FRAGMENTS

For that which to us women bringeth shame
One ought in women’s presence to conceal.

610

Would’st thou count up the roll of happy men,
Thou shalt not find one mortal truly blest.

611

Ah, women! no one can escape disgrace
On whom Zeus sendeth ills in armed array;
And heaven-sent plagues we still must bear perforce.

612

Sons are the anchors of a mother’s life.

622

Thou art but young; and thou hast much to learn,
And many things to hear and understand
Seek still to add fresh knowledge profitable.

626

Death comes, the last great healer of all ills.

649

Ah, boy! ’tis just the noble and the good
That Ares loves to slay. The bold in tongue,
Shunning all pain, are out of danger’s reach;
For Ares careth not for coward souls.

657

Time, stripping off the veil, brings all to light.

658

Time, even Time, in all the vast expanse
Of this our human life,
Finds plenteous wisdom for the souls that seek.
FRAGMENTS

659
But when the Gods would hide the things of heaven,
Thou can'st not learn, although thou travel far.

660
One wise man is no match for many fools.

661
A good man still will succour the distressed.

662
True wisdom ranks among the Gods most high.

663
They that fare ill become not only deaf,
But, even though they gaze, they see not clear
What lies before them.

Sore evil still, and all unmanageable,
Is want of knowledge. Folly proves itself
Of wickedness true sister.

664
We cannot speak good words of deeds not good.

665
We should not joy in pleasures that bring shame.

666
Fortune ne'er helps the man whose courage fails.

667
Shame brings but little help in evil things;
Your silence is the talker's best ally.
Fragments

668
What means this praise? The man who yields to wine
Is void of understanding, slave to wrath,
And wont, though babbling many words and vain,
To hear full loth what eagerly he spoke.

669
When one is found as taken in the act
Of fraud and wrong, whate'er his skill of speech,
The only course for him is silence then;
Yet that is hard to bear for one who feels
Conscious of innocence.

670
In vows, forsooth, a woman shuns the pangs
And pains of childbirth; but the evil o'er,
Once more she comes within the self-same net,
O'ercome by that strong passion of her soul.

671
No oath weighs aught on one of scoundrel soul.

672
When trouble ceases e'en our troubles please.

674
Where fathers are by children overcome,
That is no city of the wise and good,
'Tis best, where'er we are, to follow still
The customs of the country.

675
He to whom men pay honour's noble meed
Has need of noble deeds innumerable,
And out of easy conflict there can come
But little glory.
FRAGMENTS

676
Counsels are mightier things than strength of hands.

677
My body is enslaved, my mind is free.

678
Not Kyprian only, children, is she called,
Who rules o'er Kypros, but bears many names.
Hades is she, and Might imperishable,
And raving Madness, and untamed Desire,
And bitter Lamentation. All is hers,
Or earnest, or in calm, or passionate;
For still where'er is life she winds within
The inmost heart. Where finds this Goddess not
Her easy prey? She masters all the tribe
Of fish that swim the waters, she prevails
O'er all four-footed beasts that walk the earth.
Her wing directs the course of wandering birds,
Mighty o'er beasts, and men, and Gods above.
What God in wrestling throws she not thrice o'er?
Yea, if 'twere lawful to speak all the truth,
She sways the breast of Zeus. All weaponless,
Without or spear or sword, the Kyprian queen
Cuts short the schemes of mortals or of Gods.

679
What house hath ever gained prosperity,
How swoln soe'er with pride, without the grace
Of woman's nobler nature.

680
But when bereavement falls upon her house,
A woman has the purpose of a man.

681
No small disease is poverty for those

174
FRAGMENTS

Who boast of wealth; than poverty no foe
Is found more hostile.

682

O race of mortal men oppressed with care!
What nothings are we, like to shadows vain,
Cumbering the ground, and wandering to and fro!

683

None but the Gods may live untouched by ill.

684

O God, we mortals find no way to flee
From evils deeply-rooted, sent from Heaven.

685

Would one might live, and give the present hour
Its fill of pleasure, while the future creeps
For ever unforeseen.

686

The skilful gamester still should make the best
Of any throw, and not bemoan his luck.

687

Tis hope that feeds the larger half of men.

688

Ne’er can the wise grow old, in whom there dwells
A soul sustained with light of Heaven’s own day:
Great gain to men is forethought such as theirs.

689

He who in midst of woes desireth life,
Is either coward or insensible.

690

A. Now he is dead, I yearn to die with him.
B. Why such hot haste? Thou needs must meet thy fate.
FRAGMENTS

691
Truth evermore surpasseth words in might.

694
A woman's oaths I write upon the waves.

701
To drink against one's will
Is not less evil than unwilling thirst.

702
If thou should'st bring all wisdom of the wise
To one who thirsts, thou could'st not please him more
Than giving him to drink.

703
Most basely wilt thou die by doom of Heaven,
Who, being as thou art, dost still drain off
Thy pottle-deep potations.

705
This wanton insolence
Is never brought to self-control in youth,
But still among the young bursts out, and then
Tames down and withers.

707
I know that God is ever such as this,
Darkly disclosing counsels to the wise;
But to the simple, speaking fewest words,
Plain teacher found.

709
Thou shalt find a God
Who knoweth not or charity or grace,
But loves strict justice, that and that alone.
FRAGMENTS

711
Whoso will enter in a monarch's house
Is but his bond-slave, though he come as free.

713
In many a turning of the wheel of God
My fate revolves and changes all its mood;
E'en as the moon's face never keepeth still
For but two nights in one position fixed,
But from its hiding-place first comes as new,
With brightening face, and thenceforth waxeth full;
And when it gains its noblest phase of all,
Wanes off again, and comes to nothingness.

714
Counsel of evil travelleth all too quick.

715
If any man beginneth all things well,
The chances are his ends agree thereto.

717
Words that are false bring forth no fruit at all.

718
Though one be poor, his fame may yet stand high.
Not one whit worse the poor whose heart is wise.

What profit is there from our many goods,
If care, with evil thoughts,
Is still the nurse of fair prosperity?

719
Thrice happy they, who, having seen these rites,
Then pass to Hades: there to these alone
Is granted life, all others evil find.
FRAGMENTS

723
What may be taught I learn; what may be found
That I still seek for; what must come by prayer,
For that I asked the Gods.

724
Go forth, ye people strong of hand, to work,
Who with your balanced baskets of first-fruits
Worship the Working Goddess, child of Zeus,
Whose eyes are dread to look on.

725
And dost thou mourn the death of mortal man,
Not knowing if the future bringeth gain?

727
Thou waxest wanton, like a high-fed colt;
For maw and mouth are glutted with excess.

732
Searching out all things, thou in most men's acts
Wilt find but baseness.

739
Unlooked-for things must once for all begin.

741
Those who lose such friends lose them to their joy,
And they who have them for deliverance pray.

749
This is the gift of God, and what the Gods
Shall give, we men, my child, should never shun.

762
An old man's wrath is like ill-tempered scythe,
Sharp to begin, but quickly blunted off.
FRAGMENTS

763
The dice of Zeus have ever lucky throws.

772
Be pitiful, O Sun,
Whom the wise name as father of the Gods,
Author of all things.

779
Since we have rightly made our prayer to God,
Let us now go, O boys, to where the wise
Impart their knowledge of the Muses' arts.
Each day we need to take some forward step,
Till we gain power to study nobler things.
Evil a boy will learn without a guide,
With little labour, learning from himself;
But good, not even with his teacher near,
Dwells in his soul, but is full hardly gained:
Let us then, boys, be watchful, and work hard,
Lest we should seem with men untaught to rank
The children of a father far from home.

780
The gratitude of one whose memory fails
Is quickly gone.
RHYMED CHORAL ODES
AND
LYRICAL DIALOGUES
ŒDIPUS THE KING

151–215

STROPHE I

What wert thou, O thou voice
Of Zeus, thou bad’st rejoice,
Floating to Thebes from Pytho gold-abounding?
I tremble; every sense
Thrills with the dread suspense;
(O Delian Pæan, hear our cries resounding!)
My soul is filled with fears,
What thou wilt work on earth,
Or now or in the circling years;
Speak, child of golden Hope, thou Voice of heavenly birth!

ANTISTROPHE I

Athena, first of all,
Thee, child of Zeus, I call,
And Artemis thy sister with us dwelling,
Whom, on her glorious throne,
Our agora doth own,
And Phœbos in the archer’s skill excelling;
Come, O ye Guardians three,
If e’er in days of yore
Ye bade the tide of evil flee,
Drive off this fiery woe as once ye drove before.

STROPHE II

Yea come; for lo! I fail
To tell my woes’ vast tale;
For all my host in fear and sickness languish,
OEDIPUS THE KING

And weapons fail each mind;
For the earth’s increase kind
Is gone, and women faint in childbirth’s anguish:
Thou see’st men, one by one,
Like bird of fleetest wing,
Swifter than flashing ray of sun,
Pass to His gloomy shore who reigns of darkness King.

ANTISTROPHE II

Countless the spoil of death;
Our city perisheth,
And on the tainted earth our infants lie;
The tender heart is cold,
And wives and matrons old,
Now here, now there, by every altar cry.
And clear the Pæans gleam,
And chants of sorrow born;
O golden child of Zeus supreme,
Put forth thy power to help, bright-eyed as is the morn!

STROPHE III

And Ares, mighty One,
Who weaponless comes on,
And fierce and hot with battle-cry assailth,—
Bid him in flight to tread
By Amphitrite’s bed,
Or Thrakia’s homeless coast where wild wave waileth.
If aught is spared by night,
It droops before the day;
O Thou who wield’st the lightning’s blazing might;
O Zeus our Father, dart thy thunder him to slay!

ANTISTROPHE III

And oh! Lykeian king,
That from thy gold-wrought string
Thy arrows might go forth in strength excelling;
OEDEIPUS THE KING

And all the flashing rays
That Artemis displays,
Who on the Lykian mountains hath her dwelling!
Thhee, Bacchos, I invoke,
Whose name our land hath borne,
Come, wine-flushed, gold-crowned, Mænad-girt,
with smoke
Of blazing torch against that God, of Gods the scorn.

462–511
STROPHÆ I

Who was it that the rock of Delphos named,
In speech oracular,
That wrought with bloody hands his deeds dark-shamed?
Well may he wander far,
With footstep swifter and more strong
Than wind-winged steed that flies along;
For on him leaps, in Heaven’s own panoply,
With fire and flash, the son of Zeus most High,
And with Him, dread and fell,
The dark Fates follow, irresistible.

ANTISTROPHÆ I

For ’twas but now from out the snowy height
Of old Parnassos shone
The Voice that bade us all to bring to light
The unknown guilty one;
Each forest wild, each rocky shore,
Like untamed bull, he wanders o’er,
In dreary loneliness with dreary tread,
Seeking to shun dark oracles and dread,
From Delphi’s central shrine;
And yet they hover round with life and strength divine.

STROPHÆ II

Dread things, yea, dread the augur wise hath stirred:
I know not or to answer Aye, or No;
OEIDIPUS THE KING

In vain, perplexed, I seek the fitting word,
    And lost in fears nor past nor future know:
What cause of strife so fell
Between the son of Polybos hath come,
And those, the heirs of old Labdakid home,
    I have found none to tell:
From none comes well-tried word,
That I should war against the glory great
    Of Oedipus my lord,
Or make myself the avenger of an unknown fate.

ANTISTROPHE II

Yet Zeus and King Apollo, they are wise,
    And know the secret things that mortals do;
But that a prophet sees with clearer eyes
    Than these I see with, is no judgment true.
Though one in wisdom high
May wisdom of another far excel;
Yet I, until I see it 'stablished well,
    Will ne'er take up the cry:
One thing is clear, she came,
The winged maiden,—and men found him wise;
    Our city hailed his name,
And from my heart the charge of baseness ne'er shall rise.

863–910

STROPHE I

Would 'twere my lot to lead
My life in holiest purity of speech,
    In purity of deed,
Of deed and word whose Laws high-soaring reach
    Through all the vast concave,
Heaven-born, Olympos their one only sire!
    To these man never gave
The breath of life, nor shall they e'er expire
ŒDIpus The King

In dim oblivion cold:
In these God shews as great and never waxeth old.

Antistrophe I

The wantonness of pride
Begets the tyrant,—wanton pride, full-flushed
With thoughts vain, idle, wide,
That to the height of topmost fame hath rushed,
And then hath fallen low,
Into dark evil where it cannot take
One step from out that woe.
I cannot bid the Gods this order break
Of toil for noblest end;
Yea, still I call on God as guardian and as friend.

Strophe II

But if there be who walks too haughtily
In action or in speech,
Who the great might of Justice dares defy,
Whom nought can reverence teach,
Ill fate be his for that his ill-starred scorn,
Unless he choose to win
Henceforth the gain that is of Justice born,
And holds aloof from sin,
Nor lays rash hand on things inviolable.
Who now will strive to guard
His soul against the darts of passion fell?
If such deeds gain reward,
What boots it yet again
In choral dance to chant my wonted strain?

Antistrophe II

No more will I at yonder spot divine,
Earth’s centre, kneeling fall,
In Abæ’s temple, or Olympia’s shrine,
Unless, in sight of all,
ŒDIPUS THE KING

These things appear as tokens clear and true.
   But oh, Thou Lord and King,
If unto Thee that name be rightly due,
   Creation governing,
Let it not 'scape Thee, or thy deathless might!
   For now the words of old
To Laios uttered, they despise and slight;
   Nor does Apollo hold
His place in men's esteem,
And things divine are counted as a dream.

1186-1223

STROPHE I

O race of mortal men,
I number you and deem
That ye, although ye live,
Are but an empty dream.
What man, yea, what, knows more
Of happiness and peace,
Than just the idle show,
And then the sure decrease?
Thy face as pattern given,
O Œdipus, my king,
Thy doom, yea thine, I say,
I know of none I count as truly prospering.

ANTISTROPH: I

Thou, once with strange success,
As archer taking aim,
Did'st hit the mark in all,
Great riches and great fame:
And did'st, (O Zeus!) lay low
The maiden skilled in song,
The monster terrible,
With talons crook'd and long.

188
ŒDIPUS THE KING

Thou against death wast seen
Thy country's sure defence;
And therefore thou art king;
To thee the Lord of Thebes we all our homage bring.

STROPHE II

And who of all men is more wretched now?
Who dwells with woe perpetually as thou,
In chance and change of life,
(Œdipus renowned, for whom was won
The same wide haven, sheltering sire and son?
Ah how, O mother-wife,
Could that defilèd bed, when he had come,
Receive him and be dumb?

ANTISTROPHE II

Time, the all-seeing, finds thee out at last,
And passes sentence on the hateful past,
The wedlock none might wed,
Where son and spouse in strange confusion met.
Ah, son of Laios, would I could forget!
In one true word, thy succour gave me breath,
By thee I sleep in death.
OEIDIPUS AT COLONOS.

668-718

STROPH E I

Yes, thou art come, O guest,
Where our dear land is brightest of the bright,
Land in its good steeds blest,
Our home, Colonos, gleaming fair and white,
The nightingale still haunteth all our woods
Green with the flush of spring,
And sweet melodious floods
Of softest song through grove and thicket ring;
She dwelleth in the shade
Of glossy ivy, dark as purpling wine,
And the untrodden glade
Of trees that hang their myriad fruit divine,
Unscathed by blast of storm;
Here Dionysos finds his dear-loved home,
Here, revel-flushed, his form
Is wont with those his fair nurse-nymphs to roam.

ANTISTROPH E I

Here, as Heaven drops its dew,
Narcissus grows with fair bells clustered o'er,
Wreath to the Dread Ones due,
The Mighty Goddesses whom we adore;
And here is seen the crocus, golden-eyed;
The sleepless streams ne'er fail;
Still wandering on they glide,
And clear Kephisos waters all the vale;
Daily each night and morn
It winds through all the wide and fair champaign,
ÆDIPUS AT COLONOS

And pours its flood new-born
From the clear freshets of the fallen rain;
The Muses scorn it not,
But here, rejoicing, their high feast-days hold,
And here, in this blest spot,
Dwells Aphrodite in her car of gold.

STROPHE II

And here hath grown long while
A marvel and a wonder such as ne'er
I heard of otherwhere,—
Nor in great Asia's land nor Dorian Isle
That Pelops owned as his;
Full great this marvel is,—
A plant unfailing, native to the place,
Terror to every sword
Of fierce invading horde,
The grey-green Olive, rearing numerous race,
Which none or young or old
Shall smite in pride o'erbold;
For still the orb of Zeus that all things sees
Looks on it from on high,
Zeus, the great guardian of our olive-trees,
And she, Athena, with grey gleaming eye.

ANTISTROPHE II

And yet another praise,
The chiefest boast of this our mother state,
My tongue must now relate,
The gift of that great God who ocean sways;—
Of this our native ground
The greatest glory found,
Its goodly steeds and goodly colts I sing,
And, goodly too, its sea;
O Son of Cronos, Thee
We own, Thou great Poseidon, Lord and King,
ÆDIPUS AT COLONOS

For thou hast made it ours
To boast these wondrous dowers,
First in our city did'st first on horses fleet,
Place the subduing bit;
And through the sea the oars well-handled flit,
Following the Nereids with their hundred feet!

1044–1095

Strophe I

Fain would I be where meet,
In brazen-throated war,
The rush of foes who wheel in onset fleet,
Or by the Pythian shore,
Or where the waving torches gleam afar,
Where the Dread Powers watch o'er
Their mystic rites for men that mortal are,
E'en they whose golden key
Hath touched the tongue of priests, Eumolpidæ:
There, there, I deem, our Theseus leads the fight,
And those two sisters, dauntless, undismayed,
Will meet, with eager clamour of delight
That nothing leaves unsaid,
Where through these lands they tread.

Antistrophe I

Or do they now, perchance,
On to the western slope
Of old Æatis' snowy crest advance,
Hastening on swiftest steed,
Or in swift chariots each with other cope?
Now will be spoil indeed:
Dread is their might who form our country's hope,
And dread the strength of those
Whom Theseus leads to triumph o'er their foes.
Each bit is glittering, all the squadrons speed;
Shaking their reins, they urge their horses on,
E'en they who serve Athena on her steed,

192
ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS

Or Rhea’s ocean Son,
Who makes the earth his throne.

STROPHE II

Act they, or linger still?
Ah, how my soul forecasts the coming fate,
That he, against his will,
Will yield the maid whose daring has been great,
Who hath borne greatest ill
From hands of her own kin; but, soon or late,
Zeus works to-day great things:
I prophesy of glorious victories.
Ah! would that I on wings,
Swift as a dove on airy cloud that flies,
Might glad my longing eye
With sight of that much yearned-for victory!

ANTISTROPHE II

O Zeus! that reign’st on high,
All-seeing, grant the rulers of our land,
In strength of victory,
With good success in ambush there to stand;
And Thou, his child revered,
Athena Pallas; Thou, the huntsman-God,
Apollo, loved and feared.
And she, thy sister, who the woods hath trod
Following the dappled deer
Swift-footed; lo! on each of you I call,—
Come, bringing succour near
To this our land, and to its people all.

1211–1248

STROPHE

One whose desire is strong
For length of days,
CEdIPUS AT COLONOS

Who slights the middle path,
   True path of praise;
He in my eyes shall seem
   Mere dreamer vain;
For oftentimes length of days
   Brings nought but pain;
And joys—thou canst not now
   Their dwelling guess,
When once a man gives way
   To hope's excess;
At last the helper comes
   That comes to all,
When Hades' doom appears
   And dark shades fall;
Lyreless and songless then,
   No wedding guest,
Death comes to work the end,
   Death, last and best.

ANTISTROPHE

Never to be at all,
   Excels all fame;
Quickly, next best, to pass
   From whence we came.
When youth hath passed away,
   With follies vain,
Who then is free from cares?
   Where is not pain?
Murders and strifes and wars,
   Envy and hate;
Then, evil worst of all,
   The old man's fate:
Powerless and wayward then,
   No friend to cheer,—
ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS

All ills on ills are met,
All dwelling there.

EPODE

Thus this poor sufferer lives,
Not I alone;
As on far northern coast
Wild waters moan,
So without rest or hope,
Woes round him swarm,
Dread as the waves that rage,
Dark as the storm,—
Some from the far, far west
Where sunsets glow;
Some where through eastern skies
Dawn’s bright rays flow;
These where the burning south
Feels the hot light,
Those where Rhipæan hills
Rise in dark night.

1447–1456

STROPHE

New sorrows throng on me,
From new source come,
New evils from this blind man’s misery,
This stranger to our home;
Unless it be that Destiny has brought
What shall at last prevail;
For lo! I dare not say that any thought
Of the high Gods shall fail.
Time ever sees these things, beholds them all,
Bringing full round his wheel,
Uprising in a day the things that fall:—
O Zeus! that thunder-peat!
CEDIPUS AT COLONOS

1463-1471

ANTISTROPHE

Lo! the loud thunder sweeps,
Heaven-sent and dread;
And panic terror through each white hair creeps
That crowns my aged head;
I shudder in my soul, for yet again
The flashing lightning gleams.
What shall I say? What issue will it gain?
Fear fills my waking dreams;
For not in vain do all these portents rise,
Nor void of end foreknown;
O flashing fire that blazest through the skies!
O Zeus, the Almighty One!

1477-1485

STROPHE

Ah me! ah me! again
Resounds the crash that pierces in its might:
Be pitiful, be pitiful, O God!
If aught thou bringest black and dark as night,
To this our mother earth:
Yea, may I still find favour in thy sight
Nor gain boon little worth
Of seeing one on whom all curses fall!
King Zeus, on thee I call!

ANTISTROPHE

My son, come on, come on,
E'en though thou dost thy sacred station keep
There on the valley's edge,
For great Poseidon, Lord of Ocean deep,
For now the stranger-guest
His thanks on thee and on thy state would heap,
And bless thee, being blest.
ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS

Come therefore quickly; come, O Prince and King,
And timely counsel bring.

1555–1578

STROPHE

If right it be with prayers and litanies
To worship Her who reigns,
Goddess in darkness clad,
Or Thee, O King of those
Who dwell 'neath sunless skies,
Aidoneus, O Aidoneus, I implore!
Grant that the stranger tread the darkling plains,
The dwellings of the dead and Stygian shore,
With no long agony,
No voice of wailing cry;
For so, though many woes unmerited
Come on him, God, the Just, shall yet lift up his head.

ANTISTROPHE

Ye Goddesses who dwell in darkest gloom,
And thou, strange form and dread,
Monster untamed and wild,
Who crouchest, so they say,
By well-worn gates of doom,
And barkest from thy cavern, warder strong,
In Hades (so the rumours ever spread;)
Grant to our friend clear space to pass along;
(O Thou who owe'st to Earth
And Tartaros thy birth!)
There where he nears the chambers drear and dread;
Thee I implore, who still dost sleep as sleep the dead.
ANTIGONE

100–161

STROPHÉ 1

Ray of the golden sun,
    Fairest of all
That e’er in Thebes have lit
    Her seven gates tall,
Then did’st thou shine on us,
    In golden gleams;
As day’s bright eye did’st come,
    O’er Dirke’s streams,
Driving the warrior strong,
    With snow-white shield
Who had from Argos come,
    Armed for the field:
Him Thou did’st put to flight,
    With headlong speed,
Yea, hurl in shameful rout,
    Spurring his steed.

Him Polyneikes, urged by quarrel dread,
    Brought to our land a foe;
He with shrill scream, as eagle over-head,
    Hovered with wing of snow,
With many armed warriors, shield on breast,
    And helmet’s waving crest.

ANTISTROPHÉ 1

And so he came and stood,
    In fierce, hot hate,
With spears that slaughter craved,
    Round each tall gate.

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ANTIGONE

He went, his jaws unfilled
   With blood of ours,
Ere pine-fed blaze had seized
   Our crown of towers.
So great the battle-din
   Around his rear,—
The crash, that Ares loves,
   Of shield and spear:
Hard conflict that and stiff
   For well-matched foe,
The dragon fierce who fought
   And laid him low.

For Zeus the lofty speech of boastful pride
   Hateth exceedingly;
And sees them as they flow in torrent wide,
   Proud of gold panoply,—
With fire swift-flung he hurls from rampart high
One who shouts "Victory!"

STROPHIE II

So smitten down he fell
Straight to the echoing earth,
He who, with torch of fire,
And mad with frenzied mirth,
Swooped on our hearth and home
With blasts of bitter hate.
   So fared they; Ares wroth
To each brought different fate,
   And so appeared, in hour of greatest need,
Our chariot's worthiest steed.

For seven great captains at our seven gates stood,
Equals with equals matched, and left their arms
   Tribute to Zeus on high,—
All but the brothers, hateful in their mood,
Who, from one father and one mother born,
   Each claiming victory,
ANTIGONE

Wielded their spears in murderous, deadliest hate,
And shared one common fate.

ANTISTROPHE II

But now since Victory comes,
Mighty and glorious named,
Giving great cause of joy
To Thebes for chariots famed;
Of these our conflicts past
Learn ye forgetfulness,
And with our night-long dance
Around each temple press;
And Bacchos, making Thebes to ring again,
Let Him begin the strain.

But now the prince and sovereign of our land,
Creon, Menoeceus' son, with counsels new,
Following new turns of fate,
Comes, having matters of great weight in hand;
For he has called us all to conference,
The elders of his state,
And by one common summons for us sent,
For this high parliament.

332-375

STROPEH I

Many the things that strange and wondrous are,
None stranger and more wonderful than man;
He dares to wander far,
With stormy blast across the hoary sea,
Where nought his eye can scan
But waves still surging round unceasingly;
And Earth, of all the Gods,
Mightiest, unwearied, indestructible,
He weareth year by year, and breaks her clods,
While the keen plough-share marks its furrows well,
Still turning to and fro;
ANTIGONE

And still he bids his steeds
Through daily taskwork go.

ANTISTROPHE I

And lo! with snare and net he captives makes
Of all the swift-winged tribes that flit through air;
Wild, untamed beasts he takes;
And many a sea-born dweller of the deep
He with devices rare
Snares in his mesh,—man, wonderful in skill;
And all brute things that dwell
In forest dark, or roam upon the hill,
He by his craft makes subject to his need,
And brings upon the neck of rough-maned steed
The yoke that makes him bend,
And binds the mountain bull
Resisting to the end.

STROPHAL II

And speech, and subtle thought,
Swift as the wind,
And temper duly wrought
To statesman's mind,—
These he hath learnt, and how to flee the power
Of cold that none may bear,
And all the tempest darts of arrowy shower
That hurtle through the air:
Armed at all points, unarmed he nought shall meet
That coming time reveals;
Only from Hades finds he no retreat,
Though many a sore disease that hopeless seemed he
heals.

ANTISTROPHE II

And lo! with all this skill,
Beyond hope's dream,
He now to good inclines,
And now to ill;
ANTIGONE

Now holding fast his country's ancient laws,
    And in the state's esteem
Most honoured; but dishonoured, should he cause
    The thing as evil known
To rule his heart in wantonness of pride;
    Ne'er may he dwell with me,
Nor share my counsels, prompting at my side,
Who evil deeds like this still works perpetually!

582–630

STROPHE I

Ah! happy are the souls that know not ill;
    For they whose house is struck by wrath divine,
Find that no sorrow faileth, creeping still
    Through long descent of old ancestral line;
So is it as a wave
    Of ocean's billowing surge,
(Where Thrakian storm-winds rave,
And floods of darkness from the depths emerge,)
Rolls the black sand from out the lowest deep,
And shores re-echoing wail, as rough blasts o'er them sweep.

ANTISTROPHE I

Woes upon woes fast falling on the race
    Of Labdacos that faileth still I see,
Nor can one age for that which comes win grace,
    But still some God hurls all to misery:
All power to heal is fled;
    For her, the one faint light,
That o'er the last root spread,
And in the house of Oedipus was bright,
Now doth the blood-stained scythe of Gods below
Cut down, man's frenzied word and dread Erinnys' woe.

STROPHE II

What pride of man, O Zeus, in check can hold
    Thy power divine,
ANTIGONE

Which nor sleep seizeth that makes all things old,
Nor the long months of God in endless line?
    Thou grow'st not old with time,
    But ruling in thy might,
For ever dwellest in thy home sublime,
Olympos, glittering in its sheen of light:
    And through the years' long tale,
    The far time or the near,
As through the past, this law shall still prevail:—
Nought comes to life of man without or woe or fear.

ANTISTROPHE II

For unto many men come hopes that rove,
    Bringing vain joy,
And unto many cheats of blinded love;
Subtly it creeps upon the unconscious boy,
    Until his feet wax bold
    To tempt the blazing fire.
For wisely was it said by one of old,
True speech, far-famed, for all men to admire,
    That evil seems as good
    To him whom God would slay,
Through doom of evil passion in the blood;
And he without that doom scarce passeth e'en a day.

781—881

STROPHE I

O Erôs, irresistible in fight,
    Thou rushest on thy prey,
Or on fair maiden's blushing cheeks
    All night dost lurking stay;
Over the sea thou roamest evermore,
Or through the huts of shepherds rough and poor:
    None of the deathless Ones can flee,
    Nor mortal men escape from thee;
    And mad is he who comes beneath thy sway.
ANTIGONE

ANTISTROPHE I

Minds of the righteous, true and faithful found,
Thou turn'st aside to ill,
And now this strife of nearest kin
Thou stirrest at thy will.
Mighty is Love in glance of beauteous bride,
Enthroned it sits with great laws at its side;
And One, in wondrous might,
Makes merry at the sight,
The Goddess Aphrodite, conquering still.
So even I am borne along
Beyond the bounds that law uprears,
And, seeing this, am no more strong
To stay the fountain of my tears;
For lo! Antigone doth tread
The path to that wide couch where slumber all the dead.

Antigone

STROPHE II

Yes, O my friends and countrymen, ye see
How I my last path tread,
And look on the last ray of brilliancy
By yonder bright sun shed,—
This once, but never more; for Hades vast,
Drear home of all the dead,
Leads me, in life, where Acheron flows fast,
Sharing no marriage bed:
No marriage hymn was mine in all the past,
But Acheron I wed.

Chorus

And dost thou not depart,
Glorious, with highest praise,
To where the dead are gathered in the gloom,
Not smitten by the wasting plague's fell dart,
Nor slain, as sharp sword slays?
ANTIGONE

But free and living still,
Thou, of thine own free will,
Descendest to the darkness of the tomb.

Antigone

ANTISTROPHE II

I heard of one, the child of Tantalos,
The Phrygian, crushed with woes,
And there, hard by the crag of Sipylos,
As creeping ivy grows,
So crept the shoots of rock o'er life and breath;
And, as the rumour goes,
The showers ne'er leave her, wasting in her death,
Nor yet the drifting snows;
From weeping brows they drip on rocks beneath;
Thus God my life o'erthrows.

Chorus

And yet a Goddess she, of birth divine,
And we frail mortals, and of mortal race;
And for weak woman it is highest grace
That fate the Gods have suffered should be thine.

Antigone

STROPHAE III

Alas! ye mock at me;
Why thus laugh on?
As yet I still live here,
Not wholly gone.
O fellow citizens
Of city treasure-stored!
O streams of Dirke's brook!
O grove of Thebes adored,
Where stand the chariots fair!—
I bid you witness give,
How, by my friends unwept,
I pass while yet I live,

205
ANTIGONE

To yonder heaped-up mound of new-made tomb:
    Ah, miserable me!
Nor dwelling among men, nor with the dead,
    Bearing this new, drear doom,
Disowned by those who live, and those whose life hath fled.

Chorus

Thou hast gone far in boldness, yea, too far,
    And now against the throne of Right on high,
My child, thou stumblest in thy waywardness;
    Thou fillest up thy father’s misery.

Antigone

ANTISTROPHE III

Ah! there thou touchest on
    My bitterest care,
The thrice-told tale of woe
    My sire did bear,
The fate of all who take
    From Labdacos their name;
Woes of my mother’s bed!
    Embrace of foulest shame,
Mother’s and son’s, whence I
    (O misery!) was born;
Whom now I go to meet,
    Unwed, accursed, forlorn.
Ah, brother! thou, in evil wedlock wed,
    Hast, in that death of thine,
Made me, who still survived, as numbered with the dead.

Chorus

Holy it may be, holy awe to shew,
    But power with him with whom due power doth rest
Admits not of defiance without sin;
    And thou from self-willed pride yet sufferest.
ANTIGONE

Antigone

Friendless, unwept, unwed,
I wend in sorrow my appointed way;
No more may I behold this sacred ray
By yon bright glory shed,
And yet no single friend
Utters a wail for my unwept-for end.

937–987

Antigone

City of Thebes, my fathers' ancient home,
Ye Gods of days of old,
I linger not. They drag me to my doom;
Princes of Thebes, behold;
See ye what I, the last of kingly race,
And at whose hands I suffer sore disgrace,
Because all holy ties I still as holy hold.

Chorus

Strophe I

So once of old the form of Danae bore
The loss of heavenly light,
In palace strong with brazen fastenings bright,
And, in her tomb-like chamber evermore,
Did long a prisoner dwell,
Yet she, my child, my child, was high in birth,
And golden shower, that flowed from Zeus to earth,
She cherished right well:
Ah, strange and dread the power of Destiny,
Which neither proud and full prosperity,
Nor Ares in his power,
Nor dark, sea-beaten ships, nor tower,
Are able to defy.

207
ANTIGONE

ANTISTROPHE I

So too the son of Dryas once was bound,
   King of Edonian race;
Rough-tempered, he, for words of foul disgrace,
At Dionysos’ hands stern sentence found,
   In rocky cave confined:
And so there faileth, drop by drop, the life
Of one whose soul was racked by maddening strife;
   And then he called to mind
That he had touched the God with ribald tongue;
For he essayed to check the Mænads’ throng,
   And quench the sacred fire,
And stirred to jealousy the choir
   Of Muses loving song.

STROPHE II

Hard by the gloomy rocks where two seas meet
   The shores of Bosphoros rise,
And Salmydessos, the wild Thrakians’ seat,
Where Ares saw upon the bleeding eyes
A wound accursed, made in hellish mood
   Of step-dame stern and fierce,—
Eyes that were torn by hands deep dyed in blood,
And points of spindles, quick and sharp to pierce.

ANTISTROPHE II

And they, poor wretches, wail their wretched fate,
   Birth stained with foul disgrace;
They wail their mother’s lot, of lineage great,
Descended from the old Erechtheid race;
And she in yon far distant caverns vast,
   Daughter of Boreas, grew,
On lofty crag, amid the stormy blast;
And yet on her the Fates their dread spell threw.
ANTIGONE

1115-1152

STROPHÉ I

O Thou of many a name,
Joy of Cadmeian bride,
Child of great Zeus loud-thundering from the sky!
Thou rulest o'er Italia great in fame,
And dwellest where the havens open wide
Of Deo, whom Eleusis throneth high.
O Bacchos, who in Thebes delightest most,
Fair mother-city of the Bacchic throng,
Or where Ismenos' stream flows full and strong,
Or by the brood that sprang from dragon's armed host.

ANTISTROPHÉ I

Thee the bright flame saw there,
O'er rock of double crest,
Where nymphs of Corycos in revel roam,
And bright Castalia's fountain floweth fair,
And Thee, the banks of Nysa ivy-drest,
And the green shore, of many a vine the home,
Lead forth with joy, a welcome visitant,
In all the open spaces of the town,
While words scarce mortal come our joy to crown,
And make our Thebes resound with rapture jubilant.

STROPHÉ II

Yes, this of all that are,
Cities of ancient note,
Thou honourest most by far,
Thou, and thy mother whom the thunder smote;
And now since all the land
By sharp, sore pestilence is smitten low,
Come Thou with feet still cleansing as they go,
Or o'er Parnassian height,
Or where the waters bright
Make their perpetual moan to shores on either hand.
ANTIGONE

ANTISTROPHE II

O Thou that lead'st the choir
Of stars in yonder skies
That breathe with living fire,
The Lord and ruler of the night's loud cries;
Child of great Zeus adored!

Appear, O King! with all thy Thyiad train,
Who, all night long, in dance that fires the brain;
Raise shouts of ecstasy,
With fierce and frenzied cry,
Still honouring thee, Iacchos, King and Lord.
ELECTRA

86–250

Electra

O holy light of morn!
O air that dost the whole earth compass round
Oft have ye heard my cries of grief forlorn,
   And oft the echoing sound
Of blows the breast that smite,
When darkness yields to light;
And for my nightly vigils they know well,
Those loathed couches of my hated home,
How I upon my father’s sorrows dwell;
To whom in no strange land did Ares come
   Breathing out slaughter dread;
But she, my mother, and her paramour,
Ægisthos, smote him dead
With axe of murderous power;
   As men who timber hew
Cut down a lofty oak, so him they slew;
   And from none else but me
Comes touch of sympathy,
   Though thou wast doomed to die,
My father, with such shame and foulest ignominy.

And, lo! I will not fail
To weep and mourn with wailings and with sighs,
While yet I see the bright stars in the skies,
   Or watch the daylight glad,—
No, no, I will not fail,
Like sorrowing nightingale,
ELECTRA

Before the gate to pour my sorrows free,
   My woe and sorrow at my father's doom.
O house of Hades and Persephone,
   O Hermes, guide of dwellers in the gloom,
   Thou, awful Curse, and ye,
Erinnyes, daughters of the Gods, most dread,
   Whose eyes for ever see
Men foully slain, and those whose marriage bed
   'The lust of evil guile
   Doth stealthily defile,
Come, come, avengers of my father's fate!
   Come, send my brother back!
For I the courage lack,
Alone to bear the burden of this evil weight.

Chorus

STROPE I

O child, Electra, child
Of mother doomed to all extremest ill,
   Why thus in wailing wild
Dost thou unceasing pour thy sorrows still
   For him who, long ago,
Caught in thy mother's base and godless cheat,
   Fell by the fatal blow,
Our chieftain, Agamemnon? Yea, may he
   Who planned this vile deceit
   (If so to speak is meet)
   Perish most wretchedly!

Electra

O daughters of the brave and true of heart,
   Ye come to comfort me in all my woe;
I know your love, yea, know its every part;
   And yet I have no wish to stop the flow.
ELECTRA

Of tears and wailings for my ill-starred sire;
   But, O my friends, who meet,
With true affection, all my heart's desire,
   Suffer me thus, I pray,
To pine and waste away.

Chorus

Antistrophe I

And yet thou can'st not raise
Thy father, nor with wailing nor with prayer,
   From Hades' darkling ways,
And gloomy lake where all that die repair;
   But thou, thus grieving still,
Dost pass, brought low, from evil one might bear
   To that worst form of ill,
In which for deepest woe is no relief.
   Ah me! why striv'st thou so
For such increase of woe,
   Still adding to my grief?

Electra

Ah, weak as infant he who can forget
   His parents that have perished wretchedly;
Far more she pleaseth me that mourneth yet,
   And "Itys, Itys," wails unceasingly;
The bird heart-broken, messenger of Heaven.
   Ah, Niobe, most sad!
To thee, I deem, high fate divine was given,
   For thou in cavern grot,
Still weeping, ceasest not.

Chorus

Strophe II

Ah, not for thee alone
Of mortal race hath come the taste of woes.
   What cause hast thou above those twain to moan,
In whom the self-same blood of kindred flows,
ELECTRA

Iphianassa and Chrysothemis?
And one in youth obscure and sad doth live,
Yet blest, at least, in this,
That unto him Mykenæ famed shall give
Its welcome as the son of noble sire,
Beneath the care of Zeus’ almighty hand,
Returning once again, Orestes, to our land.

Electra

Yes, he it is for whom I waste away,
Wailing for him, in vain, unweariedly;
And in my sorrow know no bridal day,
But weep sad tears from eyelids never dry,
Bearing my endless weight
Of dark and dreary fate:
And he remembers not
All that I did for him, and all he knew.
What message comes, yea, what,
That is not cheated of fulfilment true?
He yearneth still for home;
Yet yearning will not come.

Chorus

ANTISTROPHIE II

Take heart, my child, take heart;
Still mighty in the heavens Zeus doth reign,
Who sees the whole world, rules its every part:
To Him do thou commit thy bitter pain,
Nor be thou over-vexèd, nor forget
Those whom thou hatest sorely evermore;
Time is a kind God yet;
For neither he who dwells on Crisa’s shore,
Where feed the oxen, Agamemnon’s son,
Unheeding, there lives on;
Nor yet the God who reigns
By Acheron’s waters o’er his dark and drear domains.
ELECTRA

Electra

Nay, but the larger half of life is gone,
And all hope fails, and I no more can bear;
No parents left, I waste my days alone;
And no true husband guardeth me from fear;
Like one of alien race,
I, in my sore disgrace,
My father’s chambers tend,
In this unsightly and unseemly dress,
And still as slave attend,
And wait on tables in my sore distress,
Tables that empty stand,
No friends on either hand.

Chorus

Strophe III

Sad was thy father’s cry,
When home he came, and sad when, as he lay,
The stern, keen blow came nigh
Of brazen hatchet sharp to smite and slay;
Guile was it that devised the murderous crime,
And lust that slew him there,
Strangely strange form begetting of old time;
Whether a God it were,
Or one of mortal race,
Who wrought these deeds of darkness and disgrace.

Electra

O day of all the days that ever came,
Most hateful unto me!
O night! O woes of banquets none may name,
Which he, my sire, did see!
Foul death which their hands wrought,
The two that took by basest treachery
Him who my life’s joy brought,
And so destroyed, destroyed me utterly.
ELECTRA

May He who dwells in might,
On yon Olympian height,
Give them to grieve with guilt-avenging groan,
And ne'er may they whose souls such deeds have known
Share in good fortune bright!

Chorus

ANTISTROPHÉ III

Take heed, and speak no more;
Hast thou no thought from what high, prosperous state
Thou now art passing o'er,
Into what sorrow lorn and desolate?
For thou hast gained a burden infinite
Of woe and wretchedness,
Still cherishing thy wrath in sore despite,
Fierce war and bitterness,
And yet it were ill done
To come in conflict with a mighty one

Electra

By sufferings dire, most dire, I was constrained.
I know it, wrath blinds not;
And yet I will not hide, though direly pained,
The misery of my lot,
Not while in life I dwell.
Ah me! from whom, my friends, companions dear,
From whom that thinketh well,
Shall I a word in season hope to hear?
O ye, who fain would cheer,
Deceive me, oh, leave me here.

For these my woes as endless shall be known;
Nor will I cease to make my wailing moan,
And weep full many a tear.

Chorus

And yet of mere good will,
As mother fond and true,
ELECTRA

I bid thee this vain toil no more pursue,
Still breeding ill on ill.

Electra

Nay; but what bounds are set to baseness here?
Come, tell me this, I pray,
How can it e'er be right
Those who are dead to slight?
Where did that law appear?

May I ne'er walk in honour in their way,
Nor if aught good be mine,
Dwell with it happily,
Should I the wings confine
That rise with bitter cry,
And bid them cease to pay

Due reverence to my father past away!
If he who dies but as dust and nought,
And poor and helpless lie,
And these no vengeance meet for what they wrought,
Then truly awe will die,
And all men lose their natural piety.

472—515

Chorus

STROPHÉ

Unless I be a brainstruck, erring seer,
Wanting in wisdom true,
Right doth her course pursue,
With dim foreshadowing:

She in her hands doth righteous victory bring,
And will ere long appear.

Yes, courage comes to me,

Hearing but now the tidings that they bring,
These visions breathing forth sweet hope and glee,

For never shall thy father, Lord and King

217
ELECTRA

Of all the Hellenes' race,
Forget the dire disgrace,
Nor that sharp brazen axe of yon far time,
Which slew him with all shame of foulest crime.

ANTISTROPHE

And so with many a foot and many a hand,
Lurking in ambush dread,
Shall come with brazen tread,
Erinnys terrible;
For lo! the clasp of blood-stained marriage-bed
Came in foul wedlock's band
On those who might not wed;
And now, in face of these things, I must deem
That those who did or shared the deed of guilt
Shall have good reason to mislike their dream:
Yea, oracles are vain,
In dreams or prophet's strain,
Unless this shadowy phantom of the night
Shall reach its goal, victorious in the right.

EPODE

O chariot-race of old,
Full of great woe untold,
From Pelops' hand;
How did'st thou come, yon time,
Dark with the guilt of crime,
To this our land!
For since the ocean wave
Gave Myrtilos a grave,
Out of the golden car
Hurled headlong forth afar,
With shame and foul despite,
No shame hath failed to light
On this our dwelling-place,
Bringing most foul disgrace.

218
ELECTRA

1058-1096

STROPHÉ I

Why, when we see on high
The birds whose wisdom is of noblest worth,
Still caring to supply
The wants of those from whom they had their birth,
Who fed their nestling youth,
Why do not we like boon with like requite?
Nay, by the lightning bright
Of Zeus, and heavenly strength of Law and Truth,
Not long shall we live on unpunished.
O Fame! for us poor mortals wont to bear
Thy tidings to the region of the dead,
Lift up thy wailing drear,
And to the Atreidæ, as they sleep below,
Report the shame, the discord, and the woe.

ANTISTROPHÉ I

Tell them those ills of old, yea, tell again,
And add that now the hot and bitter strife
Of these their children twain
Yields to no charm of fellowship in life.
Electra, now forlorn,
Deserted sails upon a stormy sea,
And in her misery,
Her father's fortune ceaseth not to mourn,
Like nightingale that waileth evermore;
She little recks if death be in the way,
And stands prepared to sleep and wake no more,
If only she those two Erinnyes slay:
Who of all souls that are, with her can vie
For fair repute of filial loyalty?

STROPHÉ II

No, none of all that boast a noble fame
Would wish his fair repute to stain and spot,
ELECTRA

By living basely, stript of honoured name;
   And thou, my child, did’st choose thy dreary lot,
Thine evil lot, bewept with many a tear,
   Arming against the thing that right defies;
And these two glories in one word dost bear
   Known as true daughter, excellent and wise.

ANTISTROPHE II

Ah, may’st thou live and be as much above
   Thy foes in might and wealth as now below
Thou dwellest ruled by those thou can’st not love!
   For I have seen thee on thy sad path go—
No pleasant pathway that—but gaining still
   The meed of praise for all the holiest laws,
Which highest place in heavenly order fill,
   By this thy reverence winning God’s applause.