

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΕΠΤΑ ΕΠΙ ΘΗΒΑΣ

Αρχαίο κείμενο και μετάφραση στα αγγλικά

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ, ΕΠΤΑ ΕΠΙ ΘΗΒΑΣ

Summary

When Oedipus, king of Thebes, realized he had married his own mother and had four children with her, he blinded himself and cursed his sons to divide their inheritance (the kingdom) by the sword. The two sons, Eteocles and Polynices, in order to avoid bloodshed, agreed to rule Thebes in alternate years. After the first year, Eteocles refused to step down and as a result, Polynices raised an army (captained by the eponymous Seven) to take Thebes by force. This is where Aeschylus' tragedy starts. There is little plot as such; instead, the bulk of the play consists of rich dialogues that show how the citizens of Thebes feel about the threat of the hostile army before their gates, and also how their king Eteocles feels and thinks about it. Dialogues also show aspects of Eteocles character. There is also a lengthy description of each of the seven captains that lead the Argive army against the seven gates of the city of Thebes as well as the devices on their respective shields. Eteocles, in turn, announces which Theban commander he will send against each Argive attacker. Finally, the commander of the troops before the seventh gate is revealed to be Polynices, the brother of the king. Then Eteocles remembers and refers to the curse of their father Oedipus King Eteocles resolves to meet and fight his brother in person before the seventh gate and exits. Following a choral ode, a messenger enters, announcing that Eteocles and Polynices have killed each other in battle. Their bodies are brought on stage, and the chorus mourns them.

Due to the popularity of Sophocles's *Antigone*, the ending of *Seven against Thebes* was rewritten about fifty years after Aeschylus' death. Where the play was meant to end with somber mourning for the dead brothers, it instead contains an ending that serves as a lead-in of sorts to Sophocles' play: a messenger appears, announcing a prohibition against burying Polynices; Antigone, however, announces her intention to defy this edict.

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The Seven Against Thebes

By Aeschylus

Written 467 B.C.E

Translated by Herbert Weir Smyth

Dramatis Personae

ETEOCLES, son of Oedipus, King of Thebes

A SPY

CHORUS OF THEBAN WOMEN

ANTIGONE

ISMENE

sisters of ETEOCLES

A HERALD

Scene

Within the Citadel of Thebes. There is an altar with the statues of several gods visible. A crowd of citizens are present as ETEOCLES enters with his attendants.

Ἑτεοκλής

Κάδμου πολῖται, χρὴ λέγειν τὰ καίρια
 ὅστις φυλάσσει προῶτος ἐν πρύμνῃ πόλεως
 οἴακα νωμῶν, βλέφαρα μὴ κοιμῶν ὕπνῳ.
 εἰ μὲν γὰρ εὖ πράξαιμεν, αἰτία θεοῦ·
 εἰ δ' αὖθ', ὃ μὴ γένοιτο, συμφορὰ τύχοι, 5
 Ἑτεοκλῆς ἂν εἷς πολὺς κατὰ πτόλιν
 ὕμνοϊθ' ὑπ' ἀστῶν φροϊμίῳ πολυρρόθοις
 οἰμῳγμασίν θ', ὧν Ζεὺς ἀλεξητήριος
 ἐπώνυμος γένοιτο Καδμείων πόλει.
 ὑμᾶς δὲ χρὴ νῦν, καὶ τὸν ἐλλείποντ' ἔτι 10
 ἥβης ἀκμαίας καὶ τὸν ἔξηβον χρόνῳ,
 βλαστημὸν ἀλδαίνοντα σώματος πολύν,
 ὦραν τ' ἔχονθ' ἕκαστον ὥστε συμπρεπές,
 πόλει τ' ἀρήγειν καὶ θεῶν ἐγχωρίων
 βωμοῖσι, τιμὰς μὴ ἔξλειφθῆναί ποτε· 15
 τέκνοις τε, Γῇ τε μητρί, φιλότατη τροφῷ·
 ἢ γὰρ νέους ἔρποντας εὐμενεῖ πέδῳ,
 ἅπαντα πανδοκοῦσα παιδείας ὄτλον,
 ἐθρέψατ' οἰκητῆρας ἀσπιδηφόρους
 πιστοὺς ὅπως γένοισθε πρὸς χρέος τόδε. 20
 καὶ νῦν μὲν ἐς τόδ' ἡμαρ εὖ ῥέπει θεός·
 χρόνον γὰρ ἤδη τόνδε πυργηρουμένοις
 καλῶς τὰ πλείω πόλεμος ἐκ θεῶν κυρεῖ.

Eteocles

Men of Cadmus's city, he who guards from the stern the concerns of the State and guides its helm with eyes untouched by sleep must speak to the point. For if we succeed, the responsibility is heaven's; [5] but if—may it not happen—disaster is our lot, Eteocles would be the one name shouted many times throughout the city in the citizens' resounding uproars and laments. From these evils may Zeus the Defender, upholding his name, shield the city of the Cadmeans!

[10] But now you—both he who is still short of his youthful prime, and he who, though past his prime, still strengthens the abundant growth of his body, and every man still in his prime, as is fitting—you must aid the State and [15] the altars of your homeland's gods so that their honors may never be obliterated. You must aid, too, your children, and Mother Earth, your beloved nurse. For welcoming all the distress of your childhood, when you were young and crept upon her kind soil, she raised you to inhabit her and bear the shield, [20] and to prove yourselves faithful in this time of need. And so, until today, God has been favorably inclined, for though we have long been under siege, the war has gone well for the most part through the gods' will.

νῦν δ' ὥς ὁ μάντις φησίν, οἰωνῶν βοτῆρ,
 ἐν ὥσιν νωμῶν καὶ φρεσίν, πυρὸς δίχλα, 25
 χρηστηρίους ὄρνιθας ἀψευδεῖ τέχνη·
 οὗτος τοιῶνδε δεσπότης μαντευμάτων
 λέγει μεγίστην προσβολὴν Ἀχαιίδα
 νυκτηγορεῖσθαι καπιβουλεύσειν πόλει.
 ἀλλ' ἔς τ' ἐπάλξεις καὶ πύλας πυργωμάτων 30
 ὀρμασθε πάντες, σοῦσθε σὺν παντευχία,
 πληροῦτε θωρακεῖα, καπὶ σέλμασιν
 πύργων στάθητε, καὶ πυλῶν ἐπ' ἐξόδοις
 μίμνοντες εὖ θαρσεῖτε, μηδ' ἐπηλύδων
 ταρβεῖτ' ἄγαν ὄμιλον· εὖ τελεῖ θεός. 35
 σκοποὺς δὲ καγὼ καὶ κατοπτῆρας στρατοῦ
 ἔπεμψα, τοὺς πέποιθα μὴ ματᾶν ὁδῶ·
 καὶ τῶνδ' ἀκούσας οὐ τι μὴ ληφθῶ δόλω.

Ἄγγελος

Ἐτεόκλεες, φέριστε Καδμείων ἄναξ,
 ἦκω σαφῇ τὰ κεῖθεν ἐκ στρατοῦ φέρων, 40
 αὐτὸς κατόπτης δ' εἴμ' ἐγὼ τῶν πραγμάτων·
 ἄνδρες γὰρ ἑπτὰ, θούριοι λοχαγέται,
 ταυροσφαγοῦντες ἐς μελάνδετον σάκος
 καὶ θιγγάνοντες χερσὶ ταυρείου φόνου,
 Ἄρη τ', Ἐνυώ, καὶ φιλαίματον Φόβον 45

But now, as the seer, the herdsman of birds, informs us, [25]
 using his ears and his mind to understand with unerring skill
 the prophetic birds unaided by sacrificial fire—he, master of
 such prophecy, declares that the greatest **Argive** attack is being
 planned in night assembly and that they will make plans to
 capture our city.

[30] Hurry each of you to the battlements and the gates of our
 towered walls! Rush with all your armor! Fill the parapets and
 take your positions on the platforms of the towers. Stand your
 ground bravely where the gates open out, [35] and do not be
 afraid of this crowd of foreigners. God will bring it to a good
 end. I myself have dispatched scouts and men to observe their
 army, and I am confident that their going is not in vain. Once I
 have heard their report, I will not be taken by any trickery.

Enter a Scout.

Scout

Eteocles, mighty prince of the Cadmeans, [40] I have returned
 with a sure report of the army outside the walls; I myself am an
 eyewitness of their actions. Seven warriors, fierce regiment-
 commanders, slaughtered a bull over a black shield, and then
 touching the bull's gore with their hands they swore an oath [45]
 by Ares, by Enyo,¹ and by Rout who delights in blood, that

ὥρκαμότησαν ἢ πόλει κατασκαφὰς
 θέντες λαπάξιν ἄστν Καδμείων βία,
 ἢ γῆν θανόντες τήνδε φυράσειν φόνω·
 μνημεῖα θ' αὐτῶν τοῖς τεκοῦσιν ἐς δόμους
 πρὸς ἄρμ' Ἀδράστου χερσὶν ἔστεφον, δάκρυ 50
 λείβοντες· οἶκτος δ' οὔτις ἦν διὰ στόμα.
 σιδηρόφρων γὰρ θυμὸς ἀνδρεία φλέγων
 ἔπνει, λεόντων ὡς Ἄρη δεδορκότων.
 καὶ τῶνδε πύστις οὐκ ὄκνω χρονίζεται·
 κληρουμένους δ' ἔλειπον, ὡς πάλω λαχόν 55
 ἕκαστος αὐτῶν πρὸς πύλας ἄγοι λόχον.
 πρὸς ταῦτ' ἀρίστους ἄνδρας ἐκκρίτους πόλεως
 πυλῶν ἐπ' ἐξόδοισι τάγευσαι τάχος·
 ἐγγὺς γὰρ ἦδη πάνοπλος Ἀργείων στρατὸς
 χωρεῖ, κονίει, πεδία δ' ἀργηστής ἀφρὸς 60
 χραίνει σταλαγμοῖς ἱππικῶν ἐκ πλευμόνων.
 σὺ δ' ὥστε ναὸς κεδνὸς οἰακοστρόφος
 φράξαι πόλισμα, πρὶν καταιγίσαι πνοὰς
 Ἄρεως· βοᾷ γὰρ κῦμα χερσαῖον στρατοῦ·
 καὶ τῶνδε καιρὸν ὅστις ὤκιστος λαβέ· 65
 καὶ γὰρ τὰ λοιπὰ πιστὸν ἡμεροσκόπον
 ὀφθαλμὸν ἔξω, καὶ σαφηνεῖα λόγου
 εἰδὼς τὰ τῶν θύραθεν ἀβλαβῆς ἔση.

either they will level the city and sack the Cadmeans' town by force, or will in death smear this soil with their blood. And on Adrastus' chariot they were placing remembrances of themselves [50] for their parents at home, and were shedding tears while so doing, but no piteous wailing escaped their lips. For their iron- hearted spirit heaved, blazing with courage, as of lions with war in their eyes. Your knowledge of these things was not delayed by fearfulness; [55] for I left them casting lots to decide how each commander, his post assigned by chance, would lead his regiment against the gates. Therefore, choose the bravest men of the city and station them quickly at the outlets of the gates. For nearby already the Argive army in full armor [60] is advancing in a flurry of dust, and glistening foam splatters the plain in drops from the horses' pantings. So you, like the careful helmsman of a ship, secure the city before Ares' blasts storm down upon it; for the wave of their army now crashes over the dry land. [65] Seize the first opportune moment for doing this. For all else, I, on my part, will keep a reliable eye on the lookout, and you, by learning from my certain report what happens beyond the gates, shall remain unharmed.

Exit.

Ἐτεοκλής

ὦ Ζεῦ τε καὶ Γῇ καὶ πολιissoῦχοι θεοί,
 Ἀρά τ' Ἐρινὺς πατρὸς ἡ μεγασθενής, **70**
 μή μοι πόλιν γε πρυμνόθεν πανώλεθρον
 ἐκθαμνίσῃτε δηάλωτον, Ἑλλάδος
 φθόγγον χέουσαν, καὶ δόμους ἐφεστίους·
 ἐλευθέραν δὲ γῆν τε καὶ Κάδμου πόλιν
 ζυγοῖσι δουλίοισι μήποτε σχεθεῖν· **75**
 γένεσθε δ' ἀλκή· ξυνὰ δ' ἐλπίζω λέγειν·
 πόλις γὰρ εὖ πράσσουσα δαίμονας τίει.

Χορός

θρέομαι φοβερά μεγάλη ἄχῃ·
 μεθεῖται στρατός· στρατόπεδον λιπὼν
 ῥεῖ πολὺς ὅδε λεὼς πρόδρομος ἵππότης· **80**
 αἰθερία κόνις με πείθει φανεῖσ',
 ἄναυδος σαφὴς ἔτυμος ἄγγελος.
 ἔτι δὲ <γᾶς> ἐμᾶς πεδί' ὀπλόκτυπ' ὦ-
 τὶ χρίμπει βοάν· ποτᾶται, βρέμει δ'
 ἀμαχέτου δίκαν ὕδατος ὀροτύπου. **85**
 ἰὼ ἰὼ
 ἰὼ θεοὶ θεαί τ' ὀρόμενον κακὸν
 βοᾷ τειχέων ὕπερ ἀλεύσατε.
 ὁ λεύκασπις ὀρνυται λαὸς εὐ-
 τρεπὴς ἐπὶ πόλιν διώκων [πόδα]. **90**

Eteocles

O Zeus and Earth, and gods that guard our city, [70] and Curse,² potent agent of my father's vengeance, do not destroy my city, ripping it up from its foundations, captive of the enemy, a city that speaks in Greece's tongue, and do not destroy our hearths and homes. [75] May they never hold the free land and city of Cadmus beneath the yoke of slavery! Be our protection! I am certain that what I ask is in our common interest; for a State that prospers pays honors to its gods.

Exit Eteocles, with citizens. The Chorus enters in fearful agitation.

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| <p>¹ Enyo is a personification of war, and hence sometimes called the mother or the daughter of Ares.</p> <p>² The curse pronounced by Oedipus against his two sons (cp. 785 ff.) is a daemonic power, here identified with the vengeance it calls into being.</p> |
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Chorus

In terror I wail loud cries of sorrow. Their army is let loose! Leaving camp, [80] —look!—the mounted throng floods swiftly ahead. The dust whirling in the air tells me this is so—its message is speechless, yet clear and true. And now the plains of my native land under the blows of hooves send a roar to my ears; the sound flies [85] and rumbles like a resistless torrent crashing down a mountainside. Ah, ah, you gods and goddesses, raise your war cry over our walls to drive away the

τίς ἄρα ῥύσεται, τίς ἄρ' ἐπαρκέσει
θεῶν ἢ θεῶν;
πότερα δῆτ' ἐγὼ <πάτρια> ποτιπέσω
βρέτη δαιμόνων; **95**
ὦ μάκαρες εὐεδροί,
ἀκμάζει βρετέων ἔχουσθαι τί μέλ-
λομεν ἀγάστονοι;
ἀκούετ' ἢ οὐκ ἀκούετ' ἀσπίδων κτύπον; **100**
πέπλων καὶ στεφάνων πότ' εἰ μὴ νῦν ἀμ-
φὶ λιτάν' ἔχομεν;
κτύπον δέδορκα· πάταγος οὐχ ἑνὸς δορός.
τί ῥέξεις; προδώσεις, παλαίχθων
Ἄρης, τὰν τεάν; **105**
ὦ χρυσοπήληξ δαῖμον ἔπιδ' ἔπι-
δε πόλιν ἃν ποτ' εὐφιλήταν ἔθου.
θεοὶ πολιόχοι πάντες ἴτε χθονὸς·
ἴδετε παρθένων **110**
ἱκέσιον λόχον δουλοσύνας ὕπερ.
κῦμα [γὰρ] περὶ πτόλιν δοχμολόφων ἀνδρῶν
καχλάζει πνοαῖς Ἄρεος ὀρόμενον. **115**
ἀλλ', ὦ Ζεῦ <πάτερ παντελής,
πάντως ἄρηξον δαῖων ἄλωσιν.
Ἀργεῖοι δὲ πόλισμα Κάδμου **120**
κυκλοῦνται· φόβος δ' ἀρήων ὅπλων
[δονεῖ], διὰ δέ τοι γενύων ἱππίων

onrushing evil! The army of the white shield, [90] ready for battle, rushes at full speed against the city. Who then will rescue us, which of the gods or goddesses will help? Or shall I fall in supplication at the feet [95] of our ancestral gods' statues?

Ah, blessed gods, firmly enthroned, the time has come to hold fast to your statues. Why do we delay, who are much to be lamented? [100] Do you hear the clash of shields, or does it escape you? When, if not now, shall we place sacred robes and wreaths on the statues to accompany our prayers?

I see the clash—it is not the clatter of a single spear. What will you do? Will you betray [105] your own land, Ares, where you have dwelt since long ago? God of the golden helmet, look, look upon the city that you once cherished!

Oh come all you gods who guard our city and its land! [110] See this suppliant band of maidens praying to be saved from slavery. A torrent of men, their helmet plumes tossing, crashes around the city, [115] sped on by the blasts of Ares. No! Father Zeus, all-accomplishing, fend from us altogether capture at the hands of the enemy.

[120] The Argives encircle the citadel of Cadmus. Terror of their weapons of war shakes us, as the bridles in the horse's jaws rattle the sound of death. Seven bold captains, conspicuous

κινύρονται φόνον χαλινοί.
 ἐπτὰ δ' ἀγάνορες πρέποντες στρατοῦ
 δορυσσοῖς σαγαῖς πύλαις ἐβδόμαις **125**

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προσίστανται πάλῳ λαχόντες. **127**
 σύ τ', ὦ Διογενὲς φιλόμαχον κράτος,
 ῥυσίπολις γενοῦ,
 Παλλάς, ὃ θ' ἵππιος ποντομέδων ἄναξ **130**
 ἰχθυβόλῳ Ποσειδάων μαχανᾷ,
 ἐπίλυσιν φόβων, ἐπίλυσιν δίδου.
 σύ τ', Ἄρης, φεῦ, φεῦ, πόλιν ἐπώνυμον **135**
 Κάδμου φύλαξον κήδεσάι τ' ἐναργῶς.
 καὶ Κύπρις, ἅτ' εἰ γένους προμάτωρ, **140**
 ἄλευσον· σέθεν γὰρ ἐξ αἵματος
 γεγόναμεν· λιταῖσί σε θεοκλύτοις
 αὐτοῦσαι πελαζόμεσθα.
 καὶ σύ, Λύκει' ἄναξ, Λύκειος γενοῦ **145**
 στρατῷ δαΐῳ στόνων ἀντίτας.
 σύ τ', ὦ Λατογένει-
 α κούρα, τόξον εὐτυκάζου [Ἄρτεμι φίλα].
 ἔ ἔ ἔ ἔ,
 ὄτοβον ἀρμάτων ἀμφὶ πόλιν κλύω· **150**
 ὦ πότνι' Ἥρα.
 ἔλακον ἀξόνων βριθομένων χνόαι.
 Ἄρτεμι φίλα, ἔ ἔ ἔ ἔ,

among the army [125] in spear-wielding harnesses, at the seven
 gates<

*> take their stand each according to his lot.

Pallas, Zeus-born power delighting in battle, prove yourself the
 savior of the city! [130] And you, lord of steeds, ruler of the
 deep, Poseidon, with your fish-striking weapon grant us release
 from our fears, grant us release! [135] You too, Ares—pity us!—
 guard the city named for Cadmus and make evident your
 closeness¹ to us! [140] And Cypris, you who are the first mother
 of our race, defend us who are sprung from your blood. We
 come to you, crying out in prayers for your divine ears.
 [145] And you, Apollo, lord of the Wolf,² be a wolf to the enemy
 force and give them groan for groan! You too, maiden child of
 Leto, ready your bow!

¹ κῆδος means both “kinship” and “care.” The wife of Cadmus was
 Harmonia, daughter of Ares and Aphrodite.

² See the note on Aesch. Suppl. >686.

Ah! Ah! [150] I hear the rattle of chariots encircling the town. O
 lady Hera! The hubs are creaking beneath the axles' load.
 Beloved Artemis!

δοριτίνακτος αἰθήρ δ' ἐπιμαίνεται. **155**
 τί πόλις ἄμμι πάσχει, τί γενήσεται;
 ποῖ δ' ἔτι τέλος ἐπάγει θεός;
 ἔ ἔ ἔ ἔ,
 ἀκροβόλων δ' ἐπάλξεων λιθὰς ἔρχεται. **158b**
 ὦ φίλ' Ἀπολλον·
 κónαβος ἐν πύλαις χαλκοδέτων σακέων, **160**
 παῖ Διός, ὅθεν
 πολεμόκραντον ἀγνὸν τέλος ἐν μάχᾳ.
 σύ τε, μάκαιρ' ἄνασσ' Ὀγκᾶ, πρὸ πόλεως
 ἐπτάπυλον ἔδος ἐπιρρύου. **165**
 ἰὼ παναρκεῖς θεοί,
 ἰὼ τέλειοι τέλειά τε γᾶς
 τᾶσδε πυργοφύλακες,
 πόλιν δορίπονον μὴ προδῶθ'
 ἑτεροφώνῳ στρατῷ. **170**
 κλύετε παρθένων κλύετε πανδίκως
 χειροτόνους λιτάς.
 ἰὼ φίλοι δαίμονες,
 λυτήριοι <τ> ἀμφιβάντες πόλιν, **175**
 δείξαθ' ὡς φιλοπόλεις,
 μέλεσθέ θ' ἱερῶν δημίων,
 μελόμενοι δ' ἀρήξατε·
 φιλοθύτων δέ τοι πόλεος ὀργίων
 μνήστορες ἔστέ μοι. **180**

[155] The air rages at the shaking of spears! What is happening to our city? What will the future bring? And where does God finally lead us?

Ah! Ah! A hail of stones strikes our battlements from afar. O beloved Apollo! [160] There is the clang of bronze-bound shields at the gates. O son of Zeus, in whom dwells the sacred power to decide in battle war's outcome! And you, blessed queen Onca,¹ on behalf of the city, [165] defend your seven-gated home!

¹ Onca, the name of a Phoenician goddess, is identified with Athena (cp. 1. 487).

All-powerful divinities, you gods and goddesses who wield the power to guard the towers of our land, do not betray our city that now toils under the spear [170] to an alien-tongued army. Hear us, hear, as is right, the prayers we maidens offer with outstretched hands.

Beloved spirits, [175] encompass the city to deliver it from ruin and show that you love it. Consider the people's offerings, and as you consider, help us. [180] Remember, I beg, our city's worship, rich in sacrifice..

Ἐτεοκλής

ὑμᾶς ἐρωτῶ, θρέμματ' οὐκ ἀνασχετά,
 ἦ ταῦτ' ἄριστα καὶ πόλει σωτήρια,
 στρατῶ τε θάρσος τῶδε πυργηρουμένῳ,
 βρέτη πεσούσας πρὸς πολισσούχων θεῶν **185**
 αὔειν, λακάζειν, σωφρόνων μισήματα;
 μήτ' ἐν κακοῖσι μήτ' ἐν εὐεστοῖ φίλη
 ξύνοικος εἶην τῶ γυναικείῳ γένει.
 κρατοῦσα μὲν γὰρ οὐχ ὁμιλητὸν θράσος,
 δείσασα δ' οἴκῳ καὶ πόλει πλέον κακόν. **190**
 καὶ νῦν πολίταις τάσδε διαδρόμους φυγὰς
 θεῖσαι διερροθήσατ' ἄψυχον κάκην·
 τὰ τῶν θύραθεν δ' ὥς ἄριστ' ὀφέλλεται,
 αὐτοὶ δ' ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἔνδοθεν πορθούμεθα.
 τοιαῦτά τ' ἄν γυναιξὶ συνναίων ἔχοις. **195**
 κεῖ μή τις ἀρχῆς τῆς ἐμῆς ἀκούσεται,
 ἀνὴρ γυνὴ τε χῶ τι τῶν μεταίχμιον,
 ψῆφος κατ' αὐτῶν ὀλεθρία βουλεύσεται,
 λευστήρα δήμου δ' οὐ τι μὴ φύγη μόρον.
 μέλει γὰρ ἀνδρὶ, μὴ γυνὴ βουλευέτω, **200**
 τᾶξωθεν· ἔνδον δ' οὔσα μὴ βλάβην τίθει.
 ἤκουσας ἢ οὐκ ἤκουσας, ἢ κωφῇ λέγω;

Χορός

ὦ φίλον Οἰδίπου τέκος, ἔδεισ' ἀκού-
 σασα τὸν ἀρματοκτυπον ὄτοβον ὄτοβον,

Eteocles

You intolerable things! I ask you, is this the best way to save the city? Does it hearten our army here besieged, [185] when you fall before the images of the gods that guard the city and shout and shriek—behavior that moderate people despise? May I never share my home with the female race, neither in time of evil nor in pleasant prosperity! When things go well for her, her boldness is unbearable, [190] but when she is afraid, she is an even greater evil for home and city. So now your cries as you rushed here and there in panicked flight have rattled the citizens into dispirited cowardice. The cause of the enemy outside our gates is excellently strengthened by your behavior, while we inside are ruined by our own people. [195] This is the sort of trouble you will have if you dwell with women. Now if anyone fails to obey my authority—whether man or woman or something in between—a sentence of death will be decreed for him and by no means whatsoever will he escape destruction by stoning at the people's hands. [200] It is for the man to take care of business outside the house; let no woman make decrees in those matters. Keep inside and do no harm! Do you hear me or not? Am I speaking to the deaf?

Chorus

Dear son of Oedipus, I grew afraid when I heard the clatter of the crashing chariots, [205] when the hubs screamed as they

ὅτε τε σύριγγες ἔκλαγξαν ἐλίτροχοι, 205
ἵππικῶν τ' ἀπύαν πηδαλίων διὰ στόμα
πυριγενετᾶν χαλινῶν.

Ἐτεοκλής

τί οὔν; ὁ ναύτης ἄρα μὴ 'ς προῶραν φυγῶν
πρύμνηθεν ἤρρε μηχανὴν σωτηρίας,
νεῶς καμούσης ποντίῳ πρὸς κύματι ; 210

Χορός

ἀλλ' ἐπὶ δαιμόνων πρόδρομος ἦλθον ἀρ-
χαῖα βρέτη, θεοῖσι πίσυνος, νιφάδος
ὅτ' ὀλοᾶς νειφομένας βρόμος ἐν πύλαις·
δὴ τότε ἤρθη φόβῳ πρὸς μακάρων λιτάς, πόλεως
ἵν' ὑπερέχοιεν ἀλκάν. 215

Ἐτεοκλής

πύργον στέγειν εὐχεσθε πολέμιον δόρυ.
οὐκοῦν τάδ' ἔσται πρὸς θεῶν· ἀλλ' οὔν θεοὺς
τοὺς τῆς ἀλούσης πόλεος ἐκλείπειν λόγος.

Χορός

μήποτ' ἐμὸν κατ' αἰῶνα λίποι θεῶν
ἄδε πανάγυρις, μηδ' ἐπίδοιμι τάνδ' 220
ἀστυδρομουμέναν πόλιν καὶ στράτευμ'
ἀπτόμενον πυρὶ δαΐφ.

Ἐτεοκλής

μή μοι θεοὺς καλοῦσα βουλεύου κακῶς·
πειθαρχία γάρ ἐστι τῆς εὐπραξίας

whirled around the wheel, and when I heard the sound of the
steering gear, fire-forged bits, in the horses' mouths.

Eteocles

Well, then, has a helmsman ever found a way to safety by
fleeing from stern to prow, [210] when his ship is foundering in
high seas?

Chorus

But trusting in the gods I came in haste to their ancient statues,
when the deadly blizzard of falling stones thundered against the
gates. Just then I set out in fear to pray to the Blessed Ones [215]
that they spread their protection over the city.

Eteocles

Pray that the rampart withstand the enemy spear. Yes, the
outcome is in the gods' hands—but then, it is said that the gods
of a captured city abandon it.

Chorus

Never so long as I live may this divine assembly abandon us,
[220] nor may I live to see the city overrun and the army seizing
it with hostile fire!

Eteocles

When you invoke the gods, do not be ill-advised. For Obedience
is [225] the mother of Success, wife of Salvation—as the saying
goes.

μήτηρ, γυνή σωτήρος· ὧδ' ἔχει λόγος. 225

Χορός

ἔστι θεοῦ δ' ἔτ' ἰσχύς καθυπερτέρα·
πολλάκι δ' ἐν κακοῖσι τὸν ἀμάχανον
κάκ χαλεπᾶς δῦας ὑπερθ' ὀμμάτων
κρημναμενᾶν νεφελᾶν ὀρθοῖ.

Ἐτεοκλῆς

ἀνδρῶν τάδ' ἐστί, σφάγια καὶ χρηστήρια 230
θεοῖσιν ἔρδειν πολεμίων πειρωμένους·
σὸν δ' αὖ τὸ σιγᾶν καὶ μένειν εἴσω δόμων.

Χορός

διὰ θεῶν πόλιν νεμόμεθ' ἀδάματον,
δυσμενέων δ' ὄχλον πύργος ἀποστέγει.
τίς τάδε νέμεσις στυγεῖ; 235

Ἐτεοκλῆς

οὔτοι φθονῶ σοι δαιμόνων τιμᾶν γένος·
ἀλλ' ὥς πολίτας μὴ κακοσπλάγχχνους τιθῆς,
εὐκηλος ἴσθι μηδ' ἄγαν ὑπερφοβοῦ.

Χορός

ποτίφατον κλύουσα πάταγον ἀνάμιγα
ταρβουσύνῳ φόβῳ τάνδ' ἐς ἀκρόπτολιν, 240
τίμιον ἔδος, ἰκόμαν.

Ἐτεοκλῆς

μή νυν, ἐὰν θνήσκοντας ἢ τετρωμένους
πύθησθε, κωκυτοῖσιν ἀρπαλίζετε.

Chorus

So she is, but the power of god is supreme, and often in bad times it raises the helpless man out of harsh misery even when stormclouds are lowering over his eyes.

Eteocles

[230] It is the man's duty to offer victims and sacrifices to the gods when they test their enemy; your duty is to be silent and to remain inside the house.

Chorus

By the will of the gods we inhabit an unconquered city, and the rampart withstands the enemy throng. [235] What indignation makes you resent this?

Eteocles

I do not begrudge your honor of the divine race; but lest you make the citizens cowardly, be calm and do not be overly fearful.

Chorus

When I heard the strange and jumbled clashes, [240] I came in trembling fear to this citadel, our seat of worship.

Eteocles

If, then, you hear that men are dying or wounded, do not seize on the news with loud wailing. For this is the food of Ares, human blood.

τούτῳ γὰρ Ἄρης βόσκεται, φόνῳ βροτῶν.

Χορός

καὶ μὴν ἀκούω γ' ἵππικῶν φρυαγμάτων. 245

Ἐτεοκλῆς

μή νυν ἀκούουσ' ἐμφανῶς ἄκου' ἄγαν.

Χορός

στένει πόλισμα γῆθεν, ὥς κυκλουμένων.

Ἐτεοκλῆς

οὐκοῦν ἔμ' ἀρκεῖ τῶνδε βουλευεῖν πέρι.

Χορός

δέδοικ', ἀραγμός δ' ἐν πύλαις ὀφέλλεται.

Ἐτεοκλῆς

οὐ σῖγα μηδὲν τῶνδ' ἐρεῖς κατὰ πτόλιν; 250

Χορός

ὦ ξυντέλεια, μὴ προδῶς πυργώματα.

Ἐτεοκλῆς

οὐκ ἐς φθόρον σιγῶς' ἀνασχῆση τάδε;

Χορός

θεοὶ πολῖται, μή με δουλείας τυχεῖν.

Ἐτεοκλῆς

αὐτὴ σὺ δουλοῖς κάμει καὶ πᾶσαν πόλιν.

Χορός

ὦ παγκρατὲς Ζεῦ, τρέψον εἰς ἐχθροὺς βέλος. 255

Chorus

[245] Oh, but I hear horses snorting!

Eteocles

Hear them, then, but not too clearly.

Chorus

The city groans from deep in the earth, as though we are surrounded.

Eteocles

Surely it is enough that I am making plans for this?

Chorus

I am terrified—the crashing at the gates is increasing.

Eteocles

[250] Won't you be silent, and speak none of this throughout the city?

Chorus

Divine company, do not betray our fortifications!

Eteocles

Damn you! Will you not endure these events in silence?

Chorus

Gods of our city! Do not let my fate be slavery!

Eteocles

You would enslave both me and all the city.

Chorus

[255] Almighty Zeus, turn your missile against the enemy!

Ἔτεοκλής

ὦ Ζεῦ, γυναικῶν οἶον ὥπασας γένος.

Χορός

μοχθηρόν, ὥσπερ ἄνδρας ὧν ἀλῶ πόλις.

Ἔτεοκλής

παλινστομεῖς αὖθιγγάνουσ' ἀγαλμάτων;

Χορός

ἀψυχία γὰρ γλῶσσαν ἀρπάζει φόβος.

Ἔτεοκλής

αἰτουμένω μοι κοῦφον εἰδοῖς τέλος. 260

Χορός

λέγοις ἂν ὡς τάχιστα, καὶ τάχ' εἴσομαι.

Ἔτεοκλής

σίγησον, ὦ τάλαινα, μὴ φίλους φόβει.

Χορός

σιγῶ· σὺν ἄλλοις πείσομαι τὸ μόρσιμον.

Ἔτεοκλής

τοῦτ' ἄντ' ἐκείνων τοῦπος αἰροῦμαι σέθεν.

καὶ πρὸς γε τούτοις, ἐκτὸς οὖσ' ἀγαλμάτων, 265

εὖχου τὰ κρείσσω, ξυμμάχους εἶναι θεούς·

κάμων ἀκούσας· εὐγμάτων, ἔπειτα σὺ

ὀλολυγμὸν ἱερὸν εὐμενῇ παιώνισον,

Ἑλληνικὸν νόμισμα θυστάδος βοῆς,

Eteocles

O Zeus, what a breed you have made for us in women!

Chorus

A breed steeped in misery, just like men whose city is captured.

Eteocles

Why are your words ill-omened, when you still grasp the gods' statues?

Chorus

In my weakness fear controls my tongue.

Eteocles

[260] If only you would grant my plea for a small service.

Chorus

Please state it as quickly as possible, and I will quickly know what to do.

Eteocles

Be silent, wretched woman; do not terrify your own men.

Chorus

I am silent. I will suffer what is destined together with the others.

Eteocles

I welcome this sentiment of yours over what you said before. [265] And in addition, keep your distance from the gods' images and make a stronger prayer, that the gods fight on our side. And once you have heard my prayers, then sing the victory song, the sacred cry of joy and goodwill, our Greek ritual of shouting in

θάρσος φίλοις, λύουσα πολέμιον φόβον. 270
 ἐγὼ δὲ χώρας τοῖς πολισσούχοις θεοῖς,
 πεδιονόμοις τε κάγορᾶς ἐπισκόποις,
 Δίρκης τε πηγαῖς, ὕδατί τ' Ἰσμηνοῦ λέγω
 εὖ ξυντυχόντων καὶ πόλεως σεσωμένης,
 μήλοισιν αἰμάσσοντας ἐστίας θεῶν, 275
 [ταυροκτονοῦντας θεοῖσιν, ὧδ' ἐπεύχομαι]
 θύσειν τροπαῖα, δαΐων δ' ἐσθήματα,
 στέψω λάφυρα δουρίπληχθ' ἄγνοις δόμοις.
 [στέψω πρὸ ναῶν, πολεμίων δ' ἐσθήματα.]
 τοιαῦτ' ἐπεύχου μὴ φιλοστόνως θεοῖς, 280
 μηδ' ἐν ματαίοις κἀγρίοις ποιφύγμασιν·
 οὐ γάρ τι μᾶλλον μὴ φύγῃς τὸ μόρσιμον.
 ἐγὼ δέ γ' ἄνδρας ἕξ ἐμοὶ σὺν ἐβδόμῳ
 ἀντηρέτας ἐχθροῖσι τὸν μέγαν τρόπον
 εἰς ἑπτατειχεῖς ἐξόδους τάξω μολών, 285
 πρὶν ἀγγέλους σπερχνούς τε καὶ ταχυρρόθους
 λόγους ἰκέσθαι καὶ φλέγειν χρείας ὑπο.

Χορός

μέλει, φόβῳ δ' οὐχ ὑπνώσσει κέαρ·
 γείτονες δὲ καρδίας
 μέριμναι ζωπυροῦσι τάρβος 290
 τὸν ἀμφιτειχῇ λεών,
 δράκοντας ὥς τις τέκνων
 ὑπερδέδοικεν λεχαίων δυσευνάτορας

tribute, [270] that brings courage to our friends and dissolves fear of the enemy. And now (*Here Eteocles makes his vow*) to the gods who guard our city's land, both those who dwell in the plain and those who watch over its meeting-place, to Dirce's springs and the waters of Ismenus, I vow that, if things go well and the city is saved, [275] the citizens shall redden the gods' altars with the blood of sheep and sacrifice bulls to the gods—this is my vow—and offer trophies, while I will crown their holy temples with the spoil of the enemy's spear-pierced garments. [280] Make this kind of prayer to the gods, without your previous lamentation, nor with wild and useless panting; for you will not escape your destiny any the more. As for me, I will go station six men, with me as the seventh, as champions to oppose the enemy in proud fashion [285] at the seven exits in the wall, even before speedy messengers or swift-rushing reports arrive and inflame us with urgent need.

Exit.

Chorus

I heed him, but through terror my heart finds no repose. [290] Anxieties border upon my heart and kindle my fear of the army surrounding our walls, as a trembling dove fears for her children in the nest because of snakes that are dangerous bed-fellows.

πάντρομος πελειάς.
 τοὶ μὲν γὰρ ποτὶ πύργους **295**
 πανδαμεὶ πανομιλεῖ
 στείχουσιν. τί γένωμαι;
 τοὶ δ' ἐπ' ἀμφιβόλοισιν
 ἰάπτουσι πολίταις
 χερμάδ' ὀκρίοεσσαν. **300**
 παντὶ τρόπῳ, Διογενεῖς
 θεοί, πόλιν καὶ στρατὸν
 Καδμογενῇ ῥύεσθε.
 ποῖον δ' ἀμείψεσθε γαίας πέδον
 τᾶσδ' ἄρειον, ἐχθροῖς **305**
 ἀφέντες τὰν βαθύχθον' αἶαν,
 ὕδωρ τε Διρκαῖον, εὐ-
 τραφέστατον πωμάτων
 ὅσων ἴησιν Ποσει-
 δᾶν ὁ γαιάοχος **310**
 Τηθύος τε παῖδες.
 πρὸς τὰδ', ὦ πολιοῦχοι
 θεοί, τοῖσι μὲν ἔξω
 πύργων ἀνδρολέτειραν
 κῆρα, ῥίψοπλον ἄταν, **315**
 ἐμβαλόντες ἄροισθε
 κῦδος τοῖσδε πολίταις.
 καὶ πόλεως ῥύτορες <ἔστ'>

[295] For against our fortifications some are advancing with all their men, all in formation. Ah, what will become of me? Others are hurling jagged boulders [300] at the citizens on all sides. O Gods born of Zeus, by every means rescue our city and people, sprung from Cadmus!

What more fertile plain will you find in place of ours, [305] if you abandon to the enemy this deep-soiled land and the water of Dirce which is the most nourishing of the streams that earth-encircling Poseidon [310] and Tethys' children pour forth? Therefore, divine guardians of the city, hurl murderous destruction on the men outside our walls [315] and panic that makes them throw away their weapons, and so win glory for these citizens. Defend the city and remain in possession of your home and throne [320] in answer to our shrill, wailing prayers!

εὐεδροί τε στάθητ'
ὀξυγόοις λιταῖσιν. **320**
οἰκτρὸν γὰρ πόλιν ᾧδ' ὠγυγίαν
Αἶδα προΐάψαι, δορὸς ἄγραν
δουλίαν ψαφαρᾷ σποδῶ
ὑπ' ἀνδρὸς Ἀχαιοῦ θεόθεν
περθομέναν ἀτίμως, **325**
τὰς δὲ κεχειρωμένας ἄγεσθαι,
ἔξ, νέας τε καὶ παλαιὰς
ἱππηδὸν πλοκάμων, περιρ-
ρηγνυμένων φαρέων. βοᾷ
δ' ἐκκενουμένα πόλις, **330**
λαῖδος ὀλλυμένας μιζοθρόου·
βαρείας τοι τύχας προταρβῶ.
κλαυτὸν δ' ἀρτιτρόποις ὠμοδρόποις
νομίμων προπάροιθεν διαμεῖψαι
δωμάτων στυγεράν ὁδόν· **335**
τί; τὸν φθίμενον γὰρ προλέγω
βέλτερα τῶνδε πράσσειν·
πολλὰ γάρ, εὖτε πτόλις δαμασθῇ,
ἔξ, δυστυχῇ τε πράσσει.
ἄλλος δ' ἄλλον ἄγει, φονεύ· **340**
εἰ, τὰ δὲ πυρφορεῖ· καπνῶ
[δὲ] χραίνεται πόλισμ' ἅπαν·
μαινόμενος δ' ἐπιπνεῖ λαοδάμας

It is a great cause for grief to hurl a primeval city to Hades in this way, quarry and slave of the spear, ravaged shamefully in the dusty ashes by an Argive man through divine will. [325] And grief, too, to let the women be led away captive—ah me!—young and old, dragged by the hair, like horses, with their cloaks torn off them. [330] A city, emptied, shouts out as the human booty perishes with mingled cries. A heavy fate, indeed, my fear anticipates.

It is a lamentable thing that modest girls should be plucked unripe, before the customary rites, and should make [335] a loathsome journey from their homes. What? I declare that the dead will do better than the captives; for when a city is subdued—ah, ah!—many and miserable are its sufferings. [340] Man drags off man, or kills, or sets fires; the whole city is defiled with smoke. Mad Ares storms, subduing the people and polluting reverence.

μιαίνων εὐσέβειαν Ἄρης.
 κορκορυγαὶ δ' ἄν' ἄστρῳ, προτὶ [πτόλιν] 345
 δ' ὀρκάνα
 πυργῶτις· πρὸς ἀνδρὸς δ' ἀνήρ
 <ἀμφὶ> δορὶ κλίνεται·
 βλαχαὶ δ' αἱματόεσσαι
 τῶν ἐπιμαστιδίων
 ἀρτιτρεφεῖς βρέμονται. 350
 ἀρπαγαὶ δὲ διαδρομαῶν ὁμαίμονες·
 ξυμβολεῖ φέρων φέροντι,
 καὶ κενὸς κενὸν καλεῖ,
 ξύννομον θέλων ἔχειν,
 οὔτε μείον οὔτ' ἴσον λελιμμένοι. 355
 τὰκ τῶνδ' εἰκάσαι λόγος πάρα.
 παντοδαπὸς δὲ καρπὸς χαμάδις πεσὼν
 ἀλγύνει κυρήσας· πικρὸν δ'
 ὄμμα θαλαμηπόλων·
 πολλὰ δ' ἀκριτόφυρτος 360
 γᾶς δόσις οὐτιδανοῖς
 ἐν ῥοθίοις φορεῖται.
 δμῳίδες δὲ καινοπήμονες νέαι·
 τλάμον' εὐνὰν αἰχμάλωτον
 ἀνδρὸς εὐτυχοῦντος ὥς 365
 δυσμενοῦς ὑπερτέρου
 ἐλπίς ἐστι νύκτερον τέλος μολεῖν,

[345] Tumults swell through the town, and against it a towering net is advancing. Man falls before man beneath the spear. Sobs and wails over gore-covered babes, just nursed at their mothers' breasts, [350] resound. Rape and pillage of those fleeing through the city are the deeds of one's own blood. Plunderer joins up with plunderer; the empty-handed calls to the empty-handed, wishing to have a partner, [355] each greedy for neither less nor equal share. Reason exists for imagining what will come after this.

The earth's varied fruits, fallen to the ground, give pain, a bitter sight for the maid-servants. [360] In jumbled confusion the abundant gifts of earth are carried away by reckless looting waves. Young women, enslaved, suffer a new evil: a bed of misery, prize of the conquering enemy's spear, as though of a prospering husband— [365] they can expect the coming of the nightly rite, which gives aid to tears and anguish!¹

The Scout is seen approaching from one side; Eteocles from the other.

παγκλαύτων ἀλγέων ἐπίρροθον.

Ἡμιχόριον Α

ὁ τοι κατόπτης, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, στρατοῦ
πευθῶ τιν' ἡμῖν, ὦ φίλοι, νέαν φέρει, **370**
σπουδῇ διώκων πομπίμους χνόας ποδῶν.

Ἡμιχόριον Β

καὶ μὴν ἄναξ ὅδ' αὐτὸς Οἰδίπου τόκος
εἰς ἀρτίκολλον ἀγγέλου λόγον μαθεῖν·
σπουδῇ δὲ καὶ τοῦδ' οὐκ ἀπαρτίζει πόδα.

Ἄγγελος

λέγοιμ' ἂν εἰδὼς εὖ τὰ τῶν ἐναντίων, **375**
ὥς τ' ἐν πύλαις ἕκαστος εἴληχεν πάλον.
Τυδεὺς μὲν ἤδη πρὸς πύλαισι Προιτίσιν
βρέμει, πόρον δ' Ἴσμενόν οὐκ ἔᾱ περᾶν
ὁ μάντις· οὐ γὰρ σφάγια γίγνεται καλά.
Τυδεὺς δὲ μαργῶν καὶ μάχης λελιμμένος **380**
μεσημβριναῖς κλαγγαῖσιν ὡς δράκων βοᾷ·
θείνει δ' ὀνειδίζει μάντιν Οἰκλείδην σοφόν,
σαίνειν μόρον τε καὶ μάχην ἀψυχία.
τοιαῦτ' αὐτῶν τρεῖς κατασκίους λόφους
σεῖει, κράνους χαίτωμ', ὑπ' ἀσπίδος δ' ἔσω **385**
χαλκήλατοι κλάζουσι κώδωνες φόβον·
ἔχει δ' ὑπέρφρον σῆμ' ἐπ' ἀσπίδος τόδε,
φλέγονθ' ὑπ' ἄστροις οὐρανὸν τετυγμένον·

LEADER OF THE FIRST HALF-CHORUS

The scout, I believe, [370] is bringing some fresh news of the army to us, my friends, since the joints of his legs are hastily speeding as they carry him on his mission.

LEADER OF THE SECOND HALF-CHORUS

And, indeed, here is our lord himself, the son of Oedipus, at the right moment to hear the messenger's report. Haste makes his stride uneven, too.

Scout

[375] It is with certain knowledge that I will give my account of the enemy's actions, how each man according to lot has been posted at the gates. Tydeus is already storming opposite the Proetid gates; but the seer will not allow him to ford the Ismenus because the omens from the sacrifices are not favorable. [380] Yet Tydeus, raging and eager for battle, shouts like a serpent hissing at high noon, and lashes skilled Oecles' son, with the taunt that he cringes in cowardice before death and battle. With such cries he shakes three overshadowing plumes, [385] his helmet's mane, while from under his shield, bells forged of bronze therein ring out a fearsome clang. He has this haughty symbol on his shield: a well-crafted sky, ablaze with stars, and the brightness of the full moon shining in the center of the

λαμπρὰ δὲ πανσέληνος ἐν μέσῳ σάκει,
 πρέσβιστον ἄστρον, νυκτὸς ὀφθαλμός, πρέπει. **390**
 τοιαῦτ' ἀλύων ταῖς ὑπερκόμποις σαγαῖς
 βοᾷ παρ' ὄχθαις ποταμίαις, μάχης ἐρῶν,
 ἵππος χαλινῶν ὡς κατασθμαίνων μένει,
 ὅστις βοὴν σάλπιγγος ὀρμαίνει μένων.
 τίς ἀντιτάξεις τῷδε; τίς Προίτου πυλῶν **395**
 κλήθρων λυθέντων προστατεῖν φερέγγυος;
Ἔτεοκλῆς
 κόσμον μὲν ἀνδρὸς οὐτὶν' ἂν τρέσαιμ' ἐγώ,
 οὐδ' ἔλκοποιά γίγνεται τὰ σήματα·
 λόφοι δὲ κώδων τ' οὐ δάκνουσ' ἄνευ δορός.
 καὶ νύκτα ταύτην ἣν λέγεις ἐπ' ἀσπίδος **400**
 ἄστροισι μαρμαίρουσαν οὐρανοῦ κυρεῖν,
 τάχ' ἂν γένοιτο μάντις ἡ ἀνοία τινί.
 εἰ γὰρ θανόντι νύξ ἐπ' ὀφθαλμοῖς πέσοι,
 τῷ τοι φέροντι σῆμ' ὑπέρκομπον τόδε
 γένοιτ' ἂν ὀρθῶς ἐνδίκως τ' ἐπώνυμον, **405**
 καὐτὸς καθ' αὐτοῦ τήνδ' ὕβριν μαντεύσεται.
 ἐγὼ δὲ Τυδεῖ κεδνὸν Ἀστακοῦ τόκον
 τῶνδ' ἀντιτάξω προστάτην πυλωμάτων,
 μάλ' εὐγενῇ τε καὶ τὸν Αἰσχύνῃς θρόνον
 τιμῶντα καὶ στυγοῦνθ' ὑπέρφρονας λόγους. **410**
 αἰσχροῶν γὰρ ἀργός, μὴ κακὸς δ' εἶναι φιλεῖ.
 σπαρτῶν δ' ἀπ' ἀνδρῶν, ὧν Ἄρης ἐφείσατο,

shield, [390] the moon that is the most revered of the stars, the eye of night. Raving so in his arrogant armor, he shouts beside the river-bank, craving battle, like some charger that fiercely champs at the bit as he waits in eagerness for the trumpet's war-cry. [395] Whom will you send against him? Who will be capable of standing as our champion at the Proetid gate when its bars are loosened?

Eteocles

I would not tremble before any mere ornaments on a man. Nor can signs and symbols wound and kill—crests and bell have no bite without the spear. [400] And regarding this "night" which you describe on his shield, sparkling with heaven's stars—perhaps the folly of it might yield to one some prophetic understanding. For should night fall on this man's eyes as he dies, then to its bearer this arrogant symbol [405] would prove rightly and justly named; and it is against himself that he will have prophesied this outrageous violence. Now as for me, against Tydeus I will station the trusty son of Astacus as defender of this gate, since he is full noble and [410] reveres the throne of Honor and detests proud speech. He is slow to act disgracefully, and he has no cowardly nature. His race springs from the men sown of the dragon's teeth, from one of those

ρίζωμ' ἀνεῖται, κάρτα δ' ἔστ' ἐγχώριος,
Μελάνιππος· ἔργον δ' ἐν κύβοις Ἄρης κρινεῖ·
Δίκη δ' ὁμαίμων κάρτα νιν προστέλλεται 415
εἴργειν τεκούση μητρὶ πολέμιον δόρυ.

Χορός

τὸν ἄμόν νυν ἀντίπαλον εὐτυχεῖν
θεοὶ δοῖεν, ὥς δικαίως πόλεως
πρόμαχος ὄρνυται· τρέμω δ' αἵματη-
φόρους μόρους ὑπὲρ φίλων 420
ὀλομένων ιδέσθαι.

Ἄγγελος

τούτῳ μὲν οὕτως εὐτυχεῖν δοῖεν θεοί·
Καπανεὺς δ' ἐπ' Ἠλέκτραισιν εἴληχεν πύλαις,
γίγας ὃδ' ἄλλος τοῦ πάρος λελεγμένου
μείζων, ὁ κόμπος δ' οὐ κατ' ἀνθρώπον φρονεῖ, 425
πύργοις δ' ἀπειλεῖ δεῖν', ἃ μὴ κραῖνοι τύχη·
θεοῦ τε γὰρ θέλοντος ἐκπέρσειν πόλιν
καὶ μὴ θέλοντός φησιν, οὐδὲ τὴν Διὸς
ἔριν πέδοι σκήψασαν ἐμποδῶν σχεθεῖν.
τὰς δ' ἀστραπὰς τε καὶ κεραυνίους βολὰς 430
μεσημβρινοῖσι θάλπεσιν προσήκασεν·
ἔχει δὲ σῆμα γυμνὸν ἄνδρα πυρφόρον,
φλέγει δὲ λαμπὰς διὰ χερῶν ὥπλισμένη·

whom Ares spared, and so Melanippus is truly born of our land.
Ares will decide the outcome with a throw of the dice; [415] but
Justice, his kin by blood, indeed sends this man forth to keep the
enemy spear from the mother that gave him birth.

Exit Melanippus.

Chorus

May the gods grant success to our champion, since he rises up in
a just cause, to battle for his city! But I shudder [420] to watch
the bloody deaths of men cut down for the sake of their own
people.

Scout

Yes, may the gods so grant success to this man. Capaneus is
stationed at the Electran gates, another giant of a man, greater
than the one described before. [425] But his boast is too proud
for a mere human, and he makes terrifying threats against our
battlements—which, I hope, chance will not fulfil! For he says he
will utterly destroy the city with god's will or without it, and
that not even conflict with Zeus, though it should fall before him
in the plain, will stand in his way. [430] The god's lightning and
thunderbolts he compares to midday heat. For his shield's
symbol he has a man without armor bearing fire, and the torch,
his weapon, blazes in his hands; and in golden letters he says "I

χρυσοῖς δὲ φωνεῖ γράμμασιν "πρήσω πόλιν."
τοιῶδε φωτὶ πέμπε--τίς ξυστήσεται, 435
τίς ἄνδρα κομπάζοντα μὴ τρέσας μενεῖ;

Ἐτεοκλῆς

καὶ τῷδε κέρδει κέρδος ἄλλο τίκτεται.
τῶν τοι ματαίων ἀνδράσιν φρονημάτων
ἢ γλῶσσ' ἀληθῆς γίγνεται κατήγορος·
Καπανεὺς δ' ἀπειλεῖ, δρᾶν παρεσκευασμένος, 440
θεοὺς ἀτίζων, κάπογυμνάζων στόμα
χαρᾶ ματαία θνητὸς ὦν εἰς οὐρανὸν
πέμπει γεγωνὰ Ζηνὶ κυμαίνοντ' ἔπη·
πέποιθα δ' αὐτῷ ξὺν δίκη τὸν πυρφόρον
ἤξειν κεραυνόν, οὐδὲν ἐξηκασμένον 445
μεσημβρινοῖσι θάλπεσιν τοῖς ἡλίου.
ἀνὴρ δ' ἐπ' αὐτῷ, κεῖ στόμαργός ἐστ' ἄγαν,
αἶθων τέτακται λῆμα, Πολυφόντου βία,
φερέγγυνον φρούρημα, προστατηρίας
Ἀρτέμιδος εὐνοίαισι σύν τ' ἄλλοις θεοῖς. 450
λέγ' ἄλλον ἄλλαις ἐν πύλαις εἰληχότα.

Χορός

ὅλοιθ' ὅς πόλει μεγάλ' ἐπεύχεται,
κεραυνοῦ δέ νιν βέλος ἐπισχέθαι,
πρὶν ἐμὸν ἐσθορεῖν δόμον, πωλικῶν

will burn the city." [435] Against such a man make your
dispatch—who will meet him in combat, who will stand firm
without trembling before his boasts?

Eteocles

Here too gain follows with interest from gain.¹ The tongue
proves in the end to be an unerring accuser of men's wicked
thoughts. [440] Capaneus makes his threats, ready to act,
irreverent toward the gods, and giving his tongue full exercise
in wicked glee, he, though a mere mortal, sends a loud and
swollen boast to Zeus in heaven. But I trust that the fire-bearing
thunderbolt will justly come to him, [445] and when it comes it
will not be anything like the sun's mid-day heat. And against
him, even though he is a big talker, a man of fiery spirit, mighty
Polyphontes, is stationed, a dependable sentinel [450] with the
good will of guardian Artemis and the other gods. Now tell me
about another one allotted to other gates!

Exit Polyphontes.

¹ Tydeus' insolence (l. 387) was "gain" to our cause; to it is now added that of Capaneus, which is like money put out at interest (τόκος).

Chorus

Death to him who exults so arrogantly over the city! May the
thunderbolt stop him before he leaps into my home [455] and

θ' ἔδωλίων ὑπερκόπῳ 455

δορί ποτ' ἐκλαπάσαι.

Ἄγγελος

καὶ μὴν τὸν ἐντεῦθεν λαχόντα πρὸς πύλαις
λέξω· τρίτῳ γὰρ Ἐτεόκλῳ τρίτος πάλος
ἐξ ὑπτίου ᾗδησεν εὐχάλκου κράνους,
πύλαισι Νηίστησι προσβαλεῖν λόχον. 460
ἵππους δ' ἐν ἀμπυκτῆρσιν ἐμβριμώμενας
δινεῖ, θελούσας πρὸς πύλαις πεπτωκέναι.
φιμοὶ δὲ συρίζουσι βάρβαρον τρόπον,
μυκτηροκόμοις πνεύμασιν πληρούμενοι.
ἐσχημάτισται δ' ἄσπις οὐ σμικρὸν τρόπον· 465
ἀνὴρ [δ'] ὀπλίτης κλίμακος προσαμβάσεις
στείχει πρὸς ἐχθρῶν πύργον, ἐκπέρσαι θέλων.
βοᾷ δὲ χούτος γραμμάτων ἐν ξυλλαβαῖς,
ὥς οὐδ' ἂν Ἄρης σφ' ἐκβάλῃ πυργωμάτων.
καὶ τῷδε φωτὶ πέμπε τὸν φερέγγυον 470
πόλεως ἀπείργειν τῆσδε δούλιον ζυγόν.

Ἐτεοκλῆς

πέμποιμ' ἂν ἤδη τόνδε, σὺν τύχῃ δέ τῳ·
καὶ δὴ πέπεμπται κόμπον ἐν χεροῖν ἔχων,
Μεγαρεύς, Κρέοντος σπέρμα τοῦ σπαρτῶν
γένους,
ὃς οὔτι μάργων ἵππικῶν φρυαγμάτων 475
βρόμον φοβηθεῖς ἐκ πυλῶν χωρήσεται,

plunders me from my maiden chambers with his outrageous
spear!

Scout

Now I will tell you about the man who next drew station at the
gates. The third lot leaped out of the upturned bronze helmet for
Eteoclus, [460] to hurl his band against the Neistan gates. He
whirls his horses as they snort through their bridles, eager to fall
against the gate. Their muzzles whistle in a barbarian way, filled
with the breath of their haughty nostrils. [465] His shield is
decorated in great style: an armored man climbs a ladder's
rungs to mount an enemy tower that he wants to destroy. This
one, too, shouts in syllables of written letters that even Ares
could not hurl him from the battlements. [470] Send a
dependable opponent against this man, too, to keep the yoke of
slavery from our city.

Eteocles

I would send this man here, and with good fortune.

Exit Megareus.

Indeed, he has already been sent, his only boast in his hands,
Megareus, Creon's seed, of the race of the sown- men. [475] He
will not withdraw from the gate in fear of the thunder of the
horses' furious snorting;

ἀλλ' ἢ θανὼν τροφεῖα πληρώσει χθονί,
ἢ καὶ δὺ' ἄνδρε καὶ πόλισμ' ἐπ' ἀσπίδος
έλων λαφύροις δῶμα κοσμήσει πατρός.
κόμπαζ' ἐπ' ἄλλω, μηδέ μοι φθόνει λέγων. 480

Χορός

ἐπεύχομαι τῷδε μὲν εὐτυχεῖν, ἰὼ
πρόμαχ' ἐμῶν δόμων, τοῖσι δὲ δυστυχεῖν.
ὥς δ' ὑπέραυχα βάζουσιν ἐπὶ πτόλει
μαينوμένα φρενί, τῶς νιν
Ζεὺς νεμέτωρ ἐπίδοι κοταίνων. 485

Ἄγγελος

τέταρτος ἄλλος, γείτονας πύλας ἔχων
Ὅγκας Ἀθάνας, ξὺν βοῇ παρίσταται,
Ἴππομέδοντος σχῆμα καὶ μέγας τύπος·
ἄλω δὲ πολλήν, ἀσπίδος κύκλον λέγω,
ἔφριξα δινήσαντος· οὐκ ἄλλως ἐρῶ. 490
ὁ σηματουργὸς δ' οὐ τις εὐτελὴς ἄρ' ἦν
ὅστις τόδ' ἔργον ὥπασεν πρὸς ἀσπίδι,
Τυφῶν' ἰέντα πύρπνοον διὰ στόμα
λιγνὺν μέλαιναν, αἰόλην πυρὸς κάσιν·
ὄφεων δὲ πλεκτάναισι περιδρομον κύτος 495
προσηδάφισται κοιλογάστορος κύκλου.
αὐτὸς δ' ἐπηλάλαξεν, ἔνθεος δ' Ἄρει
βακχᾶ πρὸς ἀλκὴν Θυιάς ὥς φόβον βλέπων.
τοιούδε φωτὸς πεῖραν εὖ φυλακτέον·

but either he will die and pay the earth the full price of his
nurture, or will capture two men and the city on the shield, and
then adorn his father's house with the spoils. [480] Tell me about
another's boasts and do not begrudge me the full tale!

Chorus

O champion of my home, I pray that this man will have good
fortune, and that there will be bad fortune for his enemies. As
they boast too much against the city in their frenzied mind, [485]
so, too, may Zeus the Requiter look on them in anger!

Scout

Another, the fourth, has the gate near Onca Athena and takes
his stand with a shout, Hippomedon, tremendous in form and
figure. I shuddered in fear as he spun a huge disk—the circle of
his shield, I mean— [490] I cannot deny it. The symbol-maker
who put the design on his shield was no lowly craftsman: the
symbol is Typhon, spitting out of his fire-breathing mouth a
dark, thick smoke, the darting sister of fire. [495] And the rim of
the hollow-bellied shield is fastened all around with snaky
braids. The warrior himself has raised the war-cry and, inspired
by Ares he raves for battle like a maenad, with a look to inspire
fear. We must put up a good defense against the assault of such
a man, [500] for already Rout is boasting of victory at the gate.

Φόβος γὰρ ἤδη πρὸς πύλαις κομπάζεται. 500

Ἑτεοκλῆς

πρῶτον μὲν Ὀγκα Παλλάς, ἥτ' ἀγχίπτολις,
πύλαισι γείτων, ἀνδρὸς ἐχθαίρουσ' ὕβριν,
εἶρξει νεοσσῶν ὥς δράκοντα δύσχιμον·

Ὑπερβίος δέ, κεδνὸς Οἶνοπος τόκος,
ἀνὴρ κατ' ἄνδρα τοῦτον ἠρέθη, θέλων 505

ἐξιστορῆσαι μοῖραν ἐν χρεία τύχης,
οὔτ' εἶδος οὔτε θυμὸν οὐδ' ὄπλων σχέσιν
μωμητός, Ἑρμῆς δ' εὐλόγως ξυνήγαγεν.

ἐχθρὸς γὰρ ἀνὴρ ἀνδρὶ τῷ ξυστήσεται,
ξυνοίσετον δὲ πολεμίους ἐπ' ἀσπίδων 510

θεοῦς· ὁ μὲν γὰρ πύρπνοον Τυφῶν' ἔχει,
Ὑπερβίῳ δὲ Ζεὺς πατήρ ἐπ' ἀσπίδος
σταδαῖος ἦσται, διὰ χερὸς βέλος φλέγων·
κοῦπω τις εἶδε Ζῆνᾶ που νικώμενον.

τοιάδε μέντοι προσφίλεια δαιμόνων· 515

πρὸς τῶν κρατούντων δ' ἐσμέν, οἱ δ' ἥσσωμένων,
εἰ Ζεὺς γε Τυφῶ καρτερώτερος μάχη·

εἰκὸς δὲ πράξειν ἄνδρας ᾧδ' ἀντιστάτας, 519

Ὑπερβίῳ τε πρὸς λόγον τοῦ σήματος 518

σωτὴρ γένοιτ' ἂν Ζεὺς ἐπ' ἀσπίδος τυχών. 520

Eteocles

First Onca Pallas, who dwells near the city, close by the gate, and who loathes outrageousness in a man, will fend him off like a dangerous snake away from nestlings. Moreover, Hyperbius, Oenops' trusty son, [505] is chosen to match him, man to man, as he is eager to search out his fate in the crisis that chance has wrought—neither in form, nor spirit nor in the wielding of his arms does he bear reproach. Hermes¹ has appropriately pitted them against each other. For the man is hostile to the man he faces in battle, [510] and the gods on their shields also meet as enemies. The one has fire-breathing Typhon, while father Zeus stands upright on Hyperbius' shield, his lightening bolt aflame in his hand. And no one yet has seen Zeus conquered. [515] Such then is the favor of the divine powers: we are with the victors, they with the vanquished, if Zeus in fact proves stronger in battle than Typhon. And it is likely that the mortal adversaries will fare as do their gods; and so, in accordance with the symbol, [520] Zeus will be a savior for Hyperbius since he resides on his shield.

Exit Hyperbius.

¹ Hermes presided over contests and lots.

Χορός

πέποιθα <δὴ> τὸν Διὸς ἀντίτυπον ἔχοντ'
ἄφιλον ἐν σάκει τοῦ χθονίου δέμας
δαίμονος, ἐχθρὸν εἴκασμα βροτοῖς τε καὶ
δαροβίοισι θεοῖσιν,
πρόσθε πυλᾶν κεφαλὰν ἰάψειν. 525

Ἄγγελος

οὕτως γένοιτο. τὸν δὲ πέμπτον αὖ λέγω,
πέμπταισι προσταχθέντα Βορραίαις πύλαις,
τύμβον κατ' αὐτὸν Διογενοῦς Ἀμφίονος·
ὄμνυσι δ' αἰχμὴν ἣν ἔχει μᾶλλον θεοῦ
σέβειν πεποιθὺς ὁμμάτων θ' ὑπέρτερον, 530
ἧ μὴν λαπάξειν ἄστν Καδμείων βία
Διός· τόδ' αὐδ' ἄ μητρὸς ἐξ ὄρεσκόου
βλάστημα καλλίπρωρον, ἀνδρόπαις ἀνήρ·
στείχει δ' ἴουλος ἄρτι διὰ παρηίδων,
ῥας φνούσης, ταρφὺς ἀντέλλουσα θρίξ. 535
ὁ δ' ὦμόν, οὔτι παρθένων ἐπώνυμον,
φρόνημα, γοργὸν δ' ὄμμ' ἔχων, προσίσταται.
οὐ μὴν ἀκόμπαστός γ' ἐφίσταται πύλαις·
τὸ γὰρ πόλεως ὄνειδος ἐν χαλκηλάτῳ
σάκει, κυκλωτῷ σώματος προβλήματι, 540
Σφίγγ' ὠμόσιτον προσμεμηχανημένην
γόμφοις ἐνώμα, λαμπρὸν ἔκκρουστον δέμας,
φέρει δ' ὑφ' αὐτῇ φῶτα Καδμείων ἕνα,

Chorus

I am sure that Zeus' antagonist, since he has on his shield the unloved form of an earth-born deity, an image hated by both mortals and the long-lived gods, [525] will drop his head in death before the gate.

Scout

Let it be so! Next I describe the fifth man who is stationed at the fifth, the Northern gate opposite the tomb of Amphion, Zeus's son. He swears by his spear which, in his confidence, he holds more to be revered than a god [530] and more precious than his eyes, that he will sack the city of the Cadmeans in spite of Zeus. He says this, the beautiful child of a mountain-bred mother—a warrior, half man, half boy, and his beard's first growth is just now advancing on his cheeks, [535] his youth in first bloom, thick, upspringing hair. But now he makes his advance with a savage heart and a terrifying look, not at all like the maidens he's named for.¹ Nor does he take his stand at the gate unboasting, but wields our city's shame on his bronze-forged [540] shield, his body's circular defence, on which the Sphinx who eats men raw is cleverly fastened with bolts, her body embossed and gleaming. She carries under her a single Cadmean,

ὥς πλεῖστ' ἐπ' ἀνδρὶ τῷδ' ἰάπτεσθαι βέλη.
ἐλθὼν δ' ἔοικεν οὐ καπηλεύσειν μάχην, 545
μακρᾶς κελεύθου δ' οὐ καταισχυνεῖν πόρον,
Παρθενοπαῖος Ἀρκάς· ὁ δὲ τοιόσδ' ἀνὴρ
μέτοικος, Ἄργει δ' ἐκτίνων καλὰς τροφάς,
πύργοις ἀπειλεῖ τοῖσδ' ἅ μὴ κραῖνοι θεός.

Ἑτεοκλῆς

εἰ γὰρ τύχοιεν ὧν φρονοῦσι πρὸς θεῶν, 550
αὐτοῖς ἐκείνοις ἀνοσίοις κομπάσμασιν·
ἦ τὰν πανώλεις παγκάκως τ' ὀλοίατο.
ἔστιν δὲ καὶ τῷδ', ὃν λέγεις τὸν Ἀρκάδα,
ἀνὴρ ἄκομπος, χεῖρ δ' ὄρᾳ τὸ δρᾶσιμον,
Ἄκτωρ ἀδελφὸς τοῦ πάρος λελεγμένου· 555
ὃς οὐκ ἐάσει γλῶσσαν ἐργμάτων ἄτερ
ἔσω πυλῶν ῥέουσιν ἀλδαίνειν κακά,
οὐδ' εἰσαμεῖψαι θηρὸς ἐχθίστου δάκους
εἰκὼ φέροντα πολεμίας ἐπ' ἀσπίδος·
ἦ ἔωθεν εἴσω τῷ φέροντι μέμψεται, 560
πυκνοῦ κροτησμοῦ τυγχάνουσ' ὑπὸ πτόλιν.
θεῶν θελόντων τὰν ἀληθεύσαιμ' ἐγώ.

so that against this man chiefly our missiles will be hurled. [545]
He does not seem to have come to do any petty trading in the
battle, nor to shame the making of his long journey—he is
Parthenopaeus of Arcadia. Such is the man, and aiming to make
full payment for the fine support given him in Argos, his
adopted land, he now threatens our fortifications—may God not
fulfil his threats!

Eteocles

[550] If only they would get from the gods what they wish for,
because of those unholy boasts of theirs, then surely they would
perish in utter ruin and misery. There is a man for this one, too,
whom you name an Arcadian, a man who does not boast, but
who knows the thing to do— [555] Actor, brother of him I
named before. He will not allow words that lack deeds to
overrun his gate and increase fear, nor will he let in a man who
carries on his hostile shield the image of the ravenous, detested
beast. [560] That beast outside his shield will blame the man
who carries her into the gate, when she has taken a heavy
beating beneath the city's walls. If the gods are willing, what I
speak may prove true!

Exit Actor.

1 Parthenopaeus “maiden-faced.” His mother Atalanta dwelt on Mt. Maenalus in **Arcadia**.

Χορός

ίκνεϊται λόγος διὰ στηθέων,
τριχὸς δ' ὀρθίας πλόκαμος ἴσταται,
μεγάλα μεγαληγόνων κλυούσα 565
ἀνοσίων ἀνδρῶν. εἴθε γὰρ
θεοὶ τοῦδ' ὀλέσειαν ἐν γᾶ.

Ἄγγελος

ἔκτον λέγοιμ' ἂν ἄνδρα σωφρονέστατον,
ἀλκὴν τ' ἄριστον μάντιν, Ἀμφιάρεω βίαν·
Ὅμολωσιν δὲ πρὸς πύλαις τεταγμένος 570
κακοῖσι βάζει πολλὰ Τυδέως βίαν·
τὸν ἀνδροφόντην, τὸν πόλεως ταρακτορα,
μέγιστον Ἄργει τῶν κακῶν διδάσκαλον,
Ἐρινύος κλητῆρα, πρόσπολον φόνου,
κακῶν τ' Ἀδράστῳ τῶνδε βουλευτήριον. 575
καὶ τὸν σὸν αὖθις προσθροῶν ὁμόσπορον,
ἐξυπτιάζων ὄμμα, Πολυνείκους βίαν,
δὶς τ' ἐν τελευτῇ τοῦνομ' ἐνδατούμενος,
καλεῖ. λέγει δὲ τοῦτ' ἔπος διὰ στόμα·
"ἦ τοῖον ἔργον καὶ θεοῖσι προσφιλές, 580
καλόν τ' ἀκοῦσαι καὶ λέγειν μεθυστέροις,
πόλιν πατρώαν καὶ θεοὺς τοὺς ἐγγενεῖς
πορθεῖν, στράτευμ' ἐπακτὸν ἐμβεβληκότα;
μητρός τε πηγὴν τίς κατασβέσει δίκη;
πατρίς τε γαῖα σῆς ὑπὸ σπουδῆς δορὶ 585

Chorus

His words penetrate to my heart, my hair stands on end [565] as
I hear the loud threats of these loud-boasting, impious men.
May the gods destroy them here in our land!

Scout

The sixth man I will name is of the highest moderation and a
seer brave in combat, mighty Amphiaraus. [570] Stationed at the
Homoloid gate, he repeatedly rebukes mighty Tydeus with evil
names "Murderer, maker of unrest in the city, principal teacher
of evils to the Argives, summoner of vengeance's Curse, servant
of Slaughter, [575] counselor to Adrastus in these evil plans."
And next, with eyes looking upward, he addressed your own
brother, mighty Polynices who shares your blood, and called
him by name, dwelling twice upon its latter part.¹ These were
his words: [580] "Will such a deed as this be pleasing to the
gods, fine to hear of and to relate to those in the future—that
you sacked the city of your ancestors and your native gods and
launched a foreign army against them? What justice is it to drain
dry the font of your existence?"² [585] And how shall your
fatherland, captured by the spear for the sake of your ambition,

ἀλοῦσα πῶς σοι ξύμμαχος γενήσεται;
 ἔγωγε μὲν δὴ τήνδε πιανῶ χθόνα,
 μάντις κεκευθὼς πολεμίας ὑπὸ χθονός.
 μαχώμεθ', οὐκ ἄτιμον ἐλπίζω μόρον."
 τοιαῦθ' ὁ μάντις ἀσπὶδ' εὐκῆλως ἔχων **590**
 πάγχαλκον ἠϋδα· σῆμα δ' οὐκ ἐπὶν κύκλω.
 οὐ γὰρ δοκεῖν ἄριστος, ἀλλ' εἶναι θέλει,
 βαθεῖαν ἄλοκα διὰ φρενὸς καρπούμενος,
 ἐξ ἧς τὰ κεδνὰ βλαστάνει βουλεύματα.
 τούτῳ σοφούς τε καὶ ἀγαθοὺς ἀντηρέτας **595**
 πέμπειν ἐπαινῶ. δεινὸς ὃς θεοὺς σέβει.

Ἑτεοκλῆς

φεῦ τοῦ ξυναλλάσσοντος ὄρνιθος βροτοῖς
 δίκαιον ἄνδρα τοῖσι δυσσεβεστέροις.
 ἐν παντὶ πράγει δ' ἔσθ' ὁμιλίας κακῆς
 κάκιον οὐδέν, καρπὸς οὐ κομιστέος· **600**
 ἄτης ἄρουρα θάνατον ἐκκαρπίζεται.
 ἦ γὰρ ξυνεισβάς πλοῖον εὐσεβῆς ἀνὴρ
 ναύταισι θερμοῖς καὶ πανουργία τινὶ
 ὄλωλεν ἀνδρῶν σὺν θεοπτύστῳ γένει,
 ἦ ξὺν πολίταις ἀνδράσιν δίκαιος ὢν **605**
 ἐχθροξένοις τε καὶ θεῶν ἀμνήμοσιν,
 ταῦτοῦ κυρήσας ἐκδίκως ἀγρεύματος,
 πληγεὶς θεοῦ μάστιγι παγκοίνῳ δάμῃ.
 οὕτως δ' ὁ μάντις, υἱὸν Οἰκλέους λέγω,

be won over to your cause? As for me, I will enrich this earth, a seer interred beneath enemy soil. Let us fight! I anticipate no dishonorable death." [590] So the seer spoke as untroubled he held his all-bronze shield. No symbol was fixed to his shield's circle. For he does not wish to appear the bravest, but to be the bravest, as he harvests the fruit of his mind's deep furrow, where his careful resolutions grow. [595] I advise you to send wise and brave opponents against him. He who reveres the gods is to be feared.

Eteocles

Ah, the pity of fate's omen when it makes a just man associate with the irreverent! In all things, nothing is more evil [600] than evil partnership. Its fruit should not be gathered in: the field of recklessness yields a harvest of death. For it may be that a pious man, embarked shipboard with sailors hot for some crime, perishes along with the sort of men hated by the gods; [605] or, a man, though upright himself, when among fellow-citizens who hate all strangers and neglect the gods, may fall undeserving into the same trap as they, and be subdued, struck by the scourge of God that strikes all alike. Just so the seer, Oecles' son,

σώφρων δίκαιος ἀγαθὸς εὐσεβὴς ἀνὴρ, **610**
 μέγας προφήτης, ἀνοσίοισι συμμιγείς
 θρασυστόμοισιν ἀνδράσιν βία φρενῶν,
 τείνουσι πομπὴν τὴν μακρὰν πάλιν μολεῖν,
 Διὸς θέλοντος ξυγκαθελκυσθήσεται.
 δοκῶ μὲν οὖν σφε μὴδὲ προσβαλεῖν πύλαις **615**
 οὐχ ὥς ἄθυμος οὐδὲ λήματος κάκη,
 ἀλλ' οἶδεν ὥς σφε χρὴ τελευτῆσαι μάχη,
 εἰ καρπὸς ἔσται θεσφάτοισι Λοξίου·
 φιλεῖ δὲ σιγᾶν ἢ λέγειν τὰ καίρια.
 ὅμως δ' ἐπ' αὐτῷ φῶτα, Λασθένους βίαν, **620**
 ἐχθρόξενον πυλωρὸν ἀντιτάξομεν,
 γέροντα τὸν νοῦν, σάρκα δ' ἡβῶσαν φύει,
 ποδῶκες ὄμμα, χεῖρα δ' οὐ βραδύνεται
 παρ' ἀσπίδος γυμνωθὲν ἀρπάσαι δόρυ.
 θεοῦ δὲ δῶρόν ἐστιν εὐτυχεῖν βροτούς. **625**

[610] although a moderate, just, noble, reverent man and a great prophet, mixes with impious, rash-talking men against his own judgment, men stretching out in a procession that is long to retrace,³ and, if it is Zeus's will, he will be dragged down in ruin along with them. [615] So then, I expect that he will not even charge the gates: not because he lacks courage or is weak-willed, but because he knows that he must meet his end in battle, if the prophecies of Loxias are to come to fruition—the god usually either holds silent or speaks to the point. [620] Just the same, I will station a man against him, mighty Lasthenes, a gate-keeper who hates foreigners. He has the wisdom of an old man, but his body is at its prime: his eyes are quick, and he does not let his hand delay for his spear to seize what is left exposed by the shield. [625] Still it is God's gift when mortals succeed.

Exit Lasthenes.

¹ Polynices “much-strife” (πολύ νεῖκος). ἐνδατούμενος, literally “separating,” i.e. dwelling with emphasis on each separate part of the name.

² μητρὸς πηγῇ strictly means “source, which consists in a mother.” Having used this expression for “mother, who is the source of life,” the poet accommodates the verb to the literal sense of πηγῇ rather than use a verb of slaying which would have suited the personal object.

³ The march of the army from distant Argos is compared to a lengthened-out procession.

Χορός

κλύοντες θεοὶ δικαίας λιτὰς
ἀμετέρας τελειῖθ', ὥς πόλις εὐτυχῇ,
δορίπονα κάκ' ἐκτρέποντες <ἐς> γᾶς
ἐπιμόλους· πύργων δ' ἔκτοθεν
βαλὼν Ζεὺς σφε κτάνοι κεραυνῶ. 630

Ἄγγελος

τὸν ἑβδομον δὴ τόνδ' ἐφ' ἐβδόμαις πύλαις
λέξω, τὸν αὐτοῦ σοῦ κασίγνητον, πόλει
οἷας ἀρᾶται καὶ κατεύχεται τύχας·
πύργοις ἐπεμβὰς κάπικηρυχθεὶς χθονί,
ἀλώσιμον παιᾶν' ἐπεξιακχάσας, 635
σοὶ συμφέρεσθαι καὶ κτανὼν θανεῖν πέλας,
ἢ ζῶντ' ἀτιμαστῆρα τῶς ἀνδρηλάτην
φυγῇ τὸν αὐτὸν τόνδε τείσασθαι τρόπον.
τοιαῦτ' αὐτεῖ καὶ θεοὺς γενεθλίους
καλεῖ πατρώας γῆς ἐποπτῆρας λιτῶν 640
τῶν ὧν γενέσθαι πάγχυ Πολυνείκους βία.
ἔχει δὲ καινοπηγὲς εὐκυκλον σάκος
διπλοῦν τε σῆμα προσμεμηχανημένον.
χρυσήλατον γὰρ ἄνδρα τευχηστήν ιδεῖν
ἄγει γυνή τις σωφρόνως ἡγουμένη. 645
Δίκη δ' ἄρ' εἶναί φησιν, ὥς τὰ γράμματα
λέγει "κατάξω δ' ἄνδρα τόνδε καὶ πόλιν
ἔξει πατρῶων δωμάτων τ' ἐπιστροφάς."

Chorus

Gods, hear our just prayers and fulfil them, that the city may have good fortune! Turn aside the evils suffered in war onto those who invade our land! May Zeus strike them [630] with his thunderbolt outside the walls and slay them!

Scout

Last I will tell of the seventh champion, him at the seventh gate,¹ your own brother, and of what fate he prays for and calls down on the city. His prayer is that after he mounts the battlements and is proclaimed king in the land, [635] and shouts the paian in triumph over its capture, he may then meet you in combat, and once he kills you, that he may perish at your side, or, if you survive, make you pay with banishment in the same way as you dishonored him with exile. Mighty Polynices shouts such threats and [640] invokes his native gods, the gods of his fatherland, to watch over his prayers in every way. He holds a shield, a perfect circle, newly-made, with a double symbol cleverly fastened on it: [645] a woman modestly walking in the fore leads a man in arms made, it appears, of hammered gold. She claims to be Justice, as the lettering indicates, "I will bring this man back and he will have his city and move freely in his father's halls."

τοιαῦτ' ἐκείνων ἐστὶ τὰ ξευρήματα.
[σὺ δ' αὐτὸς ἤδη γνῶθι τίνα πέμπειν δοκεῖ·] 650
ὥς οὔ ποτ' ἀνδρὶ τῷδε κηρυκευμάτων
μέμψη, σὺ δ' αὐτὸς γνῶθι ναυκληρεῖν πόλιν.

Ἔτεοκλής

ὦ θεομανές τε καὶ θεῶν μέγα στύγος,
ὦ πανδάκρυτον ἄμὸν Οἰδίπου γένος· 655
ὦ μοι, πατρὸς δὴ νῦν ἀραὶ τελεσφόροι.
ἀλλ' οὔτε κλαίειν οὔτ' ὀδύρεσθαι πρέπει,
μὴ καὶ τεκνωθῇ δυσφορώτερος γόος.
ἐπυνύμφω δὲ κάρτα, Πολυνείκει λέγω,
τάχ' εἰσόμεσθα τοῦπίσημ' ὅποι τελεῖ,
εἷ νιν κατάξει χρυσότευκτα γράμματα 660
ἐπ' ἀσπίδος φλύοντα σὺν φοίτῳ φρενῶν.
εἰ δ' ἢ Διὸς παῖς παρθένος Δίκη παρῇν
ἔργοις ἐκείνου καὶ φρεσίν, τάχ' ἂν τόδ' ἦν·
ἀλλ' οὔτε νιν φυγόντα μητρόθεν σκότον,
οὔτ' ἐν τροφαῖσιν, οὔτ' ἐφηβήσαντά πω, 665
οὔτ' ἐν γενείου ξυλλογῇ τριχώματος,
Δίκη προσεῖδε καὶ κατηξιώσατο·
οὐδ' ἐν πατρώας μὴν χθονὸς κακουχία
οἴμαί νιν αὐτῷ νῦν παραστατεῖν πέλας.
ἦ δῆτ' ἂν εἴη πανδίκως ψευδώνυμος 670

Such are the inventions fixed to their shields. [650] [Quickly determine yourself whom you think it best to send.] Know that you will find no fault with me in the substance of my report, but you yourself determine on what course to pilot the city.

Exit.

Eteocles

O my family sired by Oedipus, steeped in tears, [655] driven to madness by the gods and by the gods detested! Ah, now indeed our father's curses are brought to fulfillment. But neither weeping nor wailing is proper for me now, lest a grief even harder to bear is brought to life. As for him whose name is so very fitting, Polynices, we shall know soon enough what the symbol on his shield will accomplish, [660] whether the babbling letters shaped in gold on his shield, together with his mind's wanderings, will bring him back. If Justice, Zeus's maiden daughter, were attending his actions and his thoughts, this might be so. But as it is, neither when he escaped the darkness of his mother's womb, [665] nor in childhood, nor at any point in his early manhood, nor when the beard first thickened on his cheek, did Justice acknowledge him and consider him worthy. And even now I do not think that she is standing by his side to aid the destruction of his fatherland. [670] Indeed, Justice would truly be false to her name, if she

Δίκη, ξυνοῦσα φωτὶ παντόλμῳ φρένας.
τούτοις πεποιθὼς εἶμι καὶ ξυστήσομαι
αὐτός· τίς ἄλλος μᾶλλον ἐνδικώτερος;
ἄρχοντί τ' ἄρχων καὶ κασιγνήτῳ κάσις,
ἐχθρὸς σὺν ἐχθρῷ στήσομαι. φέρ' ὥς τάχος 675
κνημίδας, αἰχμῆς καὶ πετρῶν προβλήματα.

Χορός

μή, φίλτατ' ἀνδρῶν, Οἰδίπου τέκος, γένη
ὀργήν ὁμοῖος τῷ κάκιστ' αὐδωμένῳ·
ἀλλ' ἄνδρας Ἀργείοισι Καδμείους ἄλις
ἐς χεῖρας ἐλθεῖν· αἶμα γὰρ καθάρισον. 680
ἀνδροῖν δ' ὁμαίμοιν θάνατος ὤδ' αὐτοκτόνος,
οὐκ ἔστι γῆρας τοῦδε τοῦ μιάσματος.

Ἐτεοκλής

εἶπερ κακὸν φέροι τις, αἰσχύνῃς ἄτερ
ἔστω· μόνον γὰρ κέρδος ἐν τεθνηκόσι·
κακῶν δὲ κασχωρῶν οὐτὶν' εὐκλείαν ἐρεῖς. 685

Χορός

τί μέμονας, τέκνον; μή τί σε θυμοπλη-
θῆς δορίμαργος ἅτα φερέτω· κακοῦ δ'
ἐκβαλ' ἔρωτος ἀρχάν.

should ally herself with a man so utterly audacious in his plans.
Trusting in this fact I will go and stand against him—I myself in
person. Who else has a more just claim? Commander against
commander, brother against brother, [675] enemy against
enemy, I will take my stand. Quick, bring my greaves to protect
against spears and stones!

Chorus

No, son of Oedipus, most dear of our men, do not be like in
temperament to him who is called by such an evil name. It is
enough that Cadmeans [680] are advancing to close combat with
Argives. That bloodshed can be expiated. But when men of the
same blood kill each other as you desire, the pollution from this
act never grows old.

Eteocles

If indeed a man should suffer evil, let it be without dishonor,
since that is the only benefit for the dead. [685] But you cannot
speak of any glory for happenings that are at once evil and held
in dishonor.

1 The ominous “seventh” is substituted for “the Highest” (“Υψισται).

Chorus

For what are you so eager, child? Do not let mad lust for battle
fill your soul and carry you away. Reject this evil passion while
it is still young.

Ἑτεοκλής

ἐπεὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα κάρτ' ἐπισπέρχει θεός,
ἴτω κατ' οὖρον κῦμα Κωκυτοῦ λαχόν **690**
Φοῖβω στυγηθὲν πᾶν τὸ Λαΐου γένος.

Χορός

ὠμοδακῆς σ' ἄγαν ἴμερος ἐξοτρύ-
νει πικρόκαρπον ἀνδροκτασίαν τελεῖν
αἵματος οὐ θεμιστοῦ.

Ἑτεοκλής

φίλου γὰρ ἐχθρά μοι πατρὸς τάλαιν' ἀρὰ **695**
ξηροῖς ἀκλαύτοις ὄμμασιν προσιζάνει,
λέγουσα κέρδος πρότερον ὑστέρου μόρου.

Χορός

ἀλλὰ σὺ μὴ 'ποτρύνου· κακὸς οὐ κεκλή-
ση βίον εὖ κυρήσας· μελάναιγίς [δ'] οὐκ
εἴσι δόμων Ἑρινύς, ὅταν ἐκ χερῶν **700**
θεοὶ θυσίαν δέχωνται;

Ἑτεοκλής

θεοῖς μὲν ἤδη πῶς παρημελήμεθα,
χάρις δ' ἀφ' ἡμῶν ὀλομένων θαυμάζεται·
τί οὖν ἔτ' ἂν σαίνοιμεν ὀλέθριον μόρον;

Eteocles

Since God hastens the deed so urgently, [690] let the whole race
of Laius, hated by Phoebus, be swept on the wind to Cocytus'
destined flood!

Chorus

A savage desire eats away at you, drives you to murder, blood-
sacrifice proscribed by divine law, whose only fruit is bitterness.

Eteocles

[695] True, my own beloved father's hateful, ruinous curse
hovers before my dry, unweeping eyes, and informs me of
benefit preceding subsequent death.¹

¹ Literally "gain coming before death that comes later." The curse whispers
"slay him, then be slain yourself."

Chorus

No, do not let yourself be driven to it. You will not be called a
coward if you retain life nobly. Will not the avenging Erinys in
her dark aegis [700] leave your house, when the gods receive
sacrifice from your hands?

Eteocles

The gods, it seems, have already banished us from their care, yet
they admire the grace we offer them when we perish. So then,
why should we cringe and shy away from deadly fate?

Χορός

νῦν ὅτε σοι παρέστακεν· ἐπεὶ δαίμων 705
λήματος ἐν τροπαία χρονία μεταλ-
λακτὸς ἴσως ἂν ἔλθοι θελεμωτέρῳ
πνεύματι· νῦν δ' ἔτι ζεῖ.

Ἐτεοκλής

ἐξέξεσεν γὰρ Οἰδίπου κατεύγματα·
ἄγαν δ' ἀληθεῖς ἐνυπνίων φαντασμάτων 710
ὄψεις, πατρῶων χρημάτων δατήριοι.

Χορός

πιθοῦ γυναιξί, καίπερ οὐ στέργων ὅμως.

Ἐτεοκλής

λέγοιτ' ἂν ὦν ἄνη τις· οὐδὲ χρὴ μακράν.

Χορός

μὴ λθῆς ὁδοὺς σὺ τάσδ' ἐφ' ἐβδόμαις πύλαις.

Ἐτεοκλής

τεθηγμένον τοί μ' οὐκ ἀπαμβλυνεῖς λόγῳ. 715

Χορός

νίκην γε μέντοι καὶ κακὴν τιμᾷ θεός.

Ἐτεοκλής

οὐκ ἄνδρ' ὀπλίτην τοῦτο χρὴ στέργειν ἔπος.

Χορός

ἀλλ' αὐτάδελφον αἶμα δρέψασθαι θέλεις;

Chorus

[705] It is only at this moment that death stands close by you, for the divine spirit may change its purpose even after a long time and come on a gentler wind. But now it still seethes.

Eteocles

Yes, the curses of Oedipus have made it seethe in fury. [710] Too true were the phantoms in my sleeping visions, predicting the division of our father's wealth!

Chorus

Obey us women, although you do not like to.

Eteocles

Recommend something that can be accomplished; your request need not be lengthy.

Chorus

Do not yourself take the road to the seventh gate!

Eteocles

[715] Let me assure you, you will not blunt my sharpened purpose with words.

Chorus

And yet any victory, even a cowardly one, is nonetheless held in honor by God.

Eteocles

A soldier must not embrace that maxim.

Chorus

But are you willing to harvest the blood of your own brother?

Ἐτεοκλής

θεῶν διδόντων οὐκ ἂν ἐκφύγοις κακά.

Χορός

πέφρικα τὰν ὠλεσίοικον **720**
 θεόν, οὐ θεοῖς ὁμοίαν,
 παναλαθῇ κακόμαντιν
 πατρός εὐκταίαν Ἐρινὺν
 τελέσαι τὰς περιθύμους
 κατάρας Οἰδιπόδα βλαψίφρονος· **725**
 παιδολέτωρ δ' ἔρις ἅδ' ὀτρύνει.
 ξένος δὲ κλήρους ἐπινωμᾷ,
 Χάλυβος Σκυθᾶν ἄποικος,
 κτεάνων χρηματοδαίτας
 πικρός, ὠμόφρων σίδαρος, **730**
 χθόνα ναίειν διαπήλας,
 ὅπόσαν καὶ φθιμένοισιν κατέχειν,
 τῶν μεγάλων πεδίων ἀμοίρους.
 ἐπεὶ δ' ἂν αὐτοκτόνως
 αὐτοδαίκτοι θάνωσι, **735**
 καὶ γαῖα κόνις πῆν
 μελαμπαγὲς αἶμα φοίνιον,
 τίς ἂν καθαρμοὺς πόροι,
 τίς ἂν σφε λούσειεν; ὦ
 πόνοι δόμων νέοι παλαι- **740**

Eteocles

When it is the gods who give you evils, you cannot flee them.

Exit

Chorus

[720] I shudder in terror at the goddess who lays ruin to homes, a goddess unlike other divinities, who is an unerring omen of evil to come. I shudder that the Erinyes invoked by the father's prayer will fulfil the over-wrathful [725] curses that Oedipus spoke in madness. This strife that will destroy his sons drives the Erinyes to fulfillment.

A stranger distributes their inheritance, a Chalybian immigrant from Scythia, a bitter divider of wealth, [730] savage-hearted iron that apportions land for them to dwell in, as much as they can occupy in death when they have lost their share in these wide plains.

But when both have died, each killing [735] the other in mutual slaughter, and the earth's dust has swallowed the black streams of their blood, who could offer sacrifice that might make purification? Who could cleanse them of their pollution? [740] O, the new troubles of this house mixed with its evils of before!

οἷσι συμμιγεῖς κακοῖς.
 παλαιγενῇ γὰρ λέγω
 παρβασίαν ὠκύποινον·
 αἰῶνα δ' ἐς τρίτον μένει
 Ἀπόλλωνος εὖτε Λάιος 745
 βία, τρὶς εἰπόντος ἐν
 μεσομάλοις Πυθικοῖς
 χρηστηρίοις θνάσκοντα γέν-
 νας ἄτερ σῶζειν πόλιν,
 κρατηθεὶς δ' ἐκ φίλων ἀβουλιᾷν 750
 ἐγείνατο μὲν μόρον αὐτῷ,
 πατροκτόνον Οἰδιπόδαν,
 ὅστε ματρὸς ἀγνάν
 σπείρας ἄρουραν, ἔν' ἐτράφη,
 ῥίζαν αἱματόεσσαν 755
 ἔτλα· παράνοια συνᾶγε
 νυμφίους φρενώλεις.
 κακῶν δ' ὥσπερ θάλασσα κῦμ' ἄγει·
 τὸ μὲν πίτνον, ἄλλο δ' αἶρει
 τρίχαλον, ὃ καὶ περὶ πρύμν- 760
 ναν πόλεως καχλάζει.
 μεταξὺ δ' ἀλκὰ δι' ὀλίγου
 τείνει, πύργος ἐν εὖρει.
 δέδοικα δὲ σὺν βασιλεῦσι
 μὴ πόλις δαμασθῇ. 765

Indeed I speak of the ancient transgression, now swift in its retribution. It remains even into the third generation, [745] ever since Laius—in defiance of Apollo who, at his Pythian oracle at the earth's center, said three times that the king would save his city if he died without offspring—

[750] Ever since he, overcome by the thoughtlessness of his longing, fathered his own death, the parricide Oedipus, who sowed his mother's sacred field, where he was nurtured, [755] and endured a bloody crop. Madness united the frenzied bridal pair.

Now it is as if a sea of evils pushes its swell onward. As one wave sinks, the sea raises up another, [760] triple-crested, which crashes around the city's stern. In between a narrow defense stretches—no wider than a wall. I fear that the city will be overthrown along with its kings. [765]

τελειᾶν γὰρ παλαιφάτων ἀρχᾶν
 βαρεῖαι καταλλαγαί· τὰ δ' ὅλοα
 πελόμεν' οὐ παρέρχεται.
 πρόπρυμνα δ' ἐκβολὰν φέρει
 ἀνδρῶν ἀλφηστᾶν **770**
 ὄλβος ἄγαν παχυνθείς.
 τίν' ἀνδρῶν γὰρ τοσόνδ' ἐθαύμασαν
 θεοὶ καὶ ξυνέστιοι πόλεος ὁ
 πολύβατός τ' ἀγῶν βροτῶν,
 ὅσον τότε Οἰδίπουν τίον, **775**
 τὰν ἀρπαξάνδραν
 κῆρ' ἀφελόντα χώρας;
 ἐπεὶ δ' ἀρτίφρων
 ἐγένετο μέλεος ἀθλίων
 γάμων, ἐπ' ἄλγαι δυσφορῶν **780**
 μαινομένα κραδία
 δίδυμα κάκ' ἐτέλεσεν·
 πατροφόνω χειρὶ τῶν
 κρεισσοτέκνων ὁμμάτων ἐπλάγχθη·
 τέκνοις δ' ἀγρίας **785**
 ἐφῆκεν ἐπικότους τροφᾶς,
 αἰαῖ, πικρογλώσσους ἀράς,
 καὶ σφε σιδαρονόμῳ
 διὰ χειρὶ ποτε λαχεῖν
 κτήματα· νῦν δὲ τρέω **790**

For the compensation is heavy when curses uttered long ago are fulfilled, and once the deadly curse has come into existence, it does not pass away. When the fortune of seafaring merchants has grown too great, [770] it must be thrown overboard.

For whom have the gods and divinities that share their altar and the thronging assembly of men ever admired [775] so much as they honored Oedipus then, when he removed that deadly, man-seizing plague from our land?

But when, his sanity regained, he grew miserable in his wretched [780] marriage, then carried away by his grief and with maddened heart he accomplished a double evil. With the hand that killed his father he struck out his eyes, which were dearer to him than his children.

[785] Next he launched brutal, wrathful words against the sons he had bred—ah! curses from a bitter tongue—that wielding iron in their hands they would one day divide his property.

[790] So now I tremble in fear that the swift-running Erinys will

μὴ τελέσῃ καμψίπους Ἑρινύς.

Ἄγγελος

θαρσεῖτε, παῖδες μητέρων τεθραμμένοι.
πόλις πέφευγεν ἥδε δούλιον ζυγόν·
πέπτωκεν ἀνδρῶν ὀβρίμων κομπάσματα·
πόλις δ' ἐν εὐδία τε καὶ κλυδωνίου 795
πολλαῖσι πληγαῖς ἄντλον οὐκ ἐδέξατο.
στέγει δὲ πύργος, καὶ πύλας φερεγγύοις
ἐφραξάμεσθα μονομάχοισι προστάταις·
καλῶς ἔχει τὰ πλεῖστ', ἐν ἑξ πυλώμασι·
τὰς δ' ἐβδόμας ὁ σεμνὸς ἐβδομαγέτης 800
ἄναξ Ἀπόλλων εἴλετ', Οἰδίπου γένει
κραίνων παλαιὰς Λαῖου δυσβουλίας.

Χορός

τί δ' ἔστι πρᾶγμα νεόκοτον πόλει πλέον;

Ἄγγελος

πόλις σέσωσται· βασιλέες δ' ὁμόσποροι--

Χορός

τίνας; τί δ' εἶπας; παραφρονῶ φόβῳ λόγου. 805

Ἄγγελος

φρονοῦσα νῦν ἄκουσον· Οἰδίπου τόκοι --

bring this to fulfillment.

Enter Messenger.

Messenger

Take heart, you daughters who were nurtured by your mother.
Our city has escaped the yoke of slavery; the boasts of the
powerful men have fallen to the ground. [795] The city enjoys
fair weather and has taken on no water even though it has been
buffeted by many waves. The walls hold, and we have fortified
the gates with champions fully capable in single-handed
combat. For the most part all is well, at six of the gates. [800] But
lord Apollo, the reverend leader of the seventh,¹ took for himself
the seventh gate, accomplishing upon the children of Oedipus
the ancient follies of Laius.

Chorus

What novel happening will further affect the city?

Messenger

The city is saved, but the kings born of the same seed --

Chorus

[805] Who? What did you say? I am out of my mind with fear of
your report.

Messenger

Control yourself now and listen. The sons of Oedipus --

Χορός

οἷ γὰρ τάλαινα, μάντις εἰμὶ τῶν κακῶν.

Ἄγγελος

οὐδ' ἀμφιλέκτως μὴν κατεσποδημένοι--

Χορός

ἐκεῖθι κεῖσθον ; βαρέα δ' οὖν ὅμως φράσον.

Ἄγγελος

ἄνδρες τεθνᾶσιν ἐκ χερῶν αὐτοκτόνων. 810

Χορός

οὕτως ἀδελφαῖς χερσὶν ἡναίρονθ' ἅμα ;

Ἄγγελος

οὕτως ὁ δαίμων κοινὸς ἦν ἀμφοῖν ἄγαν.

αὐτὸς δ' ἀναλοῖ δῆτα δύσποτμον γένος.

τοιαῦτα χαίρειν καὶ δακρύεσθαι πάρα·

πόλιν μὲν εὖ πράσσουσιν, οἱ δ' ἐπιστάται, 815

δισσὼ στρατηγῶ, διέλαχον σφυρηλάτῳ

Σκύθη σιδήρῳ κτημάτων παμψησίαν.

ἔξουσι δ' ἦν λάβωσιν ἐν ταφῇ χθονός,

πατὴρ κατ' εὐχὰς δυσπότης φορούμενοι.

[πόλις σέσωσται βασιλείῳ δ' ὁμοσπόροιν 820

πέπωκεν αἵμά γαῖ' ὑπ' ἀλλήλων φόνῳ.]

Chorus

Ah, miserable me, I am prophet of these evils.

Messenger

In truth, beyond all question, struck down in the dust—

Chorus

Are they lying out there? This is hard to bear, but say it just the same.

Messenger

[810] The men are dead, murdered by their very own hands.

Chorus

Then with hands so fraternal did they each kill the other together?

Messenger

Yes, so all too equal was their destiny to them both. All alone, in truth, it consumes the ill-fated family. We have cause in this for joy and tears— [815] the one because the city fares well, the other because the leaders, the two generals, have divided the whole of their property with hammered Scythian steel. They will possess only that land they take in burial, swept away as they were in accordance with their father's curses. [820] [The city is saved, but through their mutual murder the earth has drunk the blood of the two kings born of the same seed.]

Exit.

Χορός

ὦ μέγαλε Ζεῦ καὶ πολιοῦχοι
δαίμονες, οἱ δὴ Κάδμου πύργους
τούσδε ῥύεσθε,
πότερον χαίρω κάπολολύξω 825
πόλεως ἀσινεῖ <> σωτῆρι . . ,
ἢ τοὺς μογεροὺς καὶ δυσδαίμονας
ἀτέκνους κλαύσω πολεμάρχους; 830
οἱ δὴτ' ὀρθῶς κατ' ἐπωνυμίαν
καὶ πολυνεικεῖς
ᾧλοντ' ἀσεβεῖ διανοίᾳ. 832b
ὦ μέλαινα καὶ τελεία
γένεος Οἰδίπου τ' ἀρά, 833b
κακόν με καρδίαν τι περιπίτνει κρύος.
ἔτευξα τύμβῳ μέλος 835
Θυιάς αἵματοσταγεῖς
νεκροὺς κλύουσα δυσμόρως
θανόντας· ἢ δύσορnis ᾗ-
δε ξυναυλία δορός.
ἐξέπραξεν, οὐδ' ἀπεῖπεν 840

¹ An obscure designation of Apollo, often referred to the tradition that he was born on the seventh day. The adjective looks like a military title, but divisions of seven were unknown.

Chorus

O great Zeus and the divine powers that guard our city, you who indeed protect these walls of Cadmus, [825] should I rejoice and shout in triumph for the unharmed safety of the city, or should I lament our leaders in war, [830] now wretched, ill-fated and childless? Indeed, in exact accordance with their name and as “men of much strife,” they have perished through their impious intent.

O black curse on the family, Oedipus' curse, now brought to fulfillment! A chill of horror falls about my heart. [835] In frenzy like a maenad I make my song for the grave as I hear of their corpses dripping with blood, how they died through the workings of cruel fate. This song of the spear, sung to the flute, is indeed born of an ill omen.¹

¹ This passage has also been taken to deprecate as inauspicious the previous ode (720 ff.) because it was sung during the combat of the brothers: “It was for a tomb I framed my song when, inspired by frenzy, I heard (prophetically) . . . Ill-omened, indeed, the contest of the spear to such an accompaniment.”

πατρόθεν εὐκταία φάτις·
 βουλαὶ δ' ἄπιστοι Λαῖου διήρκεσαν.
 μέριμνα δ' ἀμφὶ πόλιν·
 θέσφατ' οὐκ ἀμβλύνεται.
 ἰὼ πολύστονοι, τόδ' ἦρ- **845**
 γάσασθ' ἄπιστον· ἦλθε δ' αἰ-
 ακτὰ πῆματ' οὐ λόγῳ.
 τάδ' αὐτόδηλα, προὔπτος ἀγγέλου λόγος·
 διπλαῖ μέριμναι, < διδυμάνορα
 κάκ' αὐτοφόνα, δίμοιρα τέ- **850**
 λεια τάδε πάθη. τί φῶ;
 τί δ' ἄλλο γ' ἢ πόνοι πόνων
 δόμων ἐφέστιοι;
 ἀλλὰ γόνων, ὦ φίλοι, κατ' οὖρον
 ἐρέσσετ' ἀμφὶ κρατὶ πόμπιμον χεροῖν **855**
 πίτυλον, ὃς αἰὲν δι' Ἀχέροντ' ἀμείβεται
 τὰν ἄστολον μελάγκροκον [ναύστολον] θεωρίδα,
 τὰν ἀστιβῆ Ἀπόλλωνι, τὰν ἀνάλιον
 πάνδοκον εἰς ἀφανῆ τε χέρσον. **860**
 ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἦκουσ' αἶδ' ἐπὶ πρᾶγος
 πικρὸν Ἀντιγόνη τ' ἠδ' Ἰσμήνη,
 θρῆνον ἀδελφοῖν· οὐκ ἀμφιβόλως
 οἶμαί σφ' ἐρατῶν ἐκ βαθυκόλπων
 στηθέων ἦσιν ἄλγος ἐπάξιον. **865**
 ἡμᾶς δὲ δίκη πρότερον φήμης

[840] The curseful utterance of their father has done its work and not fallen short. Laius' plans, made in disobedience, have kept their force. I am anxious for our city; divine decrees do not lose their edge.

The funeral procession with the bodies of the brothers comes into view.
 [845] O bringers of immense grief, you have done in this a deed beyond belief, yet lamentable troubles have indeed come.

The events are self-evident; the messenger's report is plain to see. Twofold is our distress—double disaster [850] of kindred murder, this double suffering has come to fulfillment. What shall I say? What else indeed than that sorrow born of sorrows surround this house's hearth?

But sail upon the wind of lamentation, my friends, [855] and about your head row with your hands' rapid stroke in conveyance of the dead,¹ that stroke which always causes the sacred slack-sailed, black-clothed ship to pass over Acheron to the unseen land where Apollo does not walk, [860] the sunless land that receives all men.

But here come Antigone and Ismene to do their bitter duty, the dirge over their brothers both. With all sincerity, I think, will they [865] pour forth their fitting grief from their lovely, deep-bosomed breasts. But it is right for us, before their singing, to cry

τὸν δυσκέλαδόν θ' ὕμνον Ἑρινύος
 ἰαχεῖν Αἶδα τ'
 ἐχθρὸν παιᾶν' ἐπιμέλπειν. **870**
 ἰῶ, δυσασελφόταται πασῶν ὀπόσαι
 στρόφον ἐσθῆσιν περιβάλλονται,
 κλαίω, στένομαι, καὶ δόλος οὐδεὶς
 μὴ 'κ φρενὸς ὀρθῶς με λιγαίνειν.
 ἰῶ ἰῶ δύσφρονες, **875**
 φίλων ἄπιστοι καὶ κακῶν ἀτρύμονες,
 δόμους πατρώους ἐλόν-
 τες μέλεοι σὺν αἰχμᾶ.
 μέλεοι δῆθ' οἱ μελέους θανάτους
 εὗροντο δόμων ἐπὶ λύμῃ. **880**
 ἰῶ ἰῶ δωμάτων
 ἐρειψίτοιχοι καὶ πικρὰς μοναρχίας
 ἰδόντες, ἤδη διήλ-
 λαχθε σὺν σιδάρεσσι. **885**
 κάρτα δ' ἀληθῆ πατρὸς Οἰδιπόδα
 πότνι' Ἑρινὺς ἐπέκρανεν.
 δι' εὐωνύμων τετυμμένοι,
 τετυμμένοι δῆθ',
 ὁμοσπλάγχνων τε πλευρωμάτων **890**
 *
 αἰαῖ δαιμόνιοι, **892**
 αἰαῖ δ' ἀντιφόνων

out the awful hymn of the Erinys and thereafter [870] sing the hated victory song of Hades.

Ah, sisters most unfortunate in your kin of all women who clasp their girdle about their robes, I weep, I groan, and there is no feigning in the shrill cries that come straight from my heart.

1 As the souls of the brothers are now being conveyed across Acheron in Charon's boat, the Chorus in imagination aid their passage by the ritual of mourning. Their song of lamentation stands for the wind, the beating of their heads by their hands are the strokes of the oars. Contrasted with the grim vessel that transports all spirits to the sunless land of Hades, is the ship that goes to the festival at Delos, the "clearly-seen" island, the land of Apollo, god of light and health.

[875] Ah, pity you senseless men, whom friends could not persuade and evils could not wear down! To your misery you have captured your father's house with the spear. To their misery, indeed, [880] they found a miserable death in the outrage done their house.

Ah, you brothers who were poised to cast over the walls of your home and looked—to your sorrow—for sole rule, now you have been [885] reconciled by the iron sword. The great Erinys of your father Oedipus has fulfilled it all truly. Pierced through your left sides, pierced indeed— [890] through those sides that were born from one womb! Ah, strange ones! Ah, the curses that

θανάτων ἀραί.
 διανταίαν λέγεις [πλαγὰν] δόμοισι καὶ 895
 σώμασιν πεπλαγμένους, [ἐννέπω]
 ἀναυδάτω μένει
 ἀραίῳ τ' ἐκ πατρὸς
 <οὐ> διχόφρονι πότμῳ.
 διήκει δὲ καὶ πόλιν στόνος, 900
 στένουσι πύργοι,
 στένει πέδον φίλανδρον· μένει
 κτέανα δ' ἐπιγόνοις,
 δι' ὧν αἰνομόροις,
 δι' ὧν νεῖκος ἔβα 905
 [καὶ] θανάτου τέλος.
 ἐμοιράσαντο δ' ὀξυκάρδιοι
 κτήμαθ', ὥστ' ἴσον λαχεῖν.
 διαλλακτῆρι δ' οὐκ
 ἀμεμφεῖα φίλοις,
 οὐδ' ἐπίχαρις Ἄρης. 910
 σιδαρόπλακτοι μὲν ᾧδ' ἔχουσιν,
 σιδαρόπλακτοι δὲ τοὺς μένουσι,
 τάχ' ἂν τις εἴποι, τίνες;
 τάφων πατρῶων λαχαί.
 ὅδ' ἀμῶν μάλ' ἀχέτας τοὺς 915
 προπέμπει δαΐκτῆρ γόος αὐ-
 τόστονος, αὐτοπήμων,

demand death for death! [895] Right through, as you say, were they struck, with blows to house and body by an unspeakable wrath and by the doom, called down by their father's curse, which they shared without discord.

[900] Groaning spreads throughout the city, too: the walls groan; the land that loves its sons groans. But for those who come after them there remains their property, on which account the strife [905] of those terrible-fated men came to fulfillment in death. In their haste to anger they apportioned their property so that each has an equal share. To those who loved them their reconciler is not blameless, [910] nor is Ares agreeable. Under strokes of iron they are come to this, and under strokes of iron there await them—what, one might perhaps ask—shares in their father's tomb.¹

¹ As the brothers were to divide the substance of their dead father, their equal inheritance was the tomb. λαχαί means both “apportioning of possessions” and “digging.”

[915] Our shrill, heart-rending wail goes with them—product of lamentation and pain felt of its own accord—a wail from a

δαϊόφρων [δ'·], οὐ φιλογαθῆς, ἐτύμως
 δακρυχέων ἐκ φρενός, ἃ
 κλαιομένας μου μινύθει **920**
 τοῖνδε δυοῖν ἀνάκτοιν.
 πάρεστι δ' εἰπεῖν ἐπ' ἀθλίοισιν
 ὥς ἐρξάτην πολλὰ μὲν πολίτας,
 ξένων τε πάντων στίχας
 πολυφθόρους ἐν δαΐ. **925**
 δυσδαίμων σφιν ἃ τεκοῦσα
 πρὸ πασᾶν γυναικῶν ὀπόσαι
 τεκνογόνοι κέκληνται.
 παῖδα τὸν αὐτᾶς πόσιν αὐτᾶ θεμένα
 τοῦσδ' ἔτεχ', οἳ δ' ὦδ' ἐτελεύ- **930**
 τασαν ὑπ' ἀλλαλοφόνους
 χερσὶν ὁμοσπόροισιν.
 ὁμόσποροι δῆτα καὶ πανώλεθροι,
 διατομαῖς οὐ φίλοις,
 ἔριδι μαινομένα, **935**
 νεῖκεος ἐν τελευτᾷ.
 πέπαυται δ' ἔχθος, ἐν δὲ γαίᾳ
 ζόα φονορύτῳ
 μέμικται· κάρτα δ' εἶσ' ὄμαιμοι.
 πικρὸς λυτὴρ νεικέων ὁ πόντιος **940**
 ξεῖνος ἐκ πυρὸς συθεὶς
 θακτὸς σίδαρος· πικρὸς δὲ χρημάτων

distressed mind, joyless, pouring forth tears from a heart [920]
 that wastes away as I weep for these two princes.

Over these poor men it can be said that they did much to harm
 our citizens and also the ranks of all the foreigners [925] who
 died in abundance in the fighting. Ill-fated beyond all women
 who are called by the name of mother is she who bore them.
 After she made her own child her own husband, [930] she gave
 birth to these sons, who have thus ended their lives with
 kindred hands giving death for death. Of the same seed, in truth,
 they were utterly destroyed in unloving divisions, [935] in
 maddened discord, in the ending of their strife.

Their hatred has ceased. Their life has been mingled in the
 blood-soaked earth. Now truly their blood is one. [940] Ruthless
 is that which resolved their strife, the stranger from across the
 sea, sharpened iron rushed from the fire. Ruthless, too, was

κακὸς δατητὰς Ἄρης ἀρὰν πατρώ-
 αν τιθεὶς ἀλαθῇ.
 ἔχουσι μοῖραν λαχόντες οἱ μέλεοι 945
 διοδότην ἀχθέων·
 ὑπὸ δὲ σώματι γᾶς
 πλοῦτος ἄβυσσος ἔσται.
 ἰὼ πολλοῖς ἐπανθίσαντες
 πόνοισι γενεάν· 950
 τελευταῖαι δ' ἐπηλάλαξαν
 Ἀραὶ τὸν ὀξὺν νόμον, τετραμμένου
 παντρόπῳ φυγᾷ γένους.
 ἔστακε δ' Ἄτας τροπαῖον ἐν πύλαις,
 ἐν αἷς ἐθείνοντο, καὶ δυοῖν κρατή- 955
 σας ἔληξε δαίμων.
Ἀντιγόνη
 παισθεὶς ἔπαισας.
Ἰσμήνη
 σὺ δ' ἔθανες κατακτανών.
Ἀντιγόνη
 δορὶ δ' ἔκανες--
Ἰσμήνη
 δορὶ δ' ἔθανες--
Ἀντιγόνη
 μελεοπόνος. 960

Ares, the cruel divider of their property, who made their father's
 curses come true.

[945] They hold in misery their allotted portion of god-given
 sorrows. Beneath their corpses there will be boundless wealth of
 earth.

Ah, you have wreathed [950] your race with many troubles! In
 the final outcome the Curses have raised their piercing cry, now
 that the family is turned to flight in all directions. A trophy to
 Ruin now stands at the gate [955] where they struck each other
 and where, having conquered them both, the divine power
 stayed its hand.

*The following antiphonal dirge is sung by the two sisters—Antigone
 standing by the bier of Polynices, Ismene by that of Eteocles.*

Antigone

You were struck as you struck.

Ismene

You died as you killed.

Antigone

By the spear you killed—

Ismene

By the spear you died—

Antigone

[960] Your deed made you wretched.

Ἰσμήνη
μελεοπαθής.

Ἀντιγόνη
ἴτω γόος.

Ἰσμήνη
ἴτω δάκρυ.

Ἀντιγόνη
πρόκεισαι --

Ἰσμήνη
κατακτάς. 965

Ἀντιγόνη
ἡέ.

Ἰσμήνη
ἡέ.

Ἀντιγόνη
μαίνεται γόοισι φρήν.

Ἰσμήνη
ἐντὸς δὲ καρδία στένει.

Ἀντιγόνη
ἰὼ ἰὼ πάνδυρτε σύ.

Ἰσμήνη
σὺ δ' αὖτε καὶ πανάθλιε. 970

Ἀντιγόνη
πρὸς φίλου [γ'·] ἔφθισο.

Ismene
You suffering made you wretched.

Antigone
Let the lament come.

Ismene
Let the tears come.

Antigone
You are laid out for mourning --

Ismene
[965] Though you did the killing.

Antigone
Ah me!

Ismene
Ah me!

Antigone
My heart is mad with wailing.

Ismene
My heart groans within me.

Antigone
Ah, the grief, brother all-lamentable.

Ismene
[970] And you also, brother all-wretched.

Antigone
You perished at the hands of your nearest and dearest.

Ἰσμήνη

καὶ φίλον ἔκτανες.

Ἀντιγόνη

διπλᾶ λέγειν--

Ἰσμήνη

διπλᾶ δ' ὀρᾶν--

Ἀντιγόνη

ἄχθεα τῶνδε τάδ' ἐγγύθεν. 975

Ἰσμήνη

πέλας ἀδελφέ' ἀδελφεῶν.

Χορός

ὠ Μοῖρα βαρυδότειρα μογερά,

πότνιά τ' Οἰδίπου σκιά,

μέλαιν' Ἑρινύς, ἧ μεγασθενής τις εἶ.

Ἀντιγόνη

ἦέ. 980

Ἰσμήνη

ἦέ.

Ἀντιγόνη

δυσθέατα πῆματα --

Ἰσμήνη

ἔδειξεν ἐκ φυγᾶς ἐμοί.

Ἀντιγόνη

οὐδ' ἵκεθ' ὥς κατέκτανεν.

Ismene

And you killed your nearest and dearest.

Antigone

Twofold to tell of--

Ismene

Twofold to look upon--

Antigone

[975] Are these sorrows so close to those.

Ismene

Fraternal sorrows stand close by fraternal sorrows.

Chorus

O Fate, giver of grievous troubles, and awful shade of Oedipus, black Erinyes, you are indeed a mighty force.

Antigone

[980] Ah, me

Ismene

Ah, me

Antigone

Sorrows hard to behold --

Ismene

He showed me when he returned from exile.

Antigone

But he made no return after he had killed.

Ismene

Ισμήνη

σωθείς δὲ πνεῦμ' ἀπώλεσεν.

Αντιγόνη

ᾤλεσε δῆτ' <ἄγαν>. 985

Ισμήνη

καὶ τὸν ἐνόσφισεν.

Αντιγόνη

τάλαν γένος.

Ισμήνη

τάλαν πάθος.

Αντιγόνη

δύστονα κήδε' ὁμαίμονα.

Ισμήνη

δίγυρα τριπάλτων πημάτων. 990

Χορός

ὦ Μοῖρα βαρυδότειρα μογερά,

πότνιά τ' Οἰδίπου σκιά,

μέλαιν' Ἑρινύς, ἥ μεγασθενής τις εἶ.

Αντιγόνη

σὺ τοί νιν οἶσθα διαπερῶν--

Ισμήνη

σὺ δ' οὐδὲν ὕστερος μαθῶν-- 995

Αντιγόνη

ἐπεὶ κατῆλθες ἐς πόλιν,

He was saved, but lost his life.

Antigone

[985] He lost it, all too truly.

Ismene

And took this one's life away.

Antigone

Wretched family!

Ismene

Wretched suffering!

Antigone

Kindred sorrows full of groans!

Ismene

[990] Sorrows steeped in tripled griefs.

Chorus

O Fate, giver of grievous troubles, and awful shade of Oedipus,
black Erinyes, you are indeed a mighty force.

Antigone

Now you know of the Erinyes by experience—

Ismene

[995] And you are made aware no later—

Antigone

When you came back to our city,

Ἰσμήνη

δορός γε τῷδ' ἀντηρέτας.

Ἀντιγόνη

ὅλοα λέγειν.

Ἰσμήνη

ὅλοα δ' ὀρᾶν.

Ἀντιγόνη

ὠὖ πόνος-- 1000

Ἰσμήνη

ὠὖ κακά--

Ἀντιγόνη

δῶμασι καὶ χθονί.

Ἰσμήνη

πρὸ πάντων δ' ἐμοί.

Ἀντιγόνη

καὶ τὸ πρόσω γ' ἐμοί.

Ἰσμήνη

ὠὖ ὠὖ δυστόνων κακῶν, ἄναξ. 1005

Ἀντιγόνη

ὠὖ πάντων πολυστονώτατοι.

Ἰσμήνη

ὠὖ ὠὖ δαιμονῶντες ἄτα.

Ἀντιγόνη

ὠὖ ὠὖ, ποῦ σφε θήσομεν χθονός;

Ismene

Yes, to face him with your spear.

Antigone

A tale of destruction!

Ismene

Destruction to look upon!

Antigone

[1000] Oh, the grief—

Ismene

Oh, the evils—

Antigone

For home and land.

Ismene

Above all for me,

Antigone

And more also for me.

Ismene

[1005] Ah I pity your grievous suffering, my king.

Antigone

Pity for you both, most lamentable of all men.

Ismene

You were possessed by delusion.

Antigone

Where shall we lay them in the earth?

Ἰσμήνη

ἰὼ, ὅπου <’στι> τιμιώτατον.

Ἀντιγόνη

ἰὼ ἰὼ, πῆμα πατρὶ πάρευνον. **1010**

Κῆρυξ

δοκοῦντα καὶ δόξαντ’ ἀπαγγέλλειν με χρῆ
δήμου προβούλοις τῆσδε Καδμείας πόλεως·
Ἐτεοκλέα μὲν τόνδ’ ἐπ’ εὐνοίᾳ χθονὸς
θάπτειν ἔδοξε γῆς φίλαις κατασκαφαῖς·
στυγῶν γὰρ ἐχθροὺς θάνατον εἴλετ’ ἐν πόλει **1015**
ἱερῶν πατρῶων δ’ ὅσιος ὦν μομφῆς ἄτερ
τέθνηκεν οὐπερ τοῖς νέοις θνήσκειν καλόν.
οὕτω μὲν ἀμφὶ τοῦδ’ ἐπέσταλται λέγειν·
τούτου δ’ ἀδελφὸν τόνδε Πολυνεῖκους νεκρὸν
ἔξω βαλεῖν ἄθαπτον, ἀρπαγὴν κυσίν, **1020**
ὥς ὄντ’ ἀναστατῆρα Καδμείων χθονός,
εἰ μὴ θεῶν τις ἐμποδὼν ἔστη δορὶ
τῷ τοῦδ’· ἄγος δὲ καὶ θανὼν κεκτήσεται
θεῶν πατρῶων, οὓς ἀτιμάσας ὅδε
στράτευμ’ ἐπακτὸν ἐμβαλὼν ἤρει πόλιν. **1025**
οὕτω πετηνῶν τόνδ’ ὑπ’ οἰωνῶν δοκεῖ
ταφέντ’ ἀτίμως τοῦπιτίμιον λαβεῖν,
καὶ μήθ’ ὁμαρτεῖν τυμβοχόα χειρώματα

Ismene

Ah, where their honor is greatest.

Antigone

[1010] To lie beside their father, a cause for him of sorrow.

Enter a Herald.

Herald

It is my duty to announce the will and decrees of the council on behalf of the people of this our Cadmean city.

It is decreed, first, that Eteocles here, on account of his goodwill towards the city, is to be buried in a kindly grave in its soil; [1015] for hating the enemy he chose death in the city and driven by piety towards his ancestral shrines, he died without reproach where it is an honor for the young to die. This is how I was commanded to speak regarding him. But as for his brother, it is decreed that this corpse of Polyneices [1020] is to be cast out of the city unburied to be torn by dogs, since he would have been the destroyer of the land of the Cadmeans, if one of the gods had not used his brother's spear to prevent him. Even in death he will retain the stain of his guilt against his fathers' gods, whom he dishonored [1025] when he launched a foreign army against the city to take it. For this reason it is decreed that he will receive his reward by being buried without honor beneath the winged birds; and that no labor of the hands shall

μήτ' ὄξυμόλποις προσσέβειν οἰμώγμασιν,
ἄτιμον εἶναι δ' ἐκφορᾶς φίλων ὕπο. 1030
τοιαῦτ' ἔδοξε τῷδε Καδμείων τέλει.

Ἀντιγόνη

ἐγὼ δὲ Καδμείων γε προστάταις λέγω·
ἦν μή τις ἄλλος τόνδε συνθάπτειν θέλη,
ἐγὼ σφε θάψω κἀνὰ κίνδυνον βαλῶ
θάψας' ἀδελφὸν τὸν ἐμόν, οὐδ' αἰσχύνομαι 1035
ἔχουσ' ἄπιστον τήνδ' ἀναρχίαν πόλει.
δεινὸν τὸ κοινὸν σπλάγχχνον, οὗ πεφύκαμεν,
μητρὸς ταλαίνης κἀπὸ δυστήνου πατρός.
τοιγὰρ θέλουσ' ἄκοντι κοινῶναι κακῶν
ψυχῇ, θανόντι ζῶσα συγγόνῳ φρενί. 1040
τούτου δὲ σάρκας οὐδὲ κοιλογάστορες
λύκοι σπάσσονται· μὴ δοκησάτω τινί.
τάφον γὰρ αὐτῷ καὶ κατασκαφὰς ἐγὼ,
γυνή περ οὔσα, τῷδε μηχανήσομαι,
κόλπῳ φέρουσα βυσσίνου πεπλώματος. 1045
καὐτὴ καλύψω, μηδέ τῳ δόξῃ πάλιν·
θάρσει, παρέσται μηχανὴ δραστήριος.

Κῆρυξ

αὐδῶ πόλιν σε μὴ βιάζεσθαι τάδε.

Ἀντιγόνη

αὐδῶ σὲ μὴ περισσὰ κηρύσσειν ἐμοί.

attend him by building up a burial mound nor shall anyone
offer him reverence in shrill-sung laments. [1030] He is to be
refused the honor of being carried in funeral procession by his
loved ones. Such is the decree of the Cadmean authorities.

Antigone

I at least will say something to the rulers of the Cadmeans: even
if no one else is willing to share in burying him, I will bury him
alone and risk the peril [1035] of burying my own brother. Nor
am I ashamed to act in defiant opposition to the rulers of the
city. A thing to be held in awe is the common womb from which
we were born, of a wretched mother and unfortunate father.
Therefore, my soul, willingly share his evils, even though they
are unwilling, [1040] and live in kindred spirit with the dead.
No hollow-bellied wolves will tear his flesh—let no one
“decree” that! Even though I am a woman, I will myself find the
means to give him burial and a grave, [1045] carrying the earth
in the fold of my linen robe. With my own hands I will cover
him over—let no one “decree” it otherwise. Take heart, I will
have the means to do it.

Herald

I forbid you to act thus in violation of the city.

Antigone

I forbid you to make useless proclamations to me.

Κῆρυξ

τραχύς γε μέντοι δῆμος ἐκφυγὼν κακά. 1050

Ἀντιγόνη

τράχυν· ἄθαπτος δ' οὗτος οὐ γενήσεται.

Κῆρυξ

ἀλλ' ὃν πόλις στυγεῖ, σὺ τιμήσεις τάφω;

Ἀντιγόνη

ἤδη τὰ τοῦδε διατετίμηται θεοῖς.

Κῆρυξ

οὐ, πρὶν γε χώραν τήνδε κινδύνω βαλεῖν.

Ἀντιγόνη

παθὼν κακῶς κακοῖσιν ἀντημείβετο. 1055

Κῆρυξ

ἀλλ' εἰς ἅπαντας ἀνθ' ἑνὸς τόδ' ἔργον ἦν.

Ἀντιγόνη

ἔρις περαίνει μῦθον ὑστάτη θεῶν.

ἐγὼ δὲ θάψω τόνδε· μὴ μακρηγόρει.

Κῆρυξ

ἀλλ' αὐτόβουλος ἴσθ', ἀπεννέπω δ' ἐγώ.

Χορός

φεῦ φεῦ.

ὦ μέγалаυχοι καὶ φθερσιγενεῖς 1060

Κῆρες Ἑρινύες, αἵτ' Οἰδιπόδα

γένος ὠλέσατε πρυμνόθεν οὕτως,

τί πάθω; τί δὲ δρῶ ; τί δὲ μήσωμαι;

Herald

[1050] And yet a citizenry that has escaped evil can be harsh.

Antigone

Let it be harsh! This man will not be unburied.

Herald

What! Will you honor with burial a man whom the city detests?

Antigone

For a long time now the gods have ceased to hold him in honor.

Herald

No, he was honored until he put this land in jeopardy.

Antigone

[1055] He suffered evil and gave evil in return.

Herald

But this act was against all the citizens, not only one man.

Antigone

Discord is the last of the gods to close an argument. I will bury him. Put an end to your big talk.

Herald

Well then, follow your own rash plan, but I forbid it. *Exit.*

Chorus

Ah, misery! [1060] O Erinyes, far-famed destroyers of families, goddesses of death who have thus laid ruin to the family of Oedipus, digging it up from the roots! What will happen to me? What should I do? What plan shall I devise?

πῶς τολμήσω μήτε σὲ κλαίειν
μήτε προπέμπειν ἐπὶ τύμβον · 1065
ἀλλὰ φοβοῦμαι κάποτρέπομαι
δεῖμα πολιτῶν.
σύ γε μὴν πολλῶν πενθητήρων
τεύξει· κείνος δ' ὁ τάλας ἄγοος
μονόκλαυτον ἔχων θρῆνον ἀδελφῆς 1070
εἴσιν· τίς ἂν οὖν τὰ πίθοιτο ;
Ἡμιχόριον Α
δράτῳ <τι> πόλις καὶ μὴ δράτῳ
τοὺς κλαίοντας Πολυνείκη.
ἡμεῖς μὲν ἴμεν καὶ συνθάψομεν
αἶδε προπομποί· καὶ γὰρ γενεᾶ 1075
κοινὸν τόδ' ἄχος, καὶ πόλις ἄλλως
ἄλλοτ' ἐπαινεῖ τὰ δίκαια.
Ἡμιχόριον Β
ἡμεῖς δ' ἅμα τῷδ', ὥσπερ τε πόλις
καὶ τὸ δίκαιον ξυνεπαινεῖ.
μετὰ γὰρ μάκαρας καὶ Διὸς ἰσχὺν 1080
ὅδε Καδμείων ἤρῃξε πόλιν
μὴ 'νατραπῆναι μηδ' ἄλλοδαπῷ
κύματι φωτῶν
κατακλυσθῆναι τὰ μάλιστα.

How can I have the heart neither to weep for you [1065] nor escort you to your tomb? But I am afraid and turn away in terror of the citizens. You, at least, Eteocles, will have many mourners, while he, wretched man, departs without lamentation [1070] and has a dirge sung only by one sister. Now who could comply with that?

First Half-Chorus

Let the city take action or not take action against those who lament for Polynices. We, at all events, will go and [1075] bury him with her, following the funeral procession. For this grief is shared by all our race, and the city approves as just different things at different times.

Second Half-Chorus

We will go with this other corpse, as the city and justice, too, approves. [1080] For after the blessed gods and powerful Zeus, he it was who saved the city of the Cadmeans from being capsized and flooded by a wave of foreign men—he beyond all others.

Exeunt omnes.

THE END