what breath shall such a word be made,  
 Or from what heart find utterance ? Would my tongue  
 Were rent forth rather from the quivering root  
 Than made as fire or poison thus for thee.

## PRAXITHEA.

But if thou speak of blood, and I that hear  
 Be chosen of all for this land's love to die  
 And save to thee thy city, know this well,  
 Happiest I hold me of her seed alive.

## ERECHTHEUS.

O sun that seest, what saying was this of thine,  
 God, that thy power has breathed into my lips ? 280  
 For from no sunlit shrine darkling it came.

PRAXITHEA.

What portent from the mīd oracular place  
Hath smitten thee so like a curse that flies  
Wingless, to waste men with its plagues ? yet speak.

ERECHTHEUS.

Thy blood the Gods require not ; take this first.

PRAXITHEA.

To me than thee more grievous this should sound.

ERECHTHEUS.

That word rang truer and bitterer than it knew.

PRAXITHEA.

This is not then thy grief, to see me die ?

ERECHTHEUS.

Die shalt thou not, yet give thy blood to death.

PRAXITHEA.

If this ring worse I know not ; strange it rang. 290

ERECHTHEUS.

Alas, thou knowest not ; woe is me that know.

PRAXITHEA.

And woe shall mine be, knowing ; yet halt not here.

ERECHTHEUS.

Guiltless of blood this state may stand no more.

PRAXITHEA.

Firm let it stand whatever bleed or fall.

ERECHTHEUS.

O Gods, that I should say it shall and weep.

PRAXITHEA.

Weep, and say this ? no tears should bathe such words.

ERECHTHEUS.

Woe's me that I must weep upon them, woe.

PRAXITHEA.

What stain is on them for thy tears to cleanse ?

ERECHTHEUS.

A stain of blood unurgeable with tears.

PRAXITHEA.

Whence ? for thou sayest it is and is not mine. 300

ERECHTHEUS.

Hear then and know why only of all men I  
That bring such news as mine is, I alone  
Must wash good words with weeping ; I and thou,  
Woman, must wail to hear men sing, must groan  
To see their joy who love us ; all our friends  
Save only we, and all save we that love  
This holiness of Athens, in our sight  
Shall lift their hearts up, in our hearing praise  
Gods whom we may not ; for to these they give  
Life of their children, flower of all their seed, 310  
For all their travail fruit, for all their hopes  
Harvest ; but we for all our good things, we  
Have at their hands which fill all these folk full  
Death, barrenness, child-slaughter, curses, cares,  
Sea-leaguer and land-shipwreck ; which of these,  
Which wilt thou first give thanks for ? all are thine.

## PRAXITHEA.

What first they give who give this city good,  
 For that first given to save it I give thanks  
 First, and thanks heartier from a happier tongue,  
 More than for any my peculiar grace 320  
 Shown me and not my country ; next for this,  
 That none of all these but for all these I  
 Must bear my burden, and no eye but mine  
 Weep of all women's in this broad land born  
 Who see their land's deliverance ; but much more,  
 But most for this I thank them most of all,  
 That this their edge of doom is chosen to pierce  
 My heart and not my country's ; for the sword  
 Drawn to smite there and sharpened for such stroke  
 Should wound more deep than any turned on me. 330

## CHORUS.

Well fares the land that bears such fruit, and well  
 The spirit that breeds such thought and speech in man.

## ERECHTHEUS.

O woman, thou hast shamed my heart with thine,



To show so strong a patience ; take then all ;  
For all shall break not nor bring down thy soul.  
The word that journeying to the bright God's shrine  
Who speaks askance and darkling, but his name  
Hath in it slaying and ruin broad writ out,  
I heard, hear thou : thus saith he ; There shall die  
One soul for all this people ; from thy womb      340  
Came forth the seed that here on dry bare ground  
Death's hand must sow untimely, to bring forth  
Nor blade nor shoot in season, being by name  
To the under Gods made holy, who require  
For this land's life her death and maiden blood  
To save a maiden city. Thus I heard,  
And thus with all said leave thee ; for save this  
No word is left us, and no hope alive.

## CHORUS.

He hath uttered too surely his wrath not obscurely,  
nor wrapt as in mists of his breath,      [*Str.* 1.  
The master that lightens not hearts he enlightens, but  
gives them foreknowledge of death.      350  
As a bolt from the cloud hath he sent it aloud and  
proclaimed it afar,

From the darkness and height of the horror of night  
hath he shown us a star.

Star may I name it and err not, or flame shall I say,  
Born of the womb that was born for the tomb  
of the day ?

O Night, whom other but thee for mother, and Death  
for the father, Night, [Ant. 1.

Shall we dream to discover, save thee and thy lover,  
to bring such a sorrow to sight ?

From the slumberless bed for thy bedfellow spread  
and his bride under earth

Hast thou brought forth a wild and insatiable child,  
an unbearable birth.

Fierce are the fangs of his wrath, and the pangs  
that they give ;

None is there, none that may bear them, not one  
that would live. 360

#### CHTHONIA.

Forth of the fine-spun folds of veils that hide  
My virgin chamber toward the full-faced sun  
I set my foot not moved of mine own will,  
Unmaidenlike, nor with unprompted speed

Turn eyes too broad or doglike unabashed  
On reverend heads of men and thence on thine,  
Mother, now covered from the light and bowed  
As hers who mourns her brethren ; but what grief  
Bends thy blind head thus earthward, holds thus mute,  
I know not till thy will be to lift up 370  
Toward mine thy sorrow-muffled eyes and speak ;  
And till thy will be would I know this not.

## PRAXITHEA.

Old men and childless, or if sons ye have seen  
And daughters, elder-born were these than mine,  
Look on this child, how young of years, how sweet,  
How scant of time and green of age her life  
Puts forth its flower of girlhood ; and her gait  
How virginal, how soft her speech, her eyes  
How seemingly smiling ; wise should all ye be,  
All honourable and kindly men of age ; 380  
Now give me counsel and one word to say  
That I may bear to speak, and hold my peace  
Henceforth for all time even as all ye now.  
Dumb are ye all, bowed eyes and tongueless mouths,

Unprofitable ; if this were wind that speaks,  
As much its breath might move you. Thou then,  
    child,  
Set thy sweet eyes on mine ; look through them well ;  
Take note of all the writing of my face  
As of a tablet or a tomb inscribed  
That bears me record ; lifeless now, my life      390  
Thereon that was think written ; brief to read,  
Yet shall the scripture sear thine eyes as fire  
And leave them dark as dead men's. Nay, dear child,  
Thou hast no skill, my maiden, and no sense  
To take such knowledge ; sweet is all thy lore,  
And all this bitter ; yet I charge thee learn  
And love and lay this up within thine heart,  
Even this my word ; less ill it were to die  
Than live and look upon thy mother dead,  
Thy mother-land that bare thee ; no man slain      400  
But him who hath seen it shall men count unblest,  
None blest as him who hath died and seen it not.

## CHTHONIA.

That sight some God keep from me though I die.

PRAXITHEA.

A God from thee shall keep it ; fear not this.

CHTHONIA.

Thanks all my life long shall he gain of mine.

PRAXITHEA.

Short gain of all yet shall he get of thee.

CHTHONIA.

Brief be my life, yet so long live my thanks.

PRAXITHEA.

So long ? so little ; how long shall they live ?

CHTHONIA.

Even while I see the sunlight and thine eyes.

PRAXITHEA.

Would mine might shut ere thine upon the sun. 410

CHTHONIA.

For me thou prayest unkindly ; change that prayer.

PRAXITHEA.

Not well for me thou sayest, and ill for thee.

CHTHONIA.

Nay, for me well, if thou shalt live, not I.

PRAXITHEA.

How live, and lose these loving looks of thine?

CHTHONIA.

It seems I too, thus praying, then, love thee not.

PRAXITHEA.

Lov'st thou not life? what wouldst thou do to die?

CHTHONIA.

Well, but not more than all things, love I life.

PRAXITHEA.

And fain wouldst keep it as thine age allows?

CHTHONIA.

Fain would I live, and fain not fear to die.

## PRAXITHEA.

That I might bid thee die not ! Peace ; no more. 420

## CHORUS.

A godlike race of grief the Gods have set  
For these to run matched equal, heart with heart.

## PRAXITHEA.

Child of the chief of Gods, and maiden crowned,  
Queen of these towers and fostress of their king,  
Pallas, and thou my father's holiest head,  
A living well of life nor stanch'd nor stained,  
O God Cephisus, thee too charge I next,  
Be to me judge and witness ; nor thine ear  
Shall now my tongue invoke not, thou to me  
Most hateful of things holy, mournfullest 430  
Of all old sacred streams that wash the world,  
Ilissus, on whose marge at flowery play  
A whirlwind-footed bridegroom found my child  
And rapt her northward where mine elder-born  
Keeps now the Thracian bride-bed of a God  
Intolerable to seamen, but this land

Finds him in hope for her sake favourable,  
 A gracious son by wedlock ; hear me then  
 Thou likewise, if with no faint heart or false  
 The word I say be said, the gift be given,                   440  
 Which might I choose I had rather die than give  
 Or speak and die not. Ere thy limbs were made  
 Or thine eyes lightened, strife, thou knowest, my child,  
 'Twixt God and God had risen, which heavenlier  
                   name

Should here stand hallowed, whose more liberal grace  
 Should win this city's worship, and our land  
 To which of these do reverence ; first the lord  
 Whose wheels make lightnings of the foam-flowered  
                   sea

Here on this rock, whose height brow-bound with  
                   dawn

Is head and heart of Athens, one sheer blow                   450  
 Struck, and beneath the triple wound that shook  
 The stony sinews and stark roots of the earth  
 Sprang toward the sun a sharp salt fount, and sank  
 Where lying it lights the heart up of the hill,  
 A well of bright strange brine ; but she that reared  
 Thy father with her same chaste fostering hand



Set for a sign against it in our guard  
The holy bloom of the olive, whose hoar leaf  
High in the shadowy shrine of Pandrosus  
Hath honour of us all ; and of this strife 460  
The twelve most high Gods judging with one mouth  
Acclaimed her victress ; wroth whereat, as wronged  
That she should hold from him such prize and place,  
The strong king of the tempest-rifted sea  
Loosed reinless on the low Thriasian plain  
The thunders of his chariots, swallowing stunned  
Earth, beasts, and men, the whole blind foundering  
world  
That was the sun's at morning, and ere noon  
Death's ; nor this only prey fulfilled his mind ;  
For with strange crook-toothed prows of Carian folk  
Who snatch a sanguine life out of the sea, 471  
Thieves keen to pluck their bloody fruit of spoil  
From the grey fruitless waters, has their God  
Furrowed our shores to waste them, as the fields  
Were landward harried from the north with swords  
Aonian, sickles of man-slaughtering edge  
Ground for no hopeful harvest of live grain  
Against us in Bœotia ; these being spent,

Now this third time his wind of wrath has blown  
Right on this people a mightier wave of war,      480  
Three times more huge a ruin ; such its ridge  
Foam-rimmed and hollow like the womb of heaven,  
But black for shining, and with death for life  
Big now to birth and ripe with child, full-blown  
With fear and fruit of havoc, takes the sun  
Out of our eyes, darkening the day, and blinds  
The fair sky's face unseasonably with change,  
A cloud in one and billow of battle, a surge  
High reared as heaven with monstrous surf of spears  
That shake on us their shadow, till men's heads      490  
Bend, and their hearts even with its forward wind  
Wither, so blasts all seed in them of hope  
Its breath and blight of presage ; yea, even now  
The winter of this wind out of the deeps  
Makes cold our trust in comfort of the Gods  
And blind our eye toward outlook ; yet not here,  
Here never shall the Thracian plant on high  
For ours his father's symbol, nor with wreaths  
A strange folk wreathe it upright set and crowned  
Here where our natural people born behold      500  
The golden Gorgon of the shield's defence

That screens their flowering olive, nor strange gods  
Be graced, and Pallas here have praise no more. †  
And if this be not I must give my child,  
Thee, mine own very blood and spirit of mine,  
Thee to be slain. Turn from me, turn thine eyes  
A little from me ; I can bear not yet  
To see if still they smile on mine or no,  
If fear make faint the light in them, or faith  
Fix them as stars of safety. Need have we, 510  
Sore need of stars that set not in mid storm,  
Lights that outlast the lightnings ; yet my heart  
Endures not to make proof of thine or these,  
Not yet to know thee whom I made, and bare  
What manner of woman ; had I borne thee man,  
I had made no question of thine eyes or heart,  
Nor spared to read the scriptures in them writ,  
Wert thou my son ; yet couldst thou then but die  
Fallen in sheer fight by chance and charge of spears  
And have no more of memory, fill no tomb 520  
More famous than thy fellows in fair field,  
Where many share the grave, many the praise ;  
But one crown shall one only girl my child  
Wear, dead for this dear city, and give back life

To him that gave her and to me that bare,  
And save two sisters living ; and all this,  
Is this not all good ? I shall give thee, child,  
Thee but by fleshly nature mine, to bleed  
For dear land's love ; but if the city fall  
What part is left me in my children then ? 530  
But if it stand and thou for it lie dead,  
Then hast thou in it a better part than we,  
A holier portion than we all ; for each  
Hath but the length of his own life to live,  
And this most glorious mother-land on earth  
To worship till that life have end ; but thine  
Hath end no more than hers ; thou, dead, shalt live  
Till Athens live not ; for the days and nights  
Given of thy bare brief dark dividual life,  
Shall she give thee half all her agelong own 540  
And all its glory ; for thou givest her these ;  
But with one hand she takes and gives again  
More than I gave or she requires of thee.  
Come therefore, I will make thee fit for death,  
I that could give thee, dear, no gift at birth  
Save of light life that breathes and bleeds, even I  
Will help thee to this better gift than mine

And lead thee by this little living hand  
That death shall make so strong, to that great end  
Whence it shall lighten like a God's, and strike 550  
Dead the strong heart of battle that would break  
Athens ; but ye, pray for this land, old men,  
That it may bring forth never child on earth  
To love it less, for none may more, than we.

## CHORUS.

Out of the north wind grief came forth, [Str. 1.  
And the shining of a sword out of the sea.  
Yea, of old the first-blown blast blew the prelude of  
this last,  
The blast of his trumpet upon Rhodope.  
Out of the north skies full of his cloud,  
With the clamour of his storms as of a crowd 560  
At the wheels of a great king crying aloud,  
At the axle of a strong king's car  
That has girded on the girdle of war—  
With hands that lightened the skies in sunder  
And feet whose fall was followed of thunder,  
A God, a great God strange of name,

With horse-yoke fleeter-hoofed than flame,  
 To the mountain bed of a maiden came,  
 Oreithyia, the bride mismated,  
 Wofully wed in a snow-strewn bed 570  
 With a bridegroom that kisses the bride's mouth  
 dead ;

Without garland, without glory, without song,  
 As a fawn by night on the hills belated,  
 Given over for a spoil unto the strong.

From lips how pale so keen a wail [Ant. 1.

At the grasp of a God's hand on her she gave,  
 When his breath that darkens air made a havoc of  
 her hair,

It rang from the mountain even to the wave ;  
 Rang with a cry, *Woe's me, woe is me!*  
 From the darkness upon Hæmus to the sea : 580  
 And with hands that clung to her new lord's knee,  
 As a virgin overborne with shame,  
 She besought him by her spouseless fame,  
 By the blameless breasts of a maid unmarried  
 And locks unmaidenly rent and harried,  
 And all her flower of body, born  
 To match the maidenhood of morn,



And the wild beasts quailed in the rifts and hollows  
Where hound nor clarion of huntsman follows,  
And the depths of the sea were aghast, and whitened,  
And the crowns of their waves were as flame that  
lightened,

And the heart of the floods thereof was riven.

But she knew not him coming for terror, she felt not  
her wrong that he wrought her, [Ant. 2.

When her locks as leaves were shed before his  
breath, 610

And she heard not for terror his prayer, though the  
cry was a God's that besought her,

Blown from lips that strew the world-wide seas  
with death.

For the heart was molten within her to hear,

And her knees beneath her were loosened for  
fear,

And her blood fast bound as a frost-bound water,

And the soft new bloom of the green earth's  
daughter

Wind-wasted as blossom of a tree ;

As the wild God rapt her from earth's breast  
lifted,



On the strength of the stream of his dark breath  
 drifted,  
 From the bosom of earth as a bride from the  
 mother, 620  
 With storm for bridesman and wreck for brother,  
 As a cloud that he sheds upon the sea.

Of this hoary-headed woe [Epode.  
 Song made memory long ago ;  
 Now a younger grief to mourn  
 Needs a new song younger born.  
 Who shall teach our tongues to reach  
 What strange height of saddest speech,  
 For the new bride's sake that is given to be  
 A stay to fetter the foot of the sea, 630  
 Lest it quite spurn down and trample the town,  
 Ere the violets be dead that were plucked for  
 its crown,  
 Or its olive-leaf whiten and wither ?  
 Who shall say of the wind's way  
 That he journeyed yesterday,  
 Or the track of the storm that shall sound to-  
 morrow,  
 If the new be more than the grey-grown sorrow ?

For the wind of the green first season was keen,  
 And the blast shall be sharper than blew between  
 That the breath of the sea blows hither. 640

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Old men, grey borderers on the march of death,  
 Tongue-fighters, tough of talk and sinewy speech,  
 Else nerveless, from no crew of such faint folk  
 Whose tongues are stouter than their hands come I  
 To bid not you to battle ; let them strike  
 Whose swords are sharper than your keen-tongued  
 And ye, sit fast and sorrow ; but what man [wail,  
 Of all this land-folk and earth-labouring herd  
 For heart or hand seems foremost, him I call  
 If heart be his to hearken, him bid forth 650  
 To try if one be in the sun's sight born  
 Of all that grope and grovel on dry ground  
 That may join hands in battle-grip for death  
 With them whose seed and strength is of the sea.

## CHORUS.

Know thou this much for all thy loud blast blown,  
 We lack not hands to speak with, swords to plead,

For proof of peril, not of boisterous breath,  
Sea-wind and storm of barren mouths that foam  
And rough rock's edge of menace ; and short space  
May lesson thy large ignorance and inform       660  
This insolence with knowledge if there live  
Men earth-begotten of no tenderer thews  
Than knit the great joints of the grim sea's brood  
With hasps of steel together ; heaven to help,  
One man shall break, even on their own flood's verge,  
That iron bulk of battle ; but thine eye  
That sees it now swell higher than sand or shore  
Haply shall see not when thine host shall shrink.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Not haply, nay, but surely, shall not thine.

CHORUS.

That lot shall no God give who fights for thee.       670

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Shall Gods bear bit and bridle, fool, of men ?

CHORUS.

Nor them forbid we nor shalt thou constrain.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Yet say'st thou none shall make the good lot mine ?

CHORUS.

Of thy side none, nor moved for fear of thee.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Gods hast thou then to baffle Gods of ours ?

CHORUS.

Nor thine nor mine, but equal-souled are they.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Toward good and ill, then, equal-eyed of soul ?

CHORUS.

Nay, but swift-eyed to note where ill thoughts breed.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Thy shaft word-feathered flies yet far of me.

CHORUS.

Pride knows not, wounded, till the heart be cleft. 680

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

No shaft wounds deep whose wing is plumed with  
words.

CHORUS.

Lay that to heart, and bid thy tongue learn grace.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Grace shall thine own crave soon too late of mine.

CHORUS.

Boast thou till then, but I wage words no more.

ERECHTHEUS.

Man, what shrill wind of speech and wrangling air  
Blows in our ears a summons from thy lips  
Winged with what message, or what gift or grace  
Requiring? none but what his hand may take  
Here may the foe think hence to reap, nor this  
Except some doom from Godward yield it him. 690

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

King of this land-folk, by my mouth to thee  
Thus saith the son of him that shakes thine earth,

Eumolpus ; now the stakes of war are set,  
For land or sea to win by throw and wear ;  
Choose therefore or to quit thy side and give  
The palm unfought for to his bloodless hand,  
Or by that father's sceptre, and the foot  
Whose tramp far off makes tremble for pure fear  
Thy soul-struck mother, piercing like a sword  
The immortal womb that bare thee ; by the waves 700  
That no man bridles and that bound thy world,  
And by the winds and storms of all the sea,  
He swears to raze from eyeshot of the sun  
This city named not of his father's name,  
And wash to deathward down one flood of doom  
This whole fresh brood of earth yeaned naturally,  
Green yet and faint in its first blade, unblown  
With yellow hope of harvest ; so do thou,  
Seeing whom thy time is come to meet, for fear  
Yield, or gird up thy force to fight and die. 710

## ERECHTHEUS.

To fight then be it ; for if to die or live,  
No man but only a God knows this much yet

Seeing us fare forth, who bear but in our hands  
The weapons not the fortunes of our fight ;  
For these now rest as lots that yet undrawn  
Lie in the lap of the unknown hour ; but this  
I know, not thou, whose hollow mouth of storm  
Is but a warlike wind, a sharp salt breath  
That bites and wounds not ; death nor life of mine  
Shall give to death or lordship of strange kings 720  
The soul of this live city, nor their heel  
Bruise her dear brow discrowned, nor snaffle or  
goad  
Wound her free mouth or stain her sanguine side  
Yet masterless of man ; so bid thy lord  
Learn ere he weep to learn it, and too late  
Gnash teeth that could not fasten on her flesh, «  
And foam his life out in dark froth of blood  
Vain as a wind's waif of the loud-mouthed sea  
Torn from the wave's edge whitening. Tell him  
this ;  
Though thrice his might were mustered for our  
scathe 730  
And thicker set with fence of thorn-edged spears  
Than sands are whirled about the wintering beach

When storms have swoln the rivers, and their blasts  
Have breached the broad sea-banks with stress of  
    sea,

That waves of inland and the main make war  
As men that mix and grapple ; though his ranks  
Were more to number than all wildwood leaves  
The wind waves on the hills of all the world,  
Yet should the heart not faint, the head not fall,  
The breath not fail of Athens. Say, the Gods   740  
From lips that have no more on earth to say  
Have told thee this the last good news or ill  
That I shall speak in sight of earth and sun  
Or he shall hear and see them : for the next .  
That ear of his from tongue of mine may take  
Must be the first word spoken underground  
From dead to dead in darkness. Hence ; make  
    haste,

Lest war's fleet foot be swifter than thy tongue  
And I that part not to return again  
On him that comes not to depart away           750  
Be fallen before thee ; for the time is full,  
And with such mortal hope as knows not fear  
I go this high last way to the end of all.



## CHORUS.

Who shall put a bridle in the mourner's lips to chasten  
them, [Str. I.

Or seal up the fountains of his tears for shame ?

Song nor prayer nor prophecy shall slacken tears nor  
hasten them,

Till grief be within him as a burnt-out flame ;

Till the passion be broken in his breast

And the might thereof molten into rest,

And the rain of eyes that weep be dry, 760

And the breath be stilled of lips that sigh.

Death at last for all men is a harbour ; yet they flee  
from it, [Ant. I.

Set sails to the storm-wind and again to sea ;

Yet for all their labour no whit further shall they be  
from it,

Nor longer but wearier shall their life's work be.

And with anguish of travail until night

Shall they steer into shipwreck out of sight,

And with oars that break and shrouds that strain

Shall they drive whence no ship steers again.

Bitter and strange is the word of the God most  
high, [Str. 2. 770

And steep the strait of his way.

Through a pass rock-rimmed and narrow the light that  
gleams

On the faces of men falls faint as the dawn of  
dreams,

The dayspring of death as a star in an under sky

Where night is the dead men's day.

As darkness and storm is his will that on earth is  
done, [Ant. 2.

As a cloud is the face of his strength.

King of kings, holiest of holies, and mightiest of  
might,

Lord of the lords of thine heaven that are humble in  
thy sight,

Hast thou set not an end for the path of the fires of  
the sun, 780

To appoint him a rest at length ?

Hast thou told not by measure the waves of the  
waste wide sea, [Str. 3.

And the ways of the wind their master and thrall to  
thee ?

Hast thou filled not the furrows with fruit for  
the world's increase ?

Has thine ear not heard from of old or thine eye not  
read

The thought and the deed of us living, the doom of  
us dead ?

Hast thou made not war upon earth, and again  
made peace ?

Therefore, O father, that seest us whose lives are a  
breath, [Ant. 3.

Take off us thy burden, and give us not wholly to  
death.

For lovely is life, and the law wherein all  
things live, 790

And gracious the season of each, and the hour of its  
kind,

And precious the seed of his life in a wise man's mind ;  
But all save life for his life will a base man give.

But a life that is given for the life of the whole live  
land, [Str. 4.

From a heart unspotted a gift of a spotless hand,  
Of pure will perfect and free, for the land's life's sake,  
What man shall fear not to put forth his hand and take ?

For the fruit of a sweet life plucked in its pure green  
 prime [Ant. 4.

On his hand who plucks is as blood, on his soul as  
 crime. 799

With cursing ye buy not blessing, nor peace with strife,  
 And the hand is hateful that chaffers with death for life.

Hast thou heard, O my heart, and endurest [Str. 5.

The word that is said,

What a garland by sentence found surest

Is wrought for what head?

With what blossomless flowerage of sea-foam and  
 blood-coloured foliage inwound

It shall crown as a heifer's for slaughter the forehead  
 for marriage uncrowned?

How the veils and the wreaths that should  
 cover [Ant. 5.

The brows of the bride

Shall be shed by the breath of what lover 810

And scattered aside?

With a blast of the mouth of what bridegroom the  
 crowns shall be cast from her hair,

And her head by what altar made humble be left of  
 them naked and bare?

At a shrine unbeloved of a God un beholden a gift  
shall be given for the land, [Str. 6.

That its ramparts though shaken with clamour and  
horror of manifold waters may stand :

That the crests of its citadels crowned and its turrets  
that thrust up their heads to the sun

May behold him unblinded with darkness of waves  
overmastering their bulwarks begun.

As a bride shall they bring her, a prey for the bride-  
groom, a flower for the couch of her lord ; [Ant. 6.

They shall muffle her mouth that she cry not or curse  
them, and cover her eyes from the sword.

They shall fasten her lips as with bit and with bridle,  
and darken the light of her face, 820

That the soul of the slayer may not falter, his heart  
be not molten, his hand give not grace.

If she weep then, yet may none that hear take  
pity ; [Str. 7.

If she cry not, none should hearken though she  
cried.

Shall a virgin shield thine head for love, O city,  
With a virgin's blood anointed as for pride ?

Yet we held thee dear and hallowed of her favour, [Ant. 7.  
Dear of all men held thy people to her heart ; .

Nought she loves the breath of blood, the sanguine  
savour,

Who hath built with us her throne and chosen  
her part.

Bloodless are her works, and sweet [*Epod.* 830

All the ways that feel her feet ;

From the empire of her eyes

Light takes life and darkness flies ;

From the harvest of her hands

Wealth strikes root in prosperous lands ;

Wisdom of her word is made ;

At her strength is strength afraid ;

From the beam of her bright spear

War's fleet foot goes back for fear ;

In her shrine she reared the birth 840

Fire-begotten on live earth ;

Glory from her helm was shed

On his olive-shadowed head ;

By no hand but his shall she

Scourge the storms back of the sea,

To no fame but his shall give

Grace being dead with hers to live,

And in double name divine

Half the godhead of their shrine.

But now with what word, with what woe may we  
meet 850

The timeless passage of piteous feet,  
Hither that bend to the last way's end

They shall walk upon earth ?

What song be rolled for a bride black-stoled  
And the mother whose hand of her hand hath hold ?  
For anguish of heart is my soul's strength broken  
And the tongue sealed fast that would fain have  
spoken,

To behold thee, O child of so bitter a birth

That we counted so sweet,

What way thy steps to what bride-feast tend, 860  
What gifts he must give that shall wed thee for token  
If the bridegroom be goodly to greet.

## CHTHONIA.

People, old men of my city, lordly wise and hoar of  
head,

I a spouseless bride and crownless but with garlands  
of the dead

From the fruitful light turn silent to my dark un-  
childed bed.

## CHORUS.

Wise of word was he too surely, but with deadlier  
wisdom wise,  
First who gave thee name from under earth, no breath  
from upper skies,  
When, foredoomed to this day's darkness, their first  
daylight filled thine eyes.

## PRAXITHEA.

Child, my child that wast and art but death's and now  
no more of mine,  
Half my heart is cloven with anguish by the sword  
made sharp for thine, 870  
Half exalts its wing for triumph, that I bare thee  
thus divine.

## CHTHONIA.

Though for me the sword's edge thirst that sets no  
point against thy breast,  
Mother, O my mother, where I drank of life and fell  
on rest,  
Thine, not mine, is all the grief that marks this hour  
accurst and blest.



## CHORUS.

Sweet thy sleep and sweet the bosom was that gave  
thee sleep and birth ;  
Harder now the breast, and girded with no marriage-  
band for girth,  
Where thine head<sup>l</sup> shall sleep, the namechild of the  
lords of under earth.

## PRAXITHEA.

Dark the name and dark the gifts they gave thee  
child, in childbirth were,  
Sprung from him that rent the womb of earth, a  
bitter seed to bear,  
Born with groanings of the ground that gave him  
way toward heaven's dear air. 880

## CHTHONIA.

Day to day makes answer, first to last, and life to  
death ; but I,  
Born for death's sake, die for life's sake, if indeed this  
be to die,  
This my doom that seals me deathless till the springs  
of time run dry.

## CHORUS.

Children shalt thou bear to memory, that to man  
shalt bring forth none ;  
Yea, the lordliest that lift eyes and hearts and songs to  
meet the sun,  
Names to fire men's ears like music till the round  
world's race be run.

## PRAXITHEA.

I thy mother, named of Gods that wreak revenge and  
brand with blame,  
Now for thy love shall be loved as thou, and famous  
with thy fame,  
While this city's name on earth shall be for earth her  
mightiest name.

## CHTHONIA.

That I may give this poor girl's blood of mine 890  
Scarce yet sun-warmed with summer, this thin life  
Still green with flowerless growth of seedling days,  
To build again my city ; that no drop  
Fallen of these innocent veins on the cold ground

But shall help knit the joints of her firm walls  
To knead the stones together, and make sure  
The band about her maiden girdlestead  
Once fastened, and of all men's violent hands  
Inviolable for ever ; these to me  
Were no such gifts as crave no thanksgiving,       900  
If with one blow dividing the sheer life  
I might make end, and one pang wind up all  
And seal mine eyes from sorrow ; for such end  
The Gods give none they love not ; but my heart,  
That leaps up lightened of all sloth or fear  
To take the sword's point, yet with one thought's  
    load  
Flags, and falls back, broken of wing, that halts  
Maimed in mid flight for thy sake and borne down,  
Mother, that in the places where I played  
An arm's length from thy bosom and no more       910  
Shalt find me never, nor thine eye wax glad  
To mix with mine its eyesight and for love  
Laugh without word, filled with sweet light, and speak  
Divine dumb things of the inward spirit and heart,  
Moved silently ; nor hand or lip again  
Touch hand or lip of either, but for mine

Shall thine meet only shadows of swift night,  
Dreams and dead thoughts of dead things ; and the  
bed

Thou strewedst, a sterile place for all time, strewn  
For my sleep only, with its void sad sheets 920  
Shall vex thee, and the unfruitful coverlid  
For empty days reproach me dead, that leave  
No profit of my body, but am gone  
As one not worth being born to bear no seed,  
A sapless stock and branchless ; yet thy womb  
Shall want not honour of me, that brought forth  
For all this people freedom, and for earth  
From the unborn city born out of my blood  
To light the face of all men evermore  
Glory ; but lay thou this to thy great heart 930  
Whereunder in the dark of birth conceived  
Mine unlit life lay girdled with the zone  
That bound thy bridal bosom ; set this thought  
Against all edge of evil as a sword  
To beat back sorrow, that for all the world  
Thou brought'st me forth a saviour, who shall save  
Athens ; for none but I from none but thee  
Shall take this death for garland ; and the men

Mine unknown children of unsounded years,  
My sons unrisen shall rise up at thine hand, 940  
Sown of thy seed to bring forth seed to thee,  
And call thee most of all most fruitful found  
Blessed ; but me too for my barren womb  
More than my sisters for their children born  
Shall these give honour, yea in scorn's own place  
Shall men set love and bring for mockery praise  
And thanks for curses ; for the dry wild vine  
Scoffed at and cursed of all men that was I  
Shall shed them wine to make the world's heart  
warm,  
That all eyes seeing may lighten, and all ears 950  
Hear and be kindled ; such a draught to drink  
Shall be the blood that bids this dust bring forth,  
The chalice life here spilt on this mine earth,  
Mine, my great father's mother ; whom I pray  
Take me now gently, tenderly take home,  
And softly lay in his my cold chaste hand  
Who is called of men by my name, being of Gods  
Charged only and chosen to bring men under earth,  
And now must lead and stay me with his staff  
A silent soul led of a silent God, 960

Toward sightless things led sightless ; and on earth  
 I see now but the shadow of mine end,  
 And this last light of all for me in heaven.

## PRAXITHEA.

Farewell I bid thee ; so bid thou not me,  
 Lest the Gods hear and mock us ; yet on these  
 I lay the weight not of this grief, nor cast  
 Ill words for ill deeds back ; for if one say  
 They have done men wrong, what hurt have they to  
     hear,

Or he what help to have said it ? surely, child,  
 If one among men born might say it and live      970  
 Blameless, none more than I may, who being vexed  
 Hold yet my peace ; for now through tears enough  
 Mine eyes have seen the sun that from this day  
 Thine shall see never more ; and in the night  
 Enough has blown of evil, and mine ears  
 With wail enough the winds have filled, and brought  
 Too much of cloud from over the sharp sea  
 To mar for me the morning ; such a blast  
 Rent from these wide void arms and helpless breast  
 Longsince one graft of me disbranched, and bore      980

Beyond the wild ways of the unwandered world  
And loud wastes of the thunder-throated sea,  
Springs of the night and openings of the heaven,  
The old garden of the Sun ; whence never more  
From west or east shall winds bring back that blow  
From folds of opening heaven or founts of night  
The flower of mine once ravished, born my child  
To bear strange children ; nor on wings of theirs  
Shall comfort come back to me, nor their sire  
Breathe help upon my peril, nor his strength      990  
Raise up my weakness ; but of Gods and men  
I drift unsteered on ruin, and the wave  
Darkens my head with imminent height, and hangs  
Dumb, filled too full with thunder that shall leave  
These ears death-deafened when the tide finds tongue  
And all its wrath bears on them ; thee, O child,  
I help not, nor am holpen ; fain, ah fain,  
More than was ever mother born of man,  
Were I to help thee ; fain beyond all prayer,  
Beyond all thought fain to redeem thee, torn      1000  
More timeless from me sorrowing than the dream  
That was thy sister ; so shalt thou be too,  
Thou but a vision, shadow-shaped of sleep,

By grief made out of nothing ; now but once  
 I touch, but once more hold thee, one more kiss  
 This last time and none other ever more  
 Leave on thy lips and leave them. Go ; thou wast  
 My heart, my heart's blood, life-blood of my life,  
 My child, my nursling ; now this breast once thine  
 Shall rear again no children ; never now                    1010  
 Shall any mortal blossom born like thee  
 Lie there, nor ever with small silent mouth  
 Draw the sweet springs dry for an hour that feed  
 The blind blithe life that knows not ; never head  
 Rest here to make these cold veins warm, nor eye  
 Laugh itself open with the lips that reach  
 Lovingly toward a fount more loving ; these  
 Death makes as all good lesser things now dead,  
 And all the latter hopes that flowered from these  
 And fall as these fell fruitless ; no joy more                    1020  
 Shall man take of thy maidenhood, no tongue  
 Praise it ; no good shall eyes get more of thee  
 That lightened for thy love's sake. Now, take note,  
 Give ear, O all ye people, that my word  
 May pierce your hearts through, and the stroke that  
     cleaves



Be fruitful to them ; so shall all that hear  
Grow great at heart with child of thought most high  
And bring forth seed in season ; this my child,  
This flower of this my body, this sweet life,  
This fair live youth I give you, to be slain, 1030  
Spent, shed, poured out, and perish ; take my gift  
And give it death and the under Gods who crave  
So much for that they give ; for this is more,  
Much more is this than all we ; for they give  
Freedom, and for a blast, an air of breath,  
A little soul that is not, they give back  
Light for all eyes, cheer for all hearts, and life  
That fills the world's width full of fame and praise  
And mightier love than children's. This they give,  
The grace to make thy country great, and wrest 1040  
From time and death power to take hold on her  
And strength to scathe for ever ; and this gift,  
Is this no more than man's love is or mine,  
Mine and all mothers' ? nay, where that seems more,  
Where one loves life of child, wife, father, friend,  
Son, husband, mother, more than this, even there  
Are all these lives worth nothing, all loves else  
With this love slain and buried, and their tomb

A thing for shame to spit on ; for what love  
Hath a slave left to love with ? or the heart 1050  
Base-born and bound in bondage fast to fear,  
What should it do to love thee ? what hath he,  
The man that hath no country ? Gods nor men  
Have such to friend, yoked beast-like to base life,  
Vile, fruitless, grovelling at the foot of death,  
Landless and kinless thralls of no man's blood,  
Unchilded and unmothered, abject limbs  
That breed things abject ; but who loves on earth  
Not friend, wife, husband, father, mother, child,  
Nor loves his own life for his own land's sake, 1060  
But only this thing most, more this than all,  
He loves all well and well of all is loved,  
And this love lives for ever. See now, friends,  
My countrymen, my brothers, with what heart  
I give you this that of your hands again  
The Gods require for Athens ; as I give  
So give ye to them what their hearts would have  
Who shall give back things better ; yea, and these  
I take for me to witness, all these Gods,  
Were their great will more grievous than it is, 1070  
Not one but three, for this one thin-spun thread

A threefold band of children would I give  
For this land's love's sake ; for whose love to-day  
I bid thee, child, fare deathward and farewell.

## CHORUS.

O wofullest of women, yet of all  
Happiest, thy word be hallowed ; in all time  
Thy name shall blossom, and from strange new  
tongues  
High things be spoken of thee ; for such grace  
The Gods have dealt to no man, that on none  
Have laid so heavy sorrow. From this day 1080  
Live thou assured of godhead in thy blood,  
And in thy fate no lowlier than a God  
In all good things and evil ; such a name  
Shall be thy child this city's, and thine own  
Next hers that called it Athens. Go now forth  
Blest, and grace with thee to the doors of death.

## CHTHONIA.

O city, O glory of Athens, O crown of my father's  
land, farewell.

CHORUS.

For welfare is given her of thee.

CHTHONIA.

O Goddess, be good to thy people, that in them  
dominion and freedom may dwell.

CHORUS.

Turn from us the strengths of the sea. 1090

CHTHONIA.

Let glory's and theirs be one name in the mouths of all  
nations made glad with the sun.

CHORUS.

For the cloud is blown back with thy breath.

CHTHONIA.

With the long last love of mine eyes I salute thee,  
O land where my days now are done.

CHORUS.

But her life shall be born of thy death.

CHTHONIA.

I put on me the darkness thy shadow, my mother, and  
symbol, O Earth, of my name.

CHORUS.

For thine was her witness from birth.

CHTHONIA.

In thy likeness I come to thee darkling, a daughter  
whose dawn and her even are the same.

CHORUS.

Be thine heart to her gracious, O Earth.

CHTHONIA.

To thine own kind be kindly, for thy son's name's  
sake.

CHORUS.

That sons unborn may praise thee and thy first-  
born son.

1100

CHTHONIA.

Give me thy sleep, who give thee all my life awake.

CHORUS.

Too swift a sleep, ere half the web of day be spun.

CHTHONIA.

Death brings the shears or ever life wind up the weft.

CHORUS.

Their edge is ground and sharpened ; who shall  
stay his hand ?

CHTHONIA.

The woof is thin, a small short life, with no thread  
left.

CHORUS.

Yet hath it strength, stretched out, to shelter all  
the land.

CHTHONIA.

Too frail a tent for covering, and a screen too strait.

CHORUS.

Yet broad enough for buckler shall thy sweet life be.

CHTHONIA.

A little bolt to bar off battle from the gate.

## CHORUS.

A wide sea-wall, that shatters the besieging sea.

## CHTHONIA.

I lift up mine eyes from the skirts of the shadow, [*Str.*

From the border of death to the limits of light ;

O streams and rivers of mountain and meadow,

That hallow the last of my sight,

O father that wast of my mother

Cephisus, O thou too his brother

From the bloom of whose banks as a prey

Winds harried my sister away,

O crown on the world's head lying

Too high for its waters to drown, 1120

Take yet this one word of me dying,

O city, O crown.

Though land-wind and sea-wind with mouths that

blow slaughter [*Ant.*

Should gird them to battle against thee again,

New-born of the blood of a maiden thy daughter,

The rage of their breath shall be vain.

For their strength shall be quenched and made idle

And the foam of their mouths find a bridle,

And the height of their heads bow down  
 At the foot of the towers of the town. 1130  
 Be blest and beloved as I love thee  
     Of all that shall draw from thee breath ;  
 Be thy life as the sun's is above thee ;  
     I go to my death.

## CHORUS.

Many loves of many a mood and many a kind [*Str.* 1.  
 Fill the life of man, and mould the secret mind ;  
 Many days bring many dooms, to loose and bind ;  
 Sweet is each in season, good the gift it brings,  
 Sweet as change of night and day with altering  
     wings,  
 Night that lulls world-weary day, day that comforts  
     night, 1140  
 Night that fills our eyes with sleep, day that fills with  
     light.  
 None of all is lovelier, loftier love is none, [*Ant.* 1.  
 Less is bride's for bridegroom, mother's less for son,  
 Child, than this that crowns and binds up all in one ;  
 Love of thy sweet light, thy fostering breast and hand,  
 Mother Earth, and city chosen, and natural land ;



Hills that bring the strong streams forth, heights of  
heavenlier air,

Fields aflower with winds and suns, woods with  
shadowing hair.

But none of the nations of men shall they liken to  
thee, [Str. 2.

Whose children true-born and the fruit of thy body  
are we. 1150

The rest are thy sons but in figure, in word are thy  
seed ;

We only the flower of thy travail, thy children in-  
deed.

Of thy soil hast thou fashioned our limbs, of thy  
waters their blood,

And the life of thy springs everlasting is fount of our  
flood.

No wind oversea blew us hither adrift on thy shore,  
None sowed us by land in thy womb that conceived  
us and bore.

But the stroke of the shaft of the sunlight that brought  
us to birth

Pierced only and quickened thy furrows to bear us,  
O Earth.

With the beams of his love wast thou cloven as with  
iron or fire,

And the life in thee yearned for his life, and grew  
great with desire. 1160

And the hunger and thirst to be wounded and healed  
with his dart

Made fruitful the love in thy veins and the depth of  
thine heart.

And the showers out of heaven overflowing and liquid  
with love

Fulfilled thee with child of his godhead as rain from  
above.

Such desire had ye twain of each other, till molten  
in one [Ant. 2.]

Ye might bear and beget of your bodies the fruits of  
the sun.

And the trees in their season brought forth and were  
kindled anew

By the warmth of the moisture of marriage, the child-  
bearing dew.

And the firstlings were fair of the wedlock of heaven  
and of earth ;

All countries were bounteous with blossoms and  
burgeon of birth, 1170

Green pastures of grass for all cattle, and life-giving  
corn ;

But here of thy bosom, here only, the man-child was  
born.

All races but one are as aliens engrafted or sown,  
Strange children and changelings ; but we, O our  
mother, thine own.

Thy nurslings are others, and seedlings they know not  
of whom ;

For these hast thou fostered, but us thou hast borne  
in thy womb.

Who is he of us all, O beloved, that owe thee for birth,  
Who would give not his blood for his birth's sake, O  
mother, O Earth ?

What landsman is he that was fostered and reared of  
thine hand

Who may vaunt him as we may in death though he  
die for the land ?

1180

Well doth she therefore who gives thee in guerdon  
The bloom of the life of thy giving ; [*Epode.*  
And thy body was bowed by no fruitless burden,  
That bore such fruit of thee living.

For her face was not darkened for fear,  
For her eyelids conceived not a tear,  
Nor a cry from her lips craved pity ;  
But her mouth was a fountain of song,  
And her heart as a citadel strong  
That guards the heart of the city. 1190

## MESSENGER.

High things of strong-souled men that loved their land  
On brass and stone are written, and their deeds  
On high days chanted ; but none graven or sung  
That ever set men's eyes or spirits on fire,  
Athenians, has the sun's height seen, or earth  
Heard in her depth reverberate as from heaven,  
More worth men's praise and good report of Gods  
Than here I bring for record in your ears.  
For now being come to the altar, where as priest  
Death ministering should meet her, and his hand 1200  
Seal her sweet eyes asleep, the maiden stood,  
With light in all her face as of a bride  
Smiling, or shine of festal flame by night  
Far flung from towers of triumph ; and her lips  
Trembled with pride in pleasure, that no fear

Blanched them nor death before his time drank dry  
The blood whose bloom fulfilled them ; for her cheeks  
Lightened, and brighter than a bridal veil  
Her hair enrobed her bosom and enrolled  
From face to feet the body's whole soft length 1210  
As with a cloud sun-saturate ; then she spake  
With maiden tongue words manlike, but her eyes  
Lit mildly like a maiden's : *Countrymen,*  
*With more goodwill and height of happier heart*  
*I give me to you than my mother bare,*  
*And go more gladly this great way to death*  
*Than young men bound to battle.* Then with face  
Turned to the shadowiest part of all the shrine  
And eyes fast set upon the further shade, 1219  
*Take me, dear Gods ;* and as some form had shone  
From the deep hollow shadow, some God's tongue  
Answered, *I bless you that your guardian grace*  
*Gives me to guard this country, takes my blood,*  
*Your child's by name, to heal it.* Then the priest  
Set to the flower-sweet snow of her soft throat  
The sheer knife's edge that severed it, and loosed  
From the fair bondage of so spotless flesh  
So strong a spirit ; and all that girt them round  
Gazing, with souls that hung on that sad stroke,

Groaned, and kept silence after while a man 1230  
 Might count how far the fresh blood crept, and bathed  
 How deep the dark robe and the bright shrine's base  
 Red-rounded with a running ring that grew  
 More large and duskier as the wells that fed  
 Were drained of that pure effluence : but the queen  
 Groaned not nor spake nor wept, but as a dream  
 Floats out of eyes awakening so past forth  
 Ghost-like, a shadow of sorrow, from all sight  
 To the inner court and chamber where she sits 1239  
 Dumb, till word reach her of this whole day's end.

## CHORUS.

More hapless born by far [Str.  
 Beneath some wintrier star,  
 One sits in stone among high Lydian snows,  
 The tomb of her own woes :  
 Yet happiest was once of the daughters of Gods, and  
 divine by her sire and her lord,  
 Ere her tongue was a shaft for the hearts of her sons,  
 for the heart of her husband a sword.  
 For she, too great of mind, [Ant.  
 Grown through her good things blind,

With godless lips and fire of her own breath  
Spake all her house to death ; 1250  
But thou, no mother unmothered, nor kindled in spirit  
with pride of thy seed,  
Thou hast hallowed thy child for a blameless blood-  
offering, and ransomed thy race by thy deed.

## MESSENGER.

As flower is grafted on flower, so grief on grief  
Engrafted brings forth new blossoms of strange tears,  
Fresh buds and green fruits of an alien pain ;  
For now flies rumour on a dark wide wing,  
Murmuring of woes more than ye knew, most like  
Hers whom ye hailed most wretched ; for the twain  
Last left of all this house that wore last night  
A threefold crown of maidens, and to-day 1260  
Should let but one fall dead out of the wreath,  
If mad with grief we know not and sore love  
For this their sister, or with shame soul-stung  
To outlive her dead or doubt lest their lives too  
The Gods require to seal their country safe  
And bring the oracular doom to perfect end,

Have slain themselves, and fallen at the altar-foot  
 Lie by their own hands done to death ; and fear  
 Shakes all the city as winds a wintering tree, 1269  
 And as dead leaves are men's hearts blown about  
 And shrunken with ill thoughts, and flowerless hopes  
 Parched up with presage, lest the piteous blood  
 Shed of these maidens guiltless fall and fix  
 On this land's forehead like a curse that cleaves  
 To the unclean soul's inexpiate hunted head  
 Whom his own crime tracks hotlier than a hound  
 To life's veiled end unsleeping ; and this hour  
 Now blackens toward the battle that must close  
 All gates of hope and fear on all their hearts  
 Who tremble toward its issue, knowing not yet 1280  
 If blood may buy them surety, cleanse or soil  
 The helpless hands men raise and reach no stay.

## CHORUS.

Ill thoughts breed fear, and fear ill words ; but these  
 The Gods turn from us that have kept their law.

Let us lift up the strength of our hearts in song, [*Str.* 1.

And our souls to the height of the darkling day.

If the wind in our eyes blow blood for spray,



Be the spirit that breathes in us life more  
strong,  
Though the prow reel round and the helm point  
wrong,  
And sharp reefs whiten the shoreward way. 1290  
For the steersman time sits hidden astern, [Ant. 6.  
With dark hand plying the rudder of doom,  
And the surf-smoke under it flies like fume  
As the blast shears off and the oar-blades churn  
The foam of our lives that to death return,  
Blown back as they break to the gulping gloom.  
What cloud upon heaven is arisen, what shadow,  
what sound, [Str. 2.  
From the world beyond earth, from the night  
underground,  
That scatters from wings un beholden the weight of its  
darkness around?  
For the sense of my spirit is broken, and blinded its  
eye, [Ant. 2. 1300  
As the soul of a sick man ready to die,  
With fear of the hour that is on me, with dread if an  
end be not nigh.

O Earth, O Gods of the land, have ye heart now to  
see and to hear [Str. 3.

What slays with terror mine eyesight and seals  
mine ear ?

O fountains of streams everlasting, are all ye not  
shrunk up and withered for fear ?

Lo, night is arisen on the noon, and her hounds  
are in quest by day, [Ant. 3.

And the world is fulfilled of the noise of them  
crying for their prey,

And the sun's self stricken in heaven, and cast out of  
his course as a blind man astray.

From east to west of the south sea-line [Str. 4.

Glitters the lightning of spears that shine ; 1310

As a storm-cloud swoln that comes up from the  
skirts of the sea

By the wind for helmsman to shoreward ferried,

So black behind them the live storm serried

Shakes earth with the tramp of its foot, and the  
terror to be.

Shall the sea give death whom the land gave  
birth ? [Ant. 4.

O Earth, fair mother, O sweet live Earth,

Hide us again in thy womb from the waves of it,  
help us or hide.

As a sword is the heart of the God thy brother,  
But thine as the heart of a new-made mother,  
To deliver thy sons from his ravin, and rage of his  
tide. 1320

O strong north wind, the pilot of cloud and rain,  
For the gifts we gave thee what gift hast thou  
given us again? [Str. 5.]

O God dark-winged, deep-throated, a terror to forth-  
faring ships by night,  
What bride-song is this that is blown on the blast  
of thy breath?

A gift but of grief to thy kinsmen, a song but of  
death,

For the bride's folk weeping, and woe for her father,  
who finds thee against him in fight.

Turn back from us, turn thy battle, take heed of  
our cry; [Ant. 5.]

Let thy dread breath sound, and the waters of  
war be dry;

Let thy strong wrath shatter the strength of our foe-  
men, the sword of their strength and the shield;

As vapours in heaven, or as waves or the wrecks  
of ships, 1330  
So break thou the ranks of their spears with the  
breath of thy lips,  
Till their corpses have covered and clothed as with  
raiment the face of the sword-ploughed field.  
O son of the rose-red morning, O God twin-born  
with the day, [Str. 6.  
O wind with the young sun waking, and winged for  
the same wide way,  
Give up not the house of thy kin to the host thou  
hast marshalled from northward for prey.  
From the cold of thy cradle in Thrace, from the  
mists of the fountains of night, [Ant. 6.  
From the bride-bed of dawn whence day leaps  
laughing, on fire for his flight,  
Come down with their doom in thine hand on the  
ships thou hast brought up against us to fight.  
For now not in word but in deed is the harvest of  
spears begun, [Str. 7.  
And its clamour outbellows the thunder, its lightning  
outlightens the sun. 1340

From the springs of the morning it thunders and  
lightens across and afar  
To the wave where the moonset ends and the fall of  
the last low star.  
With a trampling of drenched red hoofs and an earth-  
quake of men that meet,  
Strong war sets hand to the scythe, and the furrows  
take fire from his feet.  
Earth groans from her great rent heart, and the  
hollows of rocks are afraid,  
And the mountains are moved, and the valleys as  
waves in a storm-wind swayed.  
From the roots of the hills to the plain's dim verge  
and the dark loud shore,  
Air shudders with shrill spears crossing, and hurtling  
of wheels that roar.  
As the grinding of teeth in the jaws of a lion that  
foam as they gnash  
Is the shriek of the axles that loosen, the shock of the  
poles that crash. 1350  
The dense manes darken and glitter, the mouths of  
the mad steeds champ,  
Their heads flash blind through the battle, and death's  
foot rings in their tramp.

---

For a fourfold host upon earth and in heaven is  
arrayed for the fight,  
Clouds ruining in thunder and armies encountering  
as clouds in the night.  
Mine ears are amazed with the terror of trumpets,  
with darkness mine eyes,  
At the sound of the sea's host charging that deafens  
the roar of the sky's.  
White frontlet is dashed upon frontlet, and horse  
against horse reels hurled,  
And the gorge of the gulfs of the battle is wide for  
the spoil of the world.  
And the meadows are cumbered with shipwreck of  
chariots that founder on land, [Ant. 7.  
And the horsemen are broken with breach as of  
breakers, and scattered as sand. 1360  
Through the roar and recoil of the charges that  
mingle their cries and confound,  
Like fire are the notes of the trumpets that flash  
through the darkness of sound.  
As the swing of the sea churned yellow that sways  
with the wind as it swells  
Is the lift and relapse of the wave of the chargers  
that clash with their bells ;

And the clang of the sharp shrill brass through the  
burst of the wave as it shocks  
Rings clean as the clear wind's cry through the roar  
of the surge on the rocks :  
And the heads of the steeds in their headgear of war,  
and their corsleted breasts,  
Gleam broad as the brows of the billows that brighten  
the storm with their crests,  
Gleam dread as their bosoms that heave to the ship-  
wrecking wind as they rise,  
Filled full of the terror and thunder of water, that  
slays as it dies. 1370  
So dire is the glare of their foreheads, so fearful the  
fire of their breath,  
And the light of their eyeballs enkindled so bright  
with the lightnings of death ;  
And the foam of their mouths as the sea's when the  
jaws of its gulf are as graves,  
And the ridge of their necks as the wind-shaken mane  
on the ridges of waves :  
And their fetlocks afire as they rear drip thick with a  
dewfall of blood  
As the lips of the rearing breaker with froth of the  
manslaying flood.

And the whole plain reels and resounds as the fields  
of the sea by night

When the stroke of the wind falls darkling, and death  
is the seafarer's light.

But thou, fair beauty of heaven, dear face of the day  
nigh dead, [*Epode.*

What horror hath hidden thy glory, what hand hath  
muffled thine head? 1380

O sun, with what song shall we call thee, or ward off  
thy wrath by what name,

With what prayer shall we seek to thee, soothe with  
what incense, assuage with what gift,

If thy light be such only as lightens to deathward  
the seaman adrift

With the fire of his house for a beacon, that foemen  
have wasted with flame?

Arise now, lift up thy light; give ear to us, put forth  
thine hand,

Reach toward us thy torch of deliverance, a lamp for  
the night of the land.

Thine eye is the light of the living, no lamp for the  
dead;

O, lift up the light of thine eye on the dark of our  
dread.



Who hath blinded thee? who hath prevailed on  
thee? who hath ensnared?

Who hath broken thy bow, and the shafts for thy  
battle prepared? 1390

Have they found out a fetter to bind thee, a chain for  
thine arm that was bared?

Be the name of thy conqueror set forth, and the might  
of thy master declared.

O God, fair God of the morning, O glory of day,  
What ails thee to cast from thy forehead its  
garland away?

To pluck from thy temples their chaplet enwreathed  
of the light,

And bind on the brows of thy godhead a frontlet  
of night?

Thou hast loosened the necks of thine horses, and  
goaded their flanks with affright,

To the race of a course that we know not on ways  
that are hid from our sight.

As a wind through the darkness the wheels of their  
chariot are whirled,

And the light of its passage is night on the face of  
the world. 1400

And there falls from the wings of thy glory no help  
from on high,  
But a shadow that smites us with fear and desire of  
thine eye.  
For our hearts are as reeds that a wind on the water  
bows down and goes by,  
To behold not thy comfort in heaven that hath left us  
untimely to die.  
But what light is it now leaps forth on the land  
Enkindling the waters and ways of the air  
From thy forehead made bare,  
From the gleam of thy bow-bearing hand?  
Hast thou set not thy left hand again to the string,  
With the back-bowed horns bent sharp for a spring  
And the barbed shaft drawn, 1411  
Till the shrill steel sing and the tense nerve ring  
That pierces the heart of the dark with dawn,  
O huntsman, O king,  
When the flame of thy face hath twilight in chase  
As a hound hath a blood-mottled fawn?  
He has glanced into golden the grey sea-strands,  
And the clouds are shot through with the fires of  
his hands,

And the height of the hollow of heaven that he  
fills

As the heart of a strong man is quickened and  
thrills ; 1420

High over the folds of the low-lying lands,  
On the shadowless hills

As a guard on his watchtower he stands.

All earth and all ocean, all depth and all height,  
At the flash of an eyebeam are filled with his might :  
The sea roars backward, the storm drops dumb,  
And silence as dew on the fire of the fight  
Falls kind in our ears as his face in our sight

With presage of peace to come. 1429

Fresh hope in my heart from the ashes of dread  
Leaps clear as a flame from the pyres of the dead,  
That joy out of woe

May arise as the spring out of tempest and snow,  
With the flower-feasted month in her hands rose-red  
Borne soft as a babe from the bearing-bed.  
Yet it knows not indeed if a God be friend,  
If rescue may be from the rage of the sea,

Or the wrath of its lord have end.

For the season is full now of death or of birth,



Till the whole good hap find utterance that the Gods  
have given at length.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

All is this, that yet the city stands unforced by  
stranger strength.

CHORUS.

Sweeter sound might no mouth utter in man's ear  
than this thy word.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

Feed thy soul then full of sweetness till some bitterer  
note be heard.

CHORUS.

None, if this ring sure, can mar the music fallen from  
heaven as rain.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

If no fire of sun or star untimely sear the tender  
grain.

CHORUS.

Fresh the dewfall of thy tidings on our hopes reflower-  
ing lies.

## ATHENIAN HERALD.

Till a joyless shower and fruitless blight them, raining  
from thine eyes.

## CHORUS.

Bitter springs have barren issues ; these bedew grief's  
arid sands.

## ATHENIAN HERALD.

Such thank-offerings ask such altars as expect thy  
suppliant hands.

## CHORUS.

Tears for triumph, wail for welfare, what strange god-  
head's shrine requires ?

## ATHENIAN HERALD.

Death's or victory's be it, a funeral torch feeds all  
its festal fires.

## CHORUS.

Like a star should burn the beacon flaming from  
our city's head.

## ATHENIAN HERALD.

Like a balefire should the flame go up that says the  
king is dead.

## CHORUS.

Out of heaven, a wild-haired meteor, shoots this new  
sign, scattering fear.

## ATHENIAN HERALD.

Yea, the word has wings of fire that hovered, loth to  
burn thine ear.

## CHORUS.

From thy lips it leapt forth loosened on a shrill  
and shadowy wing. 1470

## ATHENIAN HERALD.

Long they faltered, fain to hide it deep as death that  
hides the king.

## CHORUS.

Dead with him blind hope lies blasted by the lightning  
of one sword.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

On thy tongue truth wars with error ; no man's edge  
hath touched thy lord.

CHORUS.

False was thine then, jangling menace like a war-  
steed's brow-bound bell ?

ATHENIAN HERALD.

False it rang not joy nor sorrow ; but by no man's  
hand he fell.

CHORUS.

Vainly then good news and evil through so faint a  
trumpet spake.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

All too long thy soul yet labours, as who sleeping fain  
would wake,  
Waking, fain would fall on sleep again ; the woe thou  
knowest not yet,  
When thou knowest, shall make thy memory thirst  
and hunger to forget.



## CHORUS.

Long my heart has hearkened, hanging on thy clamorous  
ous ominous cry, 1480  
Fain yet fearful of the knowledge whence it looks to  
live or die ;  
Now to take the perfect presage of thy dark and side-  
long flight  
Comes a surer soothsayer sorrowing, sable-stoled as  
birds of night.

## PRAXITHEA.

Man, what thy mother bare thee born to say  
Speak ; for no word yet wavering on thy lip  
Can wound me worse than thought forestalls or fear.

## ATHENIAN HERALD.

I have no will to weave too fine or far,  
O queen, the weft of sweet with bitter speech,  
Bright words with darkling ; but the brief truth shown  
Shall plead my pardon for a lingering tongue, 1490  
Loth yet to strike hope through the heart and slay.  
The sun's light still was lordly housed in heaven  
When the twain fronts of war encountering smote

First fire out of the battle ; but not long  
 Had the fresh wave of windy fight begun  
 Heaving, and all the surge of swords to sway,  
 When timeless night laid hold of heaven, and took  
 With its great gorge the noon as in a gulf,  
 Strangled ; and thicker than the shrill-winged shafts  
 Flew the fleet lightnings, held in chase through heaven  
 By headlong heat of thunders on their trail        1501  
 Loosed as on quest of quarry ; that our host  
 Smit with sick presage of some wrathful God  
 Quailed, but the foe as from one iron throat  
 With one great sheer sole thousand-throated cry  
 Shook earth, heart-staggered from their shout, and  
       clove

The cycless hollow of heaven ; and breached therewith  
 As with an onset of strength-shattering sound  
 The rent vault of the roaring noon of night  
 From her throned seat of usurpation rang        1510  
 Reverberate answer ; such response there pealed  
 As though the tide's charge of a storming sea  
 Had burst the sky's wall, and made broad a breach  
 In the ambient girth and bastion flanked with stars  
 Guarding the fortress of the Gods, and all

Crashed now together on ruin ; and through that cry  
 And higher above it ceasing one man's note  
 Tore its way like a trumpet : *Charge, make end,*  
*Charge, halt not, strike, rend up their strength by the*  
*roots,*

*Strike, break them, make your birthright's promise*  
*sure,* 1520

*Show your hearts hardier than the fenced land breeds*  
*And souls breathed in you from no spirit of earth,*  
*Sons of the sea's waves ;* and all ears that heard  
 Rang with that fiery cry, that the fine air  
 Thereat was fired, and kindling filled the plain  
 Full of that fierce and trumpet-quenching breath  
 That spake the clarions silent ; no glad song  
 For folk to hear that wist how dire a God  
 Begat this peril to them, what strong race 1529  
 Fathered the sea-born tongue that sang them death,  
 Threatening ; so raged through the red foam of fight  
 Poseidon's son Eumolpus ; and the war  
 Quailed round him coming, and our side bore back,  
 As a stream thwarted by the wind and sea  
 That meet it midway mouth to mouth, and beat  
 The flood back of its issue ; but the king

Shouted against them, crying, *O Father-God,*  
*Source of the God my father, from thine hand*  
*Send me what end seems good now in thy sight,*  
*But death from mine to this man ;* and the word 1540  
Quick on his lips yet like a blast of fire  
Blew them together ; and round its lords that met  
Paused all the reeling battle ; two main waves  
Meeting, one hurled sheer from the sea-wall back  
That shocks it sideways, one right in from sea  
Charging, that full in face takes at one blow  
That whole recoil and ruin, with less fear  
Startle men's eyes late shipwrecked ; for a breath  
Crest fronting crest hung, wave to wave rose poised,  
Then clashed, breaker to breaker ; cloud with cloud  
In heaven, chariot with chariot closed on earth, 1551  
One fourfold flash and thunder ; yet a breath,  
And with the king's spear through his red heart's root  
Driven, like a rock split from its hill-side, fell  
Hurled under his own horsehoofs dead on earth  
The sea-beast that made war on earth from sea,  
Dumb, with no shrill note left of storming song,  
Eumolpus ; and his whole host with one stroke  
Spear-stricken through its dense deep iron heart

Fell hurtling from us, and in fierce recoil 1560

Drew seaward as with one wide wail of waves,

Resorbed with reluctance ; such a groan

Rose from the fluctuant refluece of its ranks,

Sucked sullen back and strengthless ; but scarce yet

The steeds had sprung and wheels had bruised their

lord

Fallen, when from highest height of the sundering

heaven

The Father for his brother's son's sake slain

Sent a sheer shaft of lightning writhen and smote

Right on his son's son's forehead, that unhelmed

Shone like the star that shines down storm, and gave

Light to men's eyes that saw thy lord their king 1571

Stand and take breath from battle ; then too soon

Saw sink down as a sunset in sea-mist

The high bright head that here in van of the earth

Rose like a headland, and through storm and night

Took all the sea's wrath on it ; and now dead

They bring thee back by war-forsaken ways

The strength called once thy husband, the great guard

That was of all men, stay of all men's lives,

They bear him slain of no man but a God, 1580

Godlike ; and toward him dead the city's gates  
 Fling their arms open mother-like, through him  
 Saved ; and the whole clear land is purged of war.  
 What wilt thou say now of this weal and woe ?

## PRAXITHEA.

I praise the Gods for Athens. O sweet Earth,  
 Mother, what joy thy soul has of thy son,  
 Thy life of my dead lord, mine own soul knows  
 That knows thee godlike ; and what grief should mine,  
 What sorrow should my heart have, who behold  
 Thee made so heavenlike happy ? This alone 1590  
 I only of all these blessed, all thy kind,  
 Crave this for blessing to me, that in theirs  
 Have but a part thus bitter ; give me too  
 Death, and the sight of eyes that meet not mine.  
 And thee too from no godless heart or tongue  
 Reproachful, thee too by thy living name,  
 Father divine, merciful God, I call,  
 Spring of my lifesprings, fountain of my stream,  
 Pure and poured forth to one great end with thine,  
 Sweet head sublime of triumph and these tears, 1600

Cephisus, if thou seest as gladly shed  
 Thy blood in mine as thine own waves are given  
 To do this great land good, to give for love  
 The same lips drink and comfort the same hearts,  
 Do thou then, O my father, white-souled God,  
 To thy most pure earth-hallowing heart eterne  
 Take what thou gavest to be given for these,  
 Take thy child to thee ; for her time is full,  
 For all she hath borne she hath given, seen all she  
 had

Flow from her, from her eyes and breasts and  
 hands 1610

Flow forth to feed this people ; but be thou,  
 Dear God and gracious to all souls alive,  
 Good to thine own seed also ; let me sleep,  
 Father ; my sleepless darkling day is done,  
 My day of life like night, but slumberless :  
 For all my fresh fair springs, and his that ran  
 In one stream's bed with mine, are all run out  
 Into the deep of death. The Gods have saved  
 Athens ; my blood has bought her at their hand,  
 And ye sit safe ; be glorious and be glad 1620  
 As now for all time always, countrymen,

And love my dead for ever ; but me, me,  
 What shall man give for these so good as death ?

## CHORUS.

From the cup of my heart I pour through my lips  
 along [Str. 1.

The mingled wine of a joyful and sorrowful song ;  
 Wine sweeter than honey and bitterer than blood that  
 is poured

From the chalice of gold, from the point of the two-  
 edged sword.

For the city redeemed should joy flow forth as a flood,  
 And a dirge make moan for the city polluted with  
 blood.

Great praise should the Gods have surely, my  
 country, of thee, [Ant. 1. 1630

Were thy brow but as white as of old for thy sons to  
 see,

Were thy hands as bloodless, as blameless thy cheek  
 divine ;

But a stain on it stands of the life-blood offered for  
 thine.



What thanks shall we give that are mixed not and  
marred with dread

For the price that has ransomed thine own with thine  
own child's head ?

For a taint there cleaves to the people redeemed  
with blood, [Str. 2.

And a plague to the blood-red hand.

The rain shall not cleanse it, the dew nor the  
sacred flood

That blesses the glad live land.

In the darkness of earth beneath, in the world with-  
out sun, [Ant. 2. 1640

The shadows of past things reign ;

And a cry goes up from the ghost of an ill deed  
done,

And a curse for a virgin slain.

ATHENA.

Hear, men that mourn, and woman without mate,

Hearken ; ye sick of soul with fear, and thou

Dumb-stricken for thy children ; hear ye too,

Earth, and the glory of heaven, and winds of the air,

And the most holy heart of the deep sea,

Late wroth, now full of quiet ; hear thou, sun,  
Rolled round with the upper fire of rolling heaven 1650  
And all the stars returning ; hills and streams,  
Springs and fresh fountains, day that seest these deeds,  
Night that shalt hide not ; and thou child of mine,  
Child of a maiden, by a maid redeemed,  
Blood-guiltless, though bought back with innocent  
    blood,  
City mine own ; I Pallas bring thee word,  
I virgin daughter of the most high God  
Give all you charge and lay command on all  
The word I bring be wasted not ; for this  
The Gods have stablished and his soul hath sworn,  
That time nor earth nor changing sons of man 1661  
Nor waves of generations, nor the winds  
Of ages risen and fallen that steer their tides  
Through light and dark of birth and lovelier death  
From storm toward haven inviolable, shall see  
So great a light alive beneath the sun  
As the awless eye of Athens ; all fame else  
Shall be to her fame as a shadow in sleep  
To this wide noon at waking ; men most praised  
In lands most happy for their children found 1670

Shall hold as highest of honours given of God  
To be but likened to the least of thine,  
Thy least of all, my city ; thine shall be  
The crown of all songs sung, of all deeds done  
Thine the full flower for all time ; in thine hand  
Shall time be like a sceptre, and thine head  
Wear worship for a garland ; nor one leaf  
Shall change or winter cast out of thy crown  
Till all flowers wither in the world ; thine eyes  
Shall first in man's flash lightning liberty, 1680  
Thy tongue shall first say freedom ; thy first hand  
Shall loose the thunder terror as a hound  
To hunt from sunset to the springs of the sun  
Kings that rose up out of the populous east  
To make their quarry of thee, and shall strew  
With multitudinous limbs of myriad herds  
The foodless pastures of the sea, and make  
With wrecks immeasurable and unsummed defeat  
One ruin of all their many-folded flocks  
Ill shepherded from Asia ; by thy side 1690  
Shall fight thy son the north wind, and the sea  
That was thine enemy shall be sworn thy friend  
And hand be struck in hand of his and thine

To hold faith fast for aye ; with thee, though each  
Make war on other, wind and sea shall keep  
Peace, and take truce as brethren for thy sake  
Leagued with one spirit and single-hearted strength  
To break thy foes in pieces, who shall meet  
The wind's whole soul and might of the main sea  
Full in their face of battle, and become 1700  
A laughter to thee ; like a shower of leaves  
Shall their long galleys rank by staggering rank  
Be dashed adrift on ruin, and in thy sight  
The sea deride them, and that lord of the air  
Who took by violent hand thy child to wife  
With his loud lips bemock them, by his breath  
Swept out of sight of being ; so great a grace  
Shall this day give thee, that makes one in heart  
With mine the deep sea's godhead, and his son  
With him that was thine helmsman, king with king,  
Dead man with dead ; such only names as these 1711  
Shalt thou call royal, take none else or less  
To hold of men in honour ; but with me  
Shall these be worshipped as one God, and mix  
With mine the might of their mysterious names  
In one same shrine served singly, thence to keep

Perpetual guard on Athens ; time and change,  
Masters and lords of all men, shall be made  
To thee that knowest no master and no lord  
Servants ; the days that lighten heaven and nights  
That darken shall be ministers of thine 1721  
To attend upon thy glory, the great years  
As light-engraven letters of thy name  
Writ by the sun's hand on the front of the earth  
For world-beholden witness ; such a gift  
For one fair chaplet of three lives enwreathed  
To hang for ever from thy storied shrine,  
And this thy steersman fallen with tiller in hand  
To stand for ever at thy ship's helm seen,  
Shall he that bade their threefold flower be shorn 1730  
And laid him low that planted, give thee back  
In sign of sweet land reconciled with sea  
And heavenlike earth with heaven ; such promise-  
pledge  
I daughter without mother born of God  
To the most woful mother born of man  
Plight for continual comfort. Hail, and live  
Beyond all human hap of mortal doom  
Happy ; for so my sire hath sworn and I.

## PRAXITHEA.

O queen Athena, from a heart made whole  
Take as thou givest us blessing ; never tear      1740  
Shall stain for shame nor groan untune the song  
That as a bird shall spread and fold its wings  
Here in thy praise for ever, and fulfil  
The whole world's crowning city crowned with thee  
As the sun's eye fulfils and crowns with sight  
The circling crown of heaven. There is no grief  
Great as the joy to be made one in will  
With him that is the heart and rule of life  
And thee, God born of God ; thy name is ours,  
And thy large grace more great than our desire. 1750

## CHORUS.

From the depth of the springs of my spirit a fountain  
is poured of thanksgiving,  
My country, my mother, for thee,  
That thy dead for their death shall have life in thy  
sight and a name everliving  
At heart of thy people to be.

---

In the darkness of change on the waters of time they  
shall turn from afar

To the beam of this dawn for a beacon, the light of  
these pyres for a star.

They shall see thee who love and take comfort, who  
hate thee shall see and take warning,

Our mother that makest us free ;

And the sons of thine earth shall have help of the  
waves that made war on their morning,

And friendship and fame of the sea.

1760





## NOTES.

v. 497-503. Cf. Eurip. Fr. *Erechtheus*, 46-49.

v. 522-530. Id. 32-40.

v. 778. Æsch. *Supp.* 524-6.

v. 984. Soph. Fr. (*Oreithyia*) 326.

ὑπέρ τε πόντον πάντ' ἐπ' ἔσχατα χθονὸς  
νυκτός τε πηγὰς οὐρανοῦ τ' ἀναπτυχὰς,  
Φοίβου παλαιὸν κῆπον.

v. 1163. Æsch. Fr. (*Danaïdes*) 108.

ὄμβρος δ' ἀπ' εὐνάεντος οὐρανοῦ πεσὼν  
ἔκυσε γαῖαν.

v. 1168. Id. δενδρῶτις ὦρα δ' ἐκ νοτίζοντος γάμου  
τελείος ἔστι.

v. 1749. 'God born of God.' Soph. Ant. 834. θεός τοι καὶ θεογενής.

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