

HERCULES OETAÆUS

see, repose is deserting his weary heart, and gives back his frame to suffering, me to grief.

HERCULES [*awakening in delirium*]

Why, what is this? Do I see Trachin midst her rugged hills, or have I, set 'mongst the stars, at last left behind the race of men? Who opens heaven for me? Thee, thee, my father, now do I behold, and my step-dame also, at last appeased, I see. What heavenly sound strikes on mine ears? Juno calls me son! I see bright heaven's gleaming palace, and the track worn by Phoebus' burning wheels. I see Night's couch; her shadows call me hence.

[*Begins to come out of his delirium.*]

1441 But what is this? Who shuts heaven's gates to me, O father, and draws me down even from the stars? But now the car of Phoebus breathed hot upon my face, now was I near to heaven—but I see Trachin. Who has given me earth again? A moment since, and Oeta stood below me, and the whole world lay beneath my feet. How well, O pain, hadst thou fallen from me! Thou compellest me to confess—but stay, forestall that word.¹

[*To HYLLUS.*]

1448 O Hyllus, this, this is thy mother's boon, her gift to me. Would that with lifted club I might crush out her wicked life just as I smote down the Amazonian pest² upon the slopes of snowy Caucasus. O well-loved Megara, wast *thou* wife³ to me when madness came upon me? Give me my club and

¹ He thus checks himself on the brink of an unmanly confession of his weakness.

² *i. e.* the Amazons themselves.

³ It should have been Deianira.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

dextra inquinetur, laudibus maculam imprimam,
summus legatur femina Herculeus labor.

HYLLVS

Compesce diras, genitor, irarum minas ;
habet, peractum est, quas petis poenas dedit ;
sua perempta dextera mater iacet.

HERCVLES

Cecidit dolose¹ ; manibus irati Herculis
occidere meruit ; perdidit comitem Lichas. 1460
saevire in ipsum corpus exanime impetus
atque ira cogit. cur minis nostris caret
ipsum cadaver ? pabulum accipiant ferae.

HYLLVS

Plus misera laeso doluit ; hinc aliquid quoque
detrahere velles. occidit dextera sua,
tuo dolore ; plura quam poscis tulit.
sed non cruentae sceleribus nuptae iaces
nec fraude matris ; Nessus hos struxit dolos
ictus sagittis qui tuis vitam expuit.
cruore tincta est palla semiferi, pater, 1470
Nessusque nunc has exigit poenas sibi.

HERCVLES

Habet, peractum est, fata se nostra explicant ;
lux ista summa est. quercus hanc sortem mihi

¹ *So Richter*: relicte dolor es *Leo*: caeci dolores *A*: recte dolor es *E*: iacet? ei dolori est *Peiper*.

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bow, let my right hand be defiled, let me put stain upon my glory, and let a woman be chosen as the last toil of Hercules.

HYLLUS

Check the dire threatenings of thy wrath, my father; she has it,¹ 'tis over, the penalty which thou desirest she has paid; slain by her own hand, my mother lies in death.

HERCULES

Treacherously has she fallen; by the hands of enraged Hercules should she have died; Lichas has lost a comrade. I am moved to rage e'en 'gainst her lifeless body, and wrath impels me. Why is even her corpse safe from my assaults? Let the wild beasts make banquet on it.

HYLLUS

The unhappy woman has suffered more than him she injured; somewhat still of this thou wouldst wish to lighten. By her own hand has she fallen, through grief for thee; more suffering than thou demandest has she borne. But 'tis not by crimes of a murderous wife, nor by my mother's guile, thou liest low; Nessus contrived this snare, who, by thine arrow smit, spewed out his life. Father, 'twas in that half-beast's gore the robe was dipped, and Nessus by these thy sufferings doth requite his own.

HERCULES

'Tis well,² 'tis over, my fate unfolds itself; this is my last day on earth. This oracle the prophetic

¹ The formula of the gladiatorial contest when one of the contestants has received his death stroke.

² See note on l. 1457.

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fatidica quondam dederat et Parnassio
 Cirrhaea quatiens templa mugitu specus :
 " dextra perempti victor, Alcide, viri
 olim iacebis ; hic tibi emenso freta
 terrasque et umbras finis extremus datur."
 nil querimur ultra ; decuit hunc finem dari,
 ne quis superstes Herculis victor foret. 1480
 nunc mors legatur clara memoranda incluta,
 me digna prorsus. nobilem hunc faciam diem.
 caedatur omnis silva et Oetaeum nemus
 conripite, ut ingens Herculem accipiat rogos,
 sed ante mortem. tu, genus Poeantium,
 hoc triste nobis, iuvenis, officium appara ;
 Herculea totum flamma succendat diem.

Ad te preces nunc, Hylle, supremas fero.
 est clara captas inter, in voltu genus
 regnumque referens, Euryto virgo edita 1490
 Iole. tuis hanc facibus et thalamis para.
 victor cruentus abstuli patriam lares
 nihilque miserae praeter Alciden dedi ;
 et ipse rapitur. penset aerumnas suas,
 Iovis nepotem foveat et natum Herculis ;
 tibi illa pariat quidquid ex nobis habet.

Tuque ipsa planctus pone funereos, precor,
 o clara genetrix ; vivit Alcides tibi.
 virtute nostra paelicem feci tuam

¹ The oracle of the talking oaks, sacred to Jupiter, was at Dodona, in Epirus ; the oracle of Apollo at Delphi was in Phocis, on Mount Parnassus. The poet either means that

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oak¹ once gave me, and the Parnassian grot,¹ shaking the shrines of Cirrha with rumbling tones, declared : " By the hand of one whom, conquering, thou hast slain, Alcides, one day shalt thou lie low ; this end, when thou hast traversed seas and lands and shades, awaits thee at the last." We complain no more ; such end was meet, that no living thing might conquer Hercules. Now let me choose a death glorious, renowned, illustrious, full worthy of myself. This day will I make famous. Go, cut down all the woods, heap Oeta's grove together, that a mighty pyre may receive Hercules, and that before he dies. Thou, son² of Poeas, dear youth, perform this sad office for me ; set the whole sky aglow with the flames of Hercules.

¹⁴⁸⁸ And now to thee, Hyllus, I bring my latest prayer. Among the captives is a beauteous maid, in feature revealing her race and royal state, Iole, daughter of king Eurytus. Lead her to thy chamber with wedding torch. Victorious, blood-stained, I robbed her of her fatherland and home, and to the wretched girl gave naught except Alcides ; and now e'en he is reft from her. Let her find recompense for her sorrows, and cherish Jove's grandson and the son of Hercules ; to thee be born whatever seed she has conceived by me.

[*To* ALCMENA.]

¹⁴⁹⁷ Do thou thyself cease thy death-wails for me, I pray, illustrious mother ; thy Alcides lives ; by my heroic deeds have I made my step-dame seem but

two oracles foretold the same fate, or simply mingles the two references by way of emphasis on the oracular utterance itself.

² Philoctetes.

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credi novercam. sive nascente Hercule 1500
 nox illa certa est sive mortalis meus
 pater est—licet sit falsa progenies mei,¹
 merui parentem ; contuli caelo decus
 materque me concepit in laudes Iovis.
 quin ipse, quamquam Iuppiter, credi meus
 pater esse gaudet. parce iam lacrimis, parens ;
 superba matres inter Argolicas eris.
 quid tale Iuno genuit aetherium gerens
 sceptrum et Tonanti nupta ? mortali tamen 1510
 caelum tenens invidit, Alciden suum
 dici esse voluit.

Perage nunc, Titan, vices
 solus relictus ; ille qui vester comes
 ubique fueram, Tartara et manes peto.
 hanc tamen ad imos perferam laudem inclutam,
 quod nulla pestis fudit Alciden palam
 omnemque pestem vicit Alcides palam.

CHORVS

O decus mundi, radiate Titan,
 cuius ad primos Hecate vapores
 lassa nocturnae levat ora bigae, 1520
 dic sub Aurora positis Sabaeis,
 dic sub occasu positis Hiberis,
 quique sub plaustro patiuntur ursae
 quique ferventi quatiuntur axe,
 dic sub aeternos properare manes

¹ *Leo deletes l. 1503* : materna culpa cesset et crimen Iovis.

¹ By bearing such a son to Jove, Alcmena is proved to be real wife, and Juno the mistress.

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the concubine.¹ Whether the tale² of the night of Hercules' begetting be the truth, or whether my sire be mortal³—though I be falsely called the son of Jove, I have deserved to be his son; glory on heaven have I conferred, and to Jove's glory did my mother bring me forth. Nay, he himself, though he be Jupiter, is glad to be believed my sire. Dry now thy tears, my mother; proud 'mongst the Grecian mothers shalt thou be. What son like thine has Juno borne, though she wield the sceptre of the skies, and be the Thunderer's bride? Still, though queen of heaven, she envied a mortal woman, and wished that Alcides might be called her own.

¹⁵¹² Now, O Sun, must thou speed thy course alone, for I, who have been thy companion everywhere, am bound for Tartarus and the land of shades. Yet to the depths shall I bear this glorious fame, that no pest openly has laid Alcides low, and that all pests openly has Alcides slain.

[He goes out toward the pyre which has been prepared for him.]

CHORUS

O glory of the world, O ray-girt Sun, at whose first warmth Hecate loosens the bits from the weary steeds of her nocturnal car, tell the Sabaeans who lie beneath the dawn, tell the Iberians who lie beneath thy setting, tell those who suffer 'neath the Wagon of the Bear,⁴ and those who pant beneath thy burning car: Hercules is hastening to the endless

² See Index *s.v.* "Hercules," at beginning.

³ *i.e.* Amphitryon.

⁴ This northern constellation is either the Wain (wagon) or the Bear. The poet confuses the two conceptions.

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Herculem et regnum canis inquieti,
 unde non umquam remeabit ille.¹
 sune quos nubes radios sequantur,
 pallidus maestas speculari terras
 et caput turpes nebulae pererrent. 1530
 quando, pro Titan, ubi, quo sub axe
 Herculem in terris alium sequeris?
 quas manus orbis miser invocabit,
 si qua sub Lerna numerosa pestis
 sparget in centum rabiem dracones,
 Arcadum si quis populis vetustis
 fecerit silvas aper inquietas,
 Thraciae si quis Rhodopes alumnus
 durior terris Helices nivosae
 sparget humano stabulum cruore? 1540
 quis dabit pacem populo timenti,
 si quid irati superi per orbem
 iusserint nasci? iacet omnibus par,
 quem parem tellus genuit Tonanti.
 planctus immensas resonet per urbes
 et comas nullo cohibente nodo
 feminae exertos feriant lacertos,
 solaque obductis foribus deorum
 templa securae pateant novercae.
 Vadis ad Lethen Stygiumque litus, 1550
 unde te nullae referent carinae;
 vadis ad manes miserandus, unde
 Morte devicta tuleras triumphum,
 umbra nudatis veniens lacertis
 languido vultu tenuique collo;
 teque non solum feret illa puppis²

¹ *So Richter*: unde non umquam remeavit ullus *A*: *Leo* tunde non numquam remeavit inde *with E*, *Leo* conjecturing denuo numquam remeabit inde.

² *Peiper* notes a lacuna after l. 1556, which *Leo* thus supplies: quae tulit solum metuitque mergi.

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shades, to the realm of sleepless Cerberus, whence he will never more return. Let thy bright rays be overcast with clouds; gaze on the grieving world with pallid face and let disfiguring mists roam o'er thy head. When, O Titan, where, beneath what sky wilt thou follow another Hercules on the earth? To whose aid will the wretched world appeal if within Lerna's swamp some many-headed pest in a hundred snakes shall spread its poisonous rage; if for the ancient tribes of Arcady some boar shall disturb the quiet of the woods; if some son¹ of Thracian Rhodope, harder than the ground of snow-clad Helice, shall spatter his stalls with the blood of men? Who to the trembling nations will give peace, if the angry gods shall raise up new monsters o'er the world? Level with all men he lies,² whom earth produced level with the Thunderer. Through countless cities let cries of brief resound; let women with streaming hair smite their bare arms; let the temples of all gods be closed save his step-dame's only, for she only is free from care.

¹⁵⁵⁰ Thou farest to Lethe and the Stygian shore whence no keel will ever bring thee back; thou farest, lamented one, unto the ghosts whence, overcoming Death, thou didst once return in triumph, now but a shade, with fleshless arms, wan face and drooping neck; nor will that skiff, which once bore thee alone and feared 'twould be plunged beneath

¹ Like Diomedes, the bloody tyrant of Thrace.

² *i.e.* brought to the common level by death.

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non tamen viles eris inter umbras,
 Aeacon¹ inter geminosque Cretas
 facta discernens, feriens tyrannos.
 parcite, o dites, inhibete dextras. 1560
 laudis est purum tenuisse ferrum,
 cumque regnabas, minus in procellis
 in tuas urbes licuisse fatis.

Sed locum virtus habet inter astra.
 sedis arctoae spatium tenebis
 an graves Titan ubi promit aestus ?
 an sub occasu tepido nitebis,
 unde commisso resonare ponto
 audies Calpen ? loca quae sereni
 deprimes caeli ? quis erit recepto 1570
 tutus Alcide locus inter astra ?
 horrido tantum procul a leone
 det pater sedes calidoque cancro,
 ne tuo vultu tremefacta leges
 astra conturbent trepidetque Titan.
 vere dum flores venient tepenti
 et comam silvis hiemes recident,
 vel comam silvis revocabit aestas
 pomaque autumnno fugiente cedent,
 nulla te terris rapiet vetustas ; 1580
 tu comes Phoebos, comes ibis astris.
 ante nascetur seges in profundo
 vel fretum dulci resonabit unda,
 ante descendet glacialis ursae
 sidus et ponto vetito fruetur,
 quam tuas laudes populi quiescant.

Te, pater rerum, miseri precamur :
 nulla nascatur fera, nulla pestis,
 non duces saevos miseranda tellus
 horreat, nulla dominetur aula 1590

¹ *So Gronovius: Aeacons Leo with E: Aeaconque A.*

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the waves,¹ bear thee alone. And yet thou shalt not dwell midst common shades ; midst Aeacus and the two Cretans² shalt thou be, sitting in judgment on men's deeds, scourging tyrannic kings. Spare, O ye mighty, restrain your hands. 'Tis thy praise to have kept the sword unstained and that, what time thou didst bear sway, fate midst its storms had less power against thy cities.

¹⁵⁶⁴ But now has thy manhood place amongst the stars. Wilt occupy the spaces of the north, or where Titan sends forth his oppressive rays ? Or in the warm western sky wilt shine, where thou wilt hear Calpe resound with the charging sea ? What region of the cloudless heavens wilt thou weigh down ? What place, when Alcides comes, will be safe amidst the stars ? Only may Jove give thee thy seat far from the dread Lion and the burning Crab, lest at sight of thee the affrighted stars make turmoil of their laws and Titan tremble. While flowers shall bloom as the spring days grow warm ; while winter shall strip the foliage from the trees, and summer to the trees recall their foliage ; while fruits shall fall as autumn takes his flight, no lapse of time shall snatch thee from the world ; comrade of Phoebus, comrade of the stars, shalt thou pass on. Sooner shall wheat sprout from the surface of the deep ; sooner the roaring waves of the sea be sweet ; sooner shall the icy Bear come down and enjoy the forbidden waters, than shall the nations be silent of thy praise.

¹⁵⁸⁷ To thee, father of all, in wretchedness we pray : let no dread beast be born, no pest ; from the fear of savage kings keep this poor world free ; let no one lord it in palace hall who deems it the sole

¹ Translating Leo's suggested line.

² Minos and Rhadamanthus.

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qui putet solum decus esse regni
semper impensum tenuisse ferrum.
si quid in terris iterum timetur,
vindicem terrae petimus relictæ.

Heu quid hoc? mundus sonat. ecce maeret,
maeret Alciden pater; an deorum
clamor, an vox est timidæ novercæ?

Hercule an viso fugit astra Iuno?
passus an pondus titubavit Atlas?
an magis diri tremuere manes

1600

Herculem et visum canis inferorum
fugit abruptis trepidus catenis?
fallimur; læto venit ecce voltu
quem tulit Poeans umerisque tela
gestat et notas populis pharetras,
Herculis heres.

Effare casus, iuvenis, Herculeos precor
vultuque quonam tulerit Alcides necem.

PHILOCTETES¹

Quo nemo vitam.

CHORVS

Laetus adeone ultimos
invasit ignes?

PHILOCTETES

Esse iam flammæ nihil
ostendit ille. quid sub hoc mundo Hercules
immune vinci liquit? en domita omnia.

1610

CHORVS

Inter vapores quis fuit forti locus?

¹ The dialogue throughout this scene is given by Leo and Richter to Nuntius and Chorus, following E; to Nutrix and Philoctetes A; since the messenger is obviously Philoctetes (see

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glory of his realm to have held the sword e'er threatening. If some dread thing should come again to earth, oh, give to forsaken earth a champion.

¹⁵⁹⁵ But what is this? The universe resounds. Behold, he mourns, the father mourns Alcides; or is it the outcry of the gods or the voice of his frightened step-dame? At the sight of Hercules does Juno flee the stars? Under the mighty weight has Atlas staggered? Or is it that the awful ghosts have trembled and at sight of Hercules the hell-hound in affright has broken his chains and fled? No, we are wrong; behold with joyful face comes Poëas' son and on his shoulders he bears the shafts and the quiver known to all, the heir of Hercules.

[Enter PHILOCTETES.]

¹⁶⁰⁷ Speak out, good youth, and tell the end of Hercules, I pray, and with what countenance Alcides bore his death.

PHILOCTETES

With such as none e'er bore his life.

CHORUS

So joyous did he mount his funeral pyre?

PHILOCTETES

He showed that now flames were as naught to him. What 'neath the heavens has Hercules left by defeat unscathed? Lo, all things have been subdued.

CHORUS

Midst the hot flames what room was there for valour?

l. 1604) and there is no pertinency in the introduction of the nurse, we have given the dialogue to Philoctetes and the Chorus.

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PHILOCTETES

Quod unum in orbe vicerat nondum malum,
et flamma victa est ; haec quoque accessit feris :
inter labores ignis Herculeos abit.

CHORVS

Edissere agetum, flamma quo victa est modo ?

PHILOCTETES

Vt omnis Oeten maesta corripuit manus,
huic fagus umbras perdit et toto iacet
succissa trunco, flectit hic pinum ferox 1620
astris minantem et nube de media vocat ;
ruitura caudem movit et silvam tulit
secum minorem. Chaonis qualis loquax
stat vasta late quercus et Phoebum vetat
ultraque totos porrigit ramos manus ;
gemit illa multo vulnere impresso minax
frangitque cuneos, resilit incussus chalybs
volutusque ferrum patitur et rigidum est parum.
commota tandem cum cadens latam sui
duxit ruinam, protinus radios locus 1630
admisit omnes ; sedibus pulsae suis
volucres pererrant nemore succiso diem
quaeruntque lassis garrulae pinnis domus.
iamque omnis arbor sonuit et sacrae quoque
sensere quercus horridam ferro manum
nullique priscum profuit luco nemus.
aggeritur omnis silva et alternae trabes
in astra tollunt Herculi angustum rogam :

¹ See Index *s.v.* "Chaonian Oaks."

² Oak-trees were especially sacred to Jove.

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PHILOCTETES

The one enemy on earth which he had not o'ercome, e'en fire, is vanquished; this also has been added to the beasts; fire has taken its place midst the toils of Hercules.

CHORUS

But tell us, in what wise were the flames o'ercome?

PHILOCTETES

When the whole sorrowing band fell upon Oeta's woods, by the hands of one the beech-tree lost its shade and lay full length, hewn to the ground; one fiercely felled a pine-tree, towering to the stars, and from the clouds' midst he summoned it; in act to fall, it shook the rocky slope and with itself brought down the lesser woods. A huge oak stood, wide spreading, such as Chaonia's oak¹ of prophecy, excluding the light of day and stretching its branches far beyond all the grove. Threat'ning it groaned, by many a blow beset, and broke the wedges; back bounded the smiting steel; its edge was dulled, too soft for such a task. When the tree, at last dislodged, falling, brings widespread ruin down, straightway the place lets in the sun's full rays; the birds, driven from their perches, flit aimless through the day midst the felled grove, and, loudly complaining, with wearied wings seek for their nests. And now every tree resounded, and even the sacred oaks² felt the dread steel-armed hand, and its ancient woods availed no holy grove.³ The whole forest was piled into a heap; and the logs, starward in layers rising, made all too small a pyre for Hercules—the pine-

³ A deep, primeval forest, for ages left untouched, had acquired a special sanctity.

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raptura flammæ pinus et robur tenax
 et brevior ilex silva ; sed complet rogam 1640
 populea silva, frontis Herculeæ decus.

At ille, ut ingens nemore sub Nasamonio
 aegro reclinis pectore immugit leo,
 fertur—quis illum credat ad flammæ rapi ?
 voltus petentis astra, non ignes erat,
 ut pressit Oeten ac suis oculis rogam
 lustravit omnem. fregit impositus trabes.
 arcus poposcit. “ accipe hæc ” inquit, “ sate
 Poeante, dona et munus Alcidae cape.
 has hydra sensit, his iacent Stymphalides 1650
 et quidquid aliud eminus vici malum.

virtute felix,¹ iuvenis, has numquam irritas
 mittes in hostem ; sive de media voles
 auferre volucres nube, descendunt aves
 et certa prædæ tela de caelo fluent,
 nec fallit unquam dexteram hic arcus tuam.
 librare tela didicit et certam dare
 fugam sagittis, ipsa non fallunt iter
 emissa nervo tela. tu tantum precor
 accommoda ignes et facem extremam mihi. 1660

hic nodus ” inquit “ nulla quem cepit manus,
 mecum per ignes flagret ; hoc telum Herculem
 tantum sequetur. hoc quoque acciperes ” ait
 “ si ferre posses. adiuvet domini rogam.”
 tum rigida secum spolia Nemeæi mali
 arsura poscit ; latuit in spolio rogam.

Ingemuit omnis turba nec lacrimas dolor
 cuiquam remisit. mater in luctum furens
 diduxit avidum pectus atque utero tenus

¹ So Gronovius with ζ : †victorie felix Leo with E: viture felix. has enim numquam irritas A: his utere felix Peiper: arguing from sive (1653) Leo thinks the other alternative must have begun in l. 1652 with some such words as sive eris in acie.

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tree, quick to burn, the tough-fibred oak, the ilex of shorter trunk; but poplar wood, whose foliage adorns Alcides' brow, filled out the pyre.

¹⁶⁴² But he, like some huge, suffering lion, which, in Libyan forest lying, roars out his pain, hurried along,—who would suppose him hasting to the flames? His gaze was of one who seeks the stars, not fires of earth, when he set foot on Oeta and with his eyes surveyed the pyre complete. The great beams broke beneath him. Then for his shafts and bow he called, and said: "Take these, thou son of Poeas, take them as Alcides' gift and pledge of love. These did the Hydra feel; by these the Stymphalian birds lie low, and all other pests which at distance I overcame. O youth with valour blest, never in vain shalt thou send these 'gainst a foe; or if birds from the very clouds thou wouldst fetch away, birds will fall down, and out of the sky will thy shafts, sure of their prey, come floating; and ne'er will this bow disappoint thy hand. Well has it learned to poise the feathered shafts and unerringly send them flying; while the shafts themselves, loosed from the string, fail never to find their mark. Only do thou, I pray, apply the fire and set the last torch for me. Let this club," he said, "which no hand but mine has wielded, burn in the flames with me; this weapon alone shall follow Hercules. This also shouldst thou have," said he, "if thou couldst wield it. Let it add fuel to its master's pyre." Then did he call for the Nemean monster's shaggy skin to burn with him; 'neath the skin the pyre was hidden.

¹⁶⁶⁷ The whole throng set up a lamentation, and sorrow filled the eyes of all with tears. His mother, passionate in grief, her eager bosom stript, and she

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exerta vastos ubera in planctus ferit, 1670
 superosque et ipsum vocibus pulsans Iovem
 implevit omnem voce feminea locum.
 "deforme letum, mater, Herculeum facis;
 compesce lacrimas" inquit, "introrsus dolor
 femineus abeat. Iuno cur laetum diem
 te flente ducat? paelicis gaudet suae
 spectare lacrimas. comprime infirmum iecur,
 mater; nefas est ubera atque uterum tibi
 laniare, qui me genuit." et dirum fremens,
 qualis per urbes duxit Argolicas canem, 1680
 cum victor Erebi Dite contempto redit
 tremente fato, talis incubuit rogo.
 quis sic triumphans laetus in curru stetit
 victor? quis illo gentibus voltu dedit
 leges tyrannus? quanta pax habitum tulit!
 haesere lacrimae, cecidit impulsus dolor
 nobis quoque ipsis, nemo periturum ingemit.
 iam flere pudor est; ipsa quam sexus iubet
 maerere, siccis haesit Alemene genis
 stetitque nato paene iam similis parens. 1690

CHORVS

Nullasne in astra misit ad superos preces
 arsurus aut in vota respexit Iovem?

PHILOCTETES

Iacuit sui securus et caelum intuens
 quaesivit oculis, parte an ex aliqua pater
 despiceret illum. tum manus tendens ait:
 "quacumque parte prospicis natum pater
 (iste est pater, cui nocte commissa dies

HERCULES OETAÆUS

smote her breasts, naked e'en to the waist, in endless lamentation; and with her cries assailing the gods and Jove himself, she filled all the region round with womanish bewailings. "Mother," he said, "thou dost disgrace the death of Hercules; restrain thy tears and confine thy womanish grief within thy heart. Why for thy weeping should Juno count this day joyful? For she rejoices to see her rival's tears. Curb thy faint heart, my mother; 'tis a sin to tear the breasts and the womb that bore Alcides." Then with dread mutterings, as when through Argive towns he dragged the dog, what time, triumphant over hell, in scorn of Dis and trembling death he returned to earth, so did he lay him down upon the pyre. What victor ever stood in his chariot so joyfully triumphant? What tyrant king with such a countenance ever gave laws to nations? How calmly he bore his fate! Even our tears were stayed, grief's shock subsided, none grieves that he must perish. Now were we 'shamed to weep; Alcmena, herself, whose sex impels to mourning, stood with dry cheeks, a mother now well-nigh equal to her son.

CHORUS

Sent he no supplications heavenward to the gods e'er the fire was lit? Looked he not to Jove to hear his prayers?

PHILOCTETES

Careless of self he lay and, gazing at heaven, quested with his eyes whether from any quarter his sire looked down at him. Then, with hands outstretched, he spoke: "O father, from what quarter soe'er thou lookest on thy son, (he truly is my father, for whose sake night joined with day and one

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

- quievit unus), si meas laudes canit
 utrumque Phoebi litus et Scythiae genus
 et omnis ardens ora quam torret dies, 1700
 si pace tellus plena, si nullae gemunt
 urbes nec aras impias quisquam inquinat,
 si scelera desunt, spiritum admitte hunc precor
 in astra. non me mortis infernae locus
 nec maesta nigri regna conterrent Iovis;
 sed ire ad illos umbra, quos vici, deos,
 pater, erubesco. nube discussa diem
 pande, ut deorum voltus ardentem Herculem
 spectet; licet tu sidera et mundum neges,
 ultro, pater, cogere—si voces dolor 1710.
 abstulerit ullas, pande tum Stygios lacus
 et redde fatis; approba natum prius.
 ut dignus astris videar, hic faciet dies.
 leve est quod actum est; Herculem hic, genitor, dies
 inveniet aut damnabit.”
 Haec postquam edidit, 1715
 flammas poposcit. “hoc age, Alcidae comes 1717
 non segnis” inquit “corripe Oetaeam facem;
 noverca cernat quo feram flammas modo.¹ 1716
 quid dextra tremuit? num manus pavida impium 1719
 scelus refugit? redde iam pharetras mihi, 1720
 ignave iners inermis—en nostros manus
 quae tendat arcus! quid sedet pallor genis?
 animo faces invade quo Alciden vides
 voltu iacere. respice arsurum, miser.
 Vocat ecce iam me genitor et pandit polos.
 venio, pater.” voltusque non idem fuit.
 tremente pinum dextera ardentem impulsi;²

¹ Leo deletes this line with E: Richter, following Gronovius, places it after l. 1718.

² So A: Leo impulit with E.

HERCULES OETAÆUS

day ceased to be,) if both the bounds of Phoebus
 sing my praise, the tribes of Scythia and every burn-
 ing strand which daylight parches; if peace fills all
 the earth; if no cities groan and no man stains with
 sin his altar-fires; if crimes have ceased, admit this
 soul, I pray thee, to the stars. I have no fear of the
 infernal realm of death, nor do the sad realms of
 dusky Jove¹ affright me; but to go, naught but a
 shade, to those gods I overcame, O sire, I am
 ashamed. Dispel the clouds, spread wide the day,
 that the eyes of gods may gaze on burning Hercules.
 Though thou deny me stars and a place in heaven,
 O sire, thou shalt even be compelled—ah! if pain
 will excuse any words² of mine, then open the
 Stygian pools and give me to death again; but prove
 me first thy son. This day will make me seem
 worthy of the stars. Worthless is all that has been
 done; this day, my father, will bring Hercules to
 light or doom him.”

¹⁷¹⁵ When he had thus said, he called for fire.
 “Up now, Alcides’ willing friend,” said he, “catch
 up the Oetaean torch; let my step-dame see how I
 can bear the flames. Why did thy right hand
 tremble? Did thy hand shrink timid from such
 unholy deed? Then give me my quiver back, thou
 undaring, unskilled, unwarlike—*that* the hand to
 bend my bow! Why do thy cheeks grow pale?
 Come, seize on the torch with courage, with face
 thou seest on prone Alcides. Poor soul, have some
 regard for him who soon will burn.

¹⁷²⁵ But lo! now doth my father call me and he
 opens heaven. I come, O sire.” Then was his face
 no more the same. With trembling hand I applied

¹ Pluto.

² *i.e.* the latest defiant word, “compelled.”

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

refugit ignis et reluctantur faces
 et membra vitant, sed recedentem Hercules
 insequitur ignem. Caucasum aut Pindum aut

Athon

1730

ardere credas; nullus erumpit sonus,
 tantum ingemescit ignis. o durum iecur!
 Typhon in illo positus immanis rogo
 gemisset ipse quique convulsam solo
 imposuit umeris Ossan Enceladus ferox.

At ille medias inter exurgens faces,
 semiustus ac laniatus, intrepidum tuens:
 "nunc es parens Herculea; sic stare ad rogam
 te, mater," inquit, "sic decet fieri Herculem."
 inter vapores positus et flammæ minas

1740

immotus, inconcussus, in neutrum latus
 correpta torquens membra adhortatur, monet,
 gerit aliquid ardens. omnibus fortem addidit
 animum ministris; urere ardentem putes.
 stupet omne vulgus, vix habent flammæ fidem,
 tam placida frons est, tanta maiestas viro.
 nec properat uri; cumque iam forti datum
 leto satis pensavit, igniferas trabes
 hinc inde traxit, minima quas flamma occupat,
 totasque in ignes vertit et quis plurimus

1750

exundat ignis repetit intrepidus ferox.
 tunc ora flammis implet. ast illi graves
 luxere barbae; cumque iam voltum minax
 appeteret ignis, lamberent flammæ caput,
 non pressit oculos.—sed quid hoc? maestam intuo

HERCULES OETAÆUS

the blazing pine ; the flames shrunk back, the torch resisted and would not touch his limbs ; but Hercules followed up the shrinking flames. Thou wouldst suppose that Caucasus or Pindus or Athos was ablaze ; no sound burst forth, save that the fire seemed groaning. O stubborn heart ! Had huge Typhon been lying on that pyre, he would have groaned aloud, and fierce Enceladus who upon his shoulders bore Ossa, upturn from earth.

¹⁷⁸⁶ But Hercules, midst roaring flames upstarting, all charred and mangled, gazed dauntless round and cried : " Now art thou parent true of Hercules ; thus 'tis meet that thou shouldst stand, my mother, beside the pyre, and thus 'tis meet that Hercules be mourned." Midst scorching heat and threat'ning flames, unmoved, unshaken, to neither side turning his tortured limbs, he encourages, advises, is active still, though all aflame. To all his ministrants stoutness of soul he gives ; you would deem him all on fire to burn. The whole crowd stands in speechless wonder and the flames have scarce belief,¹ so calm his brow, the hero so majestic. Nor does he speed his burning ; but when now he deemed that courage enough had been shown in death, from every side he dragged the burning logs which the fire least fed upon, and into that blazing mass he strode and sought where the flames leaped highest, all unafraid, defiant. Awhile he feasted his eyes upon the fires. But now his heavy beard burned bright ; and even when threat'ning fire assailed his face and the hot tongues licked about his head, he did not close his eyes.—But what is this ? I see the sad mother

¹ The people hardly believed that the fire was real.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

sinu gerentem reliquias magni Herculis¹
 crinemque iactans squalidum Alcemene gemit.

ALCMENA

Timete, superi, fata ! tam parvus cinis
 Herculeus, huc huc ille decrevit gigans !
 o quanta, Titan, ad nihil moles abit ! 1760
 anilis, heu me, recipit Alciden sinus,
 hic tumulus illi est. ecce vix totam Hercules
 complevit urnam ; quam leve est pondus mihi,
 cui totus aether pondus incubuit leve.
 ad Tartara olim regnaque, o nate, ultima
 rediturus ibas — quando ab inferna Styge
 remeabis iterum ? non ut et spolium trahas
 rursusque Theseus debeat lucem tibi—
 sed quando solus ? mundus impositus tuas
 compescet umbras teque Tartareus canis 1770
 inhibere poterit ? quando Taenarias fores
 pulsabis, aut quas mater ad fauces agar
 qua mors aditur ? vadis ad manes iter
 habiturus unum. quid diem questu tero ?
 quid misera duras vita ? quid lucem tenes ?
 quem parere rursus Herculem possum Iovi ?
 quis me parentem natus Alcemenen suam
 tantus vocabit ? o nimis felix nimis,
 Thebane coniunx, Tartari intrasti loca
 florente nato teque venientem inferi 1780
 timere forsan, quod pater tantum Herculis,

¹ *Leo deletes ll. 1755, 1756, Richter 1755-1757 : the last part of the speech of Philoctetes is supposed to have fallen out.*

HERCULES OETAÆUS

bearing in her bosom the remains of great Alcides, and Alcmena, tossing her squalid locks, bewails her son.

[*Enter* ALCMENA, *carrying in her bosom a funeral urn.*]

ALCMENA

Fear ye the fates, O powers above! (*Holding up the urn.*) See the scant dust of Hercules—to this, to this has that mighty body shrunk! O Sun, how great a mass has passed away to nothingness! Ah me, this aged breast can hold Alcides, this is a tomb for him. See, Hercules has scarce filled all the urn; how light for me his weight upon whose shoulders the whole heavens as a light weight rested. Once to the farthest realms of Tartarus, O son, didst thou go but to return—Oh, when from infernal Styx wilt thou come again? Not in such wise as to bring e'en spoil with thee, nor that Theseus again may owe thee the light of day,—but when, though all alone? Will the whole world, heaped on thee, hold thy shade, or the hell-hound avail to keep thee back? When wilt thou batter down the Taenarian¹ gates, or to what yawning jaws shall thy mother betake herself, where is the approach to death? Thou takest thy journey to the dead, and 'twill be thy only one. Why do I waste time in wailing? Why dost endure, O wretched life? Why clingest to the light? What Hercules can I again bring forth to Jove? What son so great will call me mother, will call me his Alcmena? Oh, too, too happy thou, my Theban husband,² for thou to the realms of Tartarus didst descend, thy son still living; at thy approach the infernal ones, perchance, were filled with fear, merely because thou wast the sire of Hercules, even

¹ See Index *s.v.* "Taenarus." ² Amphitryon.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

vel falsus, aderas—quas petam terras anus,
 invisae saevis regibus, si quis tamen
 rex est relictus saevus? ei miserae mihi!
 quicumque caesos ingemit natus patres,
 a me petet supplicia, me cuncti obruent.
 si quis minor Busiris aut si quis minor
 Antaeus orbem fervidae terret plagae,
 ego praeda ducar; si quis Ismarius greges
 Thracis cruenti vindicat, carpent greges 1790
 mea membra diri. forsitan poenas petet
 irata Iuno; totus huc verget¹ dolor;
 securo victo tandem ab Alcide vacat,
 paelex supersum—a quanta supplicia expetet
 ne parere possim! fecit hic natus mihi
 uterum timendum.

Quae petam Alceme loca?
 quis me locus, quae regio, quae mundi plaga
 defendet aut quas mater in latebras agar
 ubique per te nota? sic patriam petam
 laresque miseros? Argos Eurystheus tenet. 1800
 marita Thebas regna et Ismenon petam
 thalamosque nostros, in quibus quondam Iovem
 dilecta vidi? pro nimis felix, nimis,
 si fulminantem et ipsa sensissem Iovem!
 utinam meis visceribus Alcides foret
 exectus infans! nunc datum est tempus, datum est
 videre natum laude certantem Iovi,
 ut et hoc daretur, scire quid fatum mihi
 eripere posset.

¹ So Richter with N. Heinsius: Leo reads †uretur with ω, and conjectures exurget.

HERCULES OETAÆUS

though falsely called.—What lands shall an aged woman seek, hated by savage kings, if spite of all any savage king is left alive? Oh, woe is me! All sons¹ who lament their murdered sires will seek revenge from me; they all will overwhelm me. If any young Busiris or if any young Antaeus terrifies the region of the burning zone,² I shall be led off as booty; if any Ismarian³ seeks revenge for the herds of the bloody king⁴ of Thrace, upon my limbs will his horrid herds be fed. Juno, perchance, in anger will seek revenge; against me will the whole force of her wrath incline; though her soul is no more disturbed by Alcides, o'ercome at last, I, the concubine, am left—ah! what punishments will she inflict, lest I be again a mother! This son has made my womb a thing of fear.

¹⁷⁹⁶ Whither shall Alcmena flee? What place, what region, what quarter of the world will take my part, or to what hiding-place shall thy mother betake herself, known everywhere through thee? Shall I seek my fatherland and my wretched home? Eurystheus is king at Argos. Shall I seek Thebes, my husband's kingdom, the Ismenus and my bridal chamber, where once, greatly beloved by him, I looked on Jove? Oh, happy, far too happy had I been, if I myself, too,⁵ had known Jove's thunderbolt! Oh, would that from my womb the infant Alcides had been ripped! But now was the chance given me, yea 'twas given to see my son vying in praise with Jove, that this, too, might be given me—to know of how much fate had power to rob me.

¹ *i.e.* whose fathers Hercules has slain.

² Both these enemies of Hercules had lived in Africa.

³ *i.e.* Thracian. ⁴ Diomedes.

She is thinking of the experience of Semele.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Quis memor vivet tui,
 o nate, populus? omne iam ingratum est genus. 1810
 petam Cleonas? Arcadum populos petam
 meritisque terras nobiles quaeram tuis?
 hic dira serpens cecidit, hic ales fera,
 hic rex cruentus, hic tua fractus manu
 qui te sepulto possidet caelum leo.
 si grata terra est, populus Almenen tuam
 defendat omnis. Thracias gentes petam
 Hebrique populos? haec quoque est meritis tuis
 defensa tellus; stabula cum regno iacent.
 hic pax cruento rege prostrato data est; 1820
 ubi enim negata est?

Quod tibi infelix anus
 quaeram sepulchrum? de tuis totus rogis
 contendat orbis. reliquias magni Herculis
 quis populus aut quae templa, quae gentes rogant?
 quis, quis petit, quis poscit Almenes onus?
 quae tibi sepulchra, nate, quis tumulus sat est?
 hic totus orbis; fama erit titulus tibi.
 quid, anime, trepidas? Herculis cineres tenes;
 complectere ossa; reliquiae auxilium dabunt,
 erunt satis praesidia, terrebunt tuae 1830
 reges vel umbrae.

HYLLVS

Debitos nato quidem
 compesce fletus, mater Alcidae incluti.
 non est gemendus nec gravi urgendus prece,

¹ Lerna.

² The Stymphalian bird.

HERCULES OETAÆUS

¹⁸⁰⁰ What people will live mindful of thee, O son? Now is the whole race ungrateful. Shall I seek Cleonae? seek the Arcadian tribes and hunt out the lands made famous by thy righteous toils? Here ¹ fell the serpent dire, here the bird-monster,² here ³ fell a bloody king, and here ⁴ by thy hand subdued, the lion fell, who, while thou liest buried here, holds a place in heaven. If earth is grateful, let every people shield thine Alcmena. Shall I go to the Thracian peoples, and to Hebrus' tribes? for this land, too, was defended by thy toils; low do the stables⁵ with the kingdom lie. Here peace was granted when the bloody king was overthrown; for where has it not been granted?

¹⁸²¹ What tomb for thee shall a luckless old woman seek? Let the whole world contend for thy remains. The ashes of mighty Hercules, what people or what temples, what races desire to have? Who then, who seeks, who demands Alcmena's burden⁶? What sepulchre, O son, what tomb is great enough for thee? Thy tomb is the whole wide world, and fame shall be thine epitaph. Why, soul of mine, art fearful? Thou holdst the dust of Hercules; embrace his bones; his mere dust will bring thee aid, will be defence enough; even thy ghost will cause kings to tremble.

HYLLUS [*who seems to have been present during the preceding scene*]

Though truly they are due thy son, restrain thy tears, mother of Alcides the illustrious. He is neither to be mourned nor pursued with grievous

³ Egypt, Thrace, or Libya, according as Busiris, Diomedes, or Antaeus is in her mind. ⁴ Nemea. ⁵ *i.e.* of Diomedes.

⁶ *i.e.* the urn containing the ashes of Hercules.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

virtute quisquis abstulit fatis iter ;
aeterna virtus Herculem fieri vetat.
fortes vetant maerere, degeneres iubent.¹

ALCMENA

Sedabo questus vindice amisso parens ?

HYLLVS

Terra atque pelagus quaque purpureus dies
utrumque clara spectat Oceanum rota²

ALCMENA

Quot misera in uno condidi natos parens ! 1840
regno carebam, regna sed poteram dare.
una inter omnes terra quas matres gerit
votis perperci, nil ego a superis peti
incolume nato ; quid dare Hercules mihi
non poterat ardor ? quis deus quicquam mihi
negare poterat ? vota in hac fuerant manu ;
quidquid negaret Iuppiter, daret Hercules.
quid tale genetrix ulla mortalis tulit ?
deriguit aliqua mater ut toto stetit
succisa fetu bisque septenos gregem 1850
deplanxit una ; gregibus aequari meus
quot ille poterat ? matribus miseris adhuc
exemplar ingens derat—Alemene dabo.
cessate, matres, pertinax si quas dolor
adhuc iubet lugere, quas luctus gravis
in saxa vertit ; cedite his cunctae malis.
agedum senile pectus, o miserae manus,
pulsate—et una funeri tanto sat es,

¹ *Leo deletes this line.*

² *Evidently there is a lacuna following this line. Leo suggests: (non sola maeres) vindice amisso dolent.*

HERCULES OETAÆUS

prayers, whoe'er by his valour hath halted the march of fate; his deathless valour forbids to weep for Hercules. Brave men forbid to mourn, cowards command.

ALCMENA

When her deliverer is lost, shall a mother abate her grief?

HYLLUS

Both land and sea and where the shining sun from his bright car looks down upon both oceans, (not thou alone dost grieve) all mourn for their lost deliverer.¹

ALCMENA

How many sons has his wretched mother buried in him alone! Kingdom I lacked, yet kingdoms could I give. I only, midst all the mothers whom the earth contains, refrained from prayer; naught from the gods I asked, while my son remained; for what could the love of Hercules not grant to me? What god could deny me aught? In my own hands were the answers to my prayers; whatever Jove denied, Hercules could bestow. What son like this has a mortal mother borne? Once a mother² stiffened into stone when, stripped of her whole brood, she stood and, one alone, lamented her twice seven children; but to how many broods like hers could my son be compared? Till now for mother's grief a measure vast enough was lacking—Alcmena will furnish it. Then cease, ye mothers, whom persistent woe still bids to mourn, whom crushing sorrow has transformed to stone; yield ye, yea, all of you, to these my woes. Then come, beat on this aged breast, O wretched hands,—and canst thou alone

¹ Translating Leo's conjecture.

² Niobe.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

grandaeva anus defecta, quam totus brevi
iam quaeret¹ orbis? expedi in planctus tamen 1860
defessa quamquam bracchia; invidiam ut deis
lugendo facias, advoca in planctus genus.

Ite Alcmenae magnique Iovis
plangite natum, cui concepto
lux una perit noctesque duas
contulit Eos: ipsa quiddam
plus luce perit.
totae pariter plangite gentes,
quarum saevos ille tyrannos
iussit Stygias penetrare domos 1870
populisque madens ponere ferrum.
fletum meritis reddite tantis,
totus, totus personet orbis.
fleat Alciden caerulea Crete,
magno tellus cara Tonanti;
centum populi bracchia pulsant;
nunc Curetes, nunc Corybantes
arma Idaea quassate manu;
armis illum lugere decet;
nunc, nunc funus plangite verum; 1880
iacet Alcides non minor ipso,
Creta, Tonante.
flete Herculeos, Arcades, obitus,
nondum Phoebe nascente genus;
iuga Parthenii Nemeaeque² sonent
feriatque graves Maenala planctus.
magno Alcidae poscit gemitum

¹ Leo †iam quaeret with *E*, and conjectures iam totus
brevis | concurret orbis: sequetur *N. Heinsius*: conveniet
Koetschau: iam peraget *Richter*.

² †Nemeaeque *Leo* with *ω*: Tegeaeque de *Wilamowitz*:
Pheneique *Richter*.

HERCULES OETAEUS

suffice for loss so vast, an aged spent old woman? Soon will the whole world unite to mourn with thee.¹ Yet raise thy arms, however weary, in lamentation; that by thy grief thou mayst stir envy in the gods, summon the whole race of men unto thy mourning.

[*Here follows* ALCMENA'S *formal song of mourning accompanied by the usual Oriental gestures of lamentation.*]

¹⁸⁶³ Come ye, bewail Alcmena's son and mighty Jove's, for whose conception one day was lost and lingering dawn joined two nights in one; something greater than the day itself is lost. Together lament, ye nations all, whose cruel tyrants he bade descend to the abodes of Styx and lay down the sword, reeking with blood of peoples. To such deserts pay tribute of your tears; let all, yea all the world echo to your laments. Alcides let sea-girt Crete bewail, land to the great Thunderer dear; let its hundred peoples beat upon their arms. Now Cretans, now priests of Cybele, with your hands clash Ida's cymbals; 'tis meet that with arms ye mourn him. Now, now make him just funeral; low lies Alcides, equal, O Crete, to the Thunderer himself. Weep for Alcides' passing, O Arcadians, who were a people ere yet the moon was born; let Parthenius' heights and Nemea's hills resound and Maenalus smite heavy blows of grief. The bristly boar, within your fields laid low, demands lament for great Alcides, and the

¹ Translating Leo's conjecture. See critical note 1.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

stratus vestris saëtiger agris
alesque sequi iussa sagittas
totum pinna velante diem. 1890

flete Argolicae, flete, Cleonae;
hic terrentem moenia quondam
vestra leonem fregit nostri
dextera nati; date Bistoniae
verbera matres gelidusque sonet
placibus Hebrus; flete Alciden,
quod non stabulis nascitur infans
nec vestra greges viscera carpunt.
flea Antaeo libera tellus
et rapta fero plaga Geryonae; 1900
mecum miserae plangite gentes,
audiat ictus utraque Tethys.

Vos quoque, mundi turba citati,
flete Herculeos, numina, casus;
vestrum Alcides cervice meus
mundum, superi, caelumque tulit,
cum stelligeri vector Olympi
pondere liber spiravit Atlans.
ubi nunc vestrae, Iuppiter, arces?
ubi promissi regia mundi? 1910
nempe Alcides mortalis obit,
nempe sepultus. quotiens telis
facibusque tuis ille pepercit,
quotiens ignis spargendus erat!
in me saltem iaculare facem
Semelenque puta.

Iamne Elysias, o nate, domus,
iam litus habes ad quod populos
natura vocat?
an post raptum Styx atra canem
praecluserit iter teque in primo 1920
limine Ditis fata morantur?

HERCULES OETAÆUS

huge bird whose wings hid all the sky, challenged¹ to meet his shafts. Weep, Argive Cleonae, weep; here long ago the lion who kept your walls in fear my son's right hand destroyed. Ye Bistonian dames, beat your breasts, and let cold Hebrus resound to your beatings; weep for Alcides, for no more are your children born for the stalls,² nor your offspring as food for the herds. Weep thou, O land from Antaeus delivered, ye regions from fierce Geryon saved; yea, with me, ye unhappy nations, lament; let both seas³ re-echo your beatings.

¹⁹⁰³ You too, ye thronging deities of the whirling heavens, bewail Hercules' fate; for my Alcides bore your heavens upon his shoulders, your sky, ye gods above, when Atlas, starry Olympus' prop, was eased of his load awhile. Where now are thy heights, O Jove? Where is the promised⁴ palace in the sky? Alcides, mortal, is dead! mortal, is buried! How oft did he save thee thy lightnings, how seldom thy fire needed hurling!⁵ Against me at least brandish thy lightning, and deem me Semele.

¹⁹¹⁶ And now, O son, holdst thou the Elysian seats, holdst now the shore whither nature calls all peoples? Or after the dog was stolen has the dark Styx barred thy way, and on the very threshold of Dis do the fates delay thee? What confusion now, my

¹ Hercules roused the bird from its Stymphalian lair by the noise of a great rattle. ² *i.e.* of Diomedes.

³ *i.e.* the eastern and western limits of the sea.

⁴ Jove had promised Hercules a place in heaven.

⁵ *i.e.* Hercules had taken upon himself the punishment of sinful men.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

quis nunc umbras, nate, tumultus
manesque tenet?
fugit abducta navita cumba
et Centauris Thessala motis
ferit attonitos ungula manes
anguesque suos hydra sub undas
territa mersit teque labores,
o nate, timent?
fallor, fallor vaesana furens! 1930
nec te manes umbraeque timent,
non Argolico rapta leoni
fulva pellis contacta iuba
laevos operit dira lacertos
vallantque ferae tempora dentes;
donum pharetrae cessere tuae
telaque mittet iam dextra minor.
vadis inermis, nate, per umbras,
ad quas semper mansurus eris.

VOX HERCVLIS

Quid me tenentem regna siderei poli 1940
caeloque tandem redditum planctu iubes
sentire fatum? parce; iam virtus mihi
in astra et ipsos fecit ad superos iter.

ALCMENA

Vnde, unde sonus trepidas aures
ferit? unde meas inhibet lacrimas
fragor? agnosco victum esse chaos.
A Styge, nate, redis iterum mihi
fractaque non semel est mors horrida?
vicisti rursus mortis loca
puppis et infernae vada tristia? 1950

HERCULES OETAEUS

son, seizes the shadowy spirits? Does the boatman draw away his skiff in flight? Do Thessalian Centaurs with flying hoofs smite the affrighted ghosts? Does the hydra in terror plunge his snaky heads beneath the waves and do thy toils all fear thee, O my son? Fooled, fooled am I, distracted, mad! Nor ghosts nor shadows are afraid of thee; the fearsome pelt, stripped from the Argolic lion, with its tawny mane shields thy left arm no more, and its savage teeth hedge not thy temples; thy quiver thou hast given away and now a lesser hand will aim thy shafts. Unarmed, my son, thou farest through the shades, and with them forever shalt thou abide.

THE VOICE OF HERCULES [*from above.*]

Why, since I hold the realms of starry heaven and at last have attained the skies, dost by lamentation bid me taste of death? Give o'er; for now has my valour borne me to the stars and to the gods themselves.

ALCMENA [*bewildered.*]

Whence, oh, whence falls that sound upon my startled ears? Whence do the thunderous tones bid check my weeping? Now know I that chaos has been o'ercome.

¹⁹⁴⁷ From the Styx, O son, art come again to me? Broken a second time is the power of grisly death? Hast escaped once more death's stronghold and the infernal skiff's dark pools? Is Acheron's wan stream

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

pervius est Acheron iam languidus
 et remeare licet soli tibi
 nec te fata tenent post funera ?
 an tibi praeclusit Pluton iter
 et pavidus regni metuit sibi ?
 certe ego te vidi flagrantibus
 impositum silvis, cum plurimus
 in caelum fureret flammae metus.
 arsisisti—cur te, cur ultima
 non tenere tuas umbras loca ? 1960
 quid timere tui manes precor ?
 umbra quoque es Diti nimis horrida ?

HERCVLES

Non me gementis stagna Cocyti tenent
 nec puppis umbras furva transvexit meas ;
 iam parce, mater, questibus ; manes semel
 umbrasque vidi. quidquid in nobis tui
 mortale fuerat, ignis evictus tulit ;
 paterna caelo, pars data est flammis tua.
 proinde planctus pone, quos nato paret
 genetrix inertis. luctus in turpes eat ; 1970
 virtus in astra tendit, in mortem timor.
 praesens ab astris, mater, Alcides cano :
 poenas cruentus iam tibi Eurystheus dabit ;
 curru superbum vecta transcendes caput.
 me iam decet subire caelestem plagam ;
 inferna vici rursus Alcides loca.

ALCMENA

Mane parumper—cessit ex oculis, abit,
 in astra fertur. fallor an voltus putat
 vidisse natum ? misera mens incredula est—

HERCULES OETAÆUS

retraceable and mayst thou alone recross it? And after thy death do the fates hold thee no more? Has Pluto barred thy way, and trembling feared for his own sovereignty? Surely upon the blazing logs I saw thee laid, when the vast, fearful flames raged to the sky. Thou wast consumed—why, why did the bottomless abyss not gain thy shade? What part of thee did the ghosts fear, I pray? Is e'en thy shade too terrible for Dis?

HERCULES [*his form now taking shape in the air above.*]

The pools of groaning Cocytus hold me not, nor has the dark skiff borne o'er my shade; then cease thy laments, my mother; once and for all have I seen the shadowy ghosts. Whate'er in me was mortal and of thee, vanquished has felt the fire; my father's part to heaven, thy part to the flames has been consigned. Cease then thy lamentations which to a worthless son might well be given. Let tears for the inglorious flow; valour fares starward, fear, to the realm of death. In living presence, mother, from the stars Alcides speaks; soon shall bloody Eurystheus make thee full recompense; o'er his proud head shalt thou in triumph ride. But now 'tis meet that I pass to the realm above; Alcides once again has conquered hell.

[*He vanishes from sight.*]

ALCMENA

Stay but a little!—he has vanished from my sight, is gone, to the stars faring. Am I deceived or do my eyes but deem they saw my son? My soul for very grief cannot believe it.—But no! thou art divine,

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

es numen et te mundus aeternum tenet ; 1980
credo triumphis.

 Regna Thebarum petam
novumque templis additum numen canam.

CHORVS

Numquam Stygias fertur ad umbras
inclita virtus. vivunt fortes
nec Lethaeos saeva per amnes
vos fata trahent, sed cum summas
exiget horas consumpta dies,
iter ad superos gloria pandet.

Sed tu, domitor magne ferarum
orbisque simul pacator, ades ; 1990
nunc quoque nostras respice terras,
et si qua novo belua voltu
quatiet populos terrore gravi,
tu fulminibus frange trisulcis—
fortius ipso genitore tuo
fulmina mitte.

HERCULES OETAÆUS

and deathless the heavens possess thee. In thy triumphant entrance I believe.

¹⁹⁸¹ Now will I take me to the realm of Thebes and there proclaim the new god added to their temples.

[*Exit.*

CHORUS

Never to Stygian shades is glorious valour borne. The brave live on, nor shall the cruel fates bear you o'er Lethe's waters; but when the last day shall bring the final hour, glory will open wide the path to heaven.

¹⁹⁸⁹ But do thou, O mighty conqueror of beasts, peace-bringer to the world, be with us yet; still as of old regard this earth of ours; and if some strange-visaged monster cause us with dire fear to tremble, do thou o'ercome him with the forked thunderbolts—yea, more mightily than thy father's self the thunders hurl.

GRAVITAS VIRTUTIS

PHOENISSAE

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

OEDIPUS, *late king of Thebes.*

ANTIGONE, *daughter of Oedipus, constant to him in his misfortunes.*

JOCASTA, *wife and mother of Oedipus.*

POLYNICES, }
ETEOCLES, } *sons of Oedipus and rivals for the throne.*

MESSENGER.

THE SCENE is laid, first in the wild country to which Oedipus, accompanied by Antigone, has betaken himself; then in Thebes; and lastly in the plain before Thebes.

THE TIME is three years after the downfall of Oedipus.

ARGUMENT

THE stroke of fate, that has been threatening Oedipus since long before his birth, has fallen at last, and he has done the thing he feared to do. And now, self-blinded and self-exiled from his land, he has for three years wandered in rough and trackless places, attended by Antigone, his daughter, who, alone of all his friends, has condoned his fated sins and remained attached to him.

Meanwhile his sons, though they agreed to reign alternate years, are soon to meet in deadly strife; for Eteocles, although his year of royal power is at an end, refuses to give up the throne; and now Polynices, who has in exile wed the daughter of Adrastus, king of Argos, is marching against the gates of Thebes, with seven great armies to enforce his rights.

[By a different version from the "Oedipus," Jocasta did not slay herself at once as in that tale, but still is living on in grief and shame, and strives to reconcile her sons.]

PHOENISSAE

OEDIPVS

CAECI parentis regimen et fessi unicum
lateris levamen, nata, quam tanti est mihi
genuisse vel sic, desere infaustum patrem.
in recta quid deflectis errantem gradum?
permitte labi; melius inveniam viam,
quam quaero, solus, quae me ab hac vita extrahat
et hoc nefandi capitis aspectu levet
caelum atque terras. quantulum hac egi manu?
non video noxae conscium nostrae diem,
sed videor. hinc iam solve inhaerentem manum 10
et patere caecum qua volet ferri pedem.
ibo, ibo qua praerupta protendit iuga
meus Cithaeron, qua peragrato celer
per saxa monte iacuit Actaeon suis
nova praeda canibus, qua per obscurum nemus
silvamque opacae vallis instinctas deo
egit sorores mater et gaudens malo
vibrante fixum praetulit thyrso caput;
vel qua cucurrit, corpus inlisum trahens,
Zethi iuvenus, qua per horrentes rubos 20

¹ In the corresponding Greek play a chorus of Phoenician maidens on their way to Delphi chanced to be at Thebes. This circumstance gives the play its name.

PHOENISSAE,¹ OR THEBAÏS

A FRAGMENT

OEDIPUS

[*To ANTIGONE, who has followed him into exile.*]

THOU guide of thy blind father's steps, his weary side's sole stay, daughter, whose getting, even so, was worth the cost to me, quit thou thy heaven-cursed sire. Why into right paths wouldst turn aside my wandering feet? Let me stumble on; better alone shall I find the way I seek, the way which from this life shall deliver me and free heaven and earth from sight of this impious head. How little did I accomplish with this hand! I do not see the light, witness of my crime, but I am seen. Therefore, now unclasp thy clinging hand and let my sightless feet wander where they will. I'll go, I'll go where my own Cithaeron lifts his rugged crags; where, speeding over the mountain's rocky ways, Actaeon lay at last, strange quarry for his own hounds; where, through the dim grove and woods of the dusky glade, a mother² led her sisters, by the god impelled, and, rejoicing in the crime, bore in advance the head³ fixed on a quivering thyrsus; or where Zethus' bull rushed along, dragging a mangled corpse, while through the thorny brambles the mad

² Agave, who with her sisters, in a frenzy inspired by Bacchus, slew her son, Pentheus.

³ *i.e.* of Pentheus.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

tauri ferocis sanguis ostendit fugas ;
 vel qua alta maria vertice immenso premit
 Inoa rupes, qua scelus fugiens novum
 novumque faciens mater insiluit freto
 mensura natum seque. felices quibus
 fortuna melior tam bonas matres dedit.

Est alius istis noster in silvis locus,
 qui me reposit, hunc petam cursu incito ;
 non haesitabit gressus, huc omni duce
 spoliatus ibo. quid moror sedes meas ? 30
 mortem, Cithaeron, redde et hospitium mihi
 illud meum restitue, ut expirem senex
 ubi debui infans. recipe supplicium vetus.
 semper cruenta saeve crudelis ferox,
 cum occidis et cum parcis, olim iam tuum
 est hoc cadaver : perage mandatum patris,
 iam et matris. animus gestit antiqua exequi
 supplicia. quid me, nata, pestifero tenes
 amore vinctum ? quid tenes ? genitor vocat.
 sequor, sequor, iam parce—sanguinem gerens 40
 insigne regni Laius rapti furit ;
 en ecce, inanes manibus infestis petit
 foditque vultus. nata, genitorem vides ?
 ego video. tandem spiritum inimicum expue,
 desertor anime, fortis in partem tui.
 omitte poenae languidas longae moras,
 mortemque totam admitte. quid segnis traho
 quod vivo ? nullum facere iam possum scelus.
 possum miser, praedico—discede a patre,
 discede, virgo. timeo post matrem omnia. 50

PHOENISSAE

creature's flight was traceable in blood; or where Ino's cliff juts out into the deep sea with towering peak, where, fleeing strange crime and yet strange crime committing, a mother leaped into the strait to sink both son and self.¹ Oh, happy they whose better fortune has given such kindly mothers!

²⁷ There is another place within these woods, my own place, which calls for me; I would fain hasten to it; my steps will falter not; thither will I go bereft of every guide. Why keep my own place waiting? Death, O Cithaeron, give me back; restore me that resting-place of mine, that I may die in age where I should have died in infancy. Claim now that penalty of old. O ever bloody, savage, cruel, fierce, both when thou slayest and when thou sparest, this carcass of mine long since belonged to thee; fulfil my father's behest—aye, and now my mother's too. My soul yearns to suffer the penalty of long ago. Why, daughter, dost hold me bound by thy baleful love? Why dost thou hold me? My father calls. I come, I come; at last let me go²—Laius rages yonder, wearing the blood-stained badge of his ravished kingdom; see! behold! there he assails and seeks to tear at my sightless countenance with his threatening hands. Daughter, dost see my father? I surely see him. [*He soliloquizes.*] At length spew out thy hateful breath, O traitor soul, brave 'gainst but a portion of thyself. Away with the slow delays of thy long-due punishment; receive death wholly. Why do I sluggishly drag on this life? Now can I do no crime. I can, wretch that I am, this I forebode—away from thy father, away, while still a maid. After my mother I fear all happenings.

¹ See Index *s.v.* "Ino."

² *i.e.* (to his daughter) "spare me thy further opposition."

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

ANTIGONA

Vis nulla, genitor, a tuo nostram manum
 corpore resolvet, nemo me comitem tibi
 eripiet umquam. Labdaci claram domum,
 opulenta ferro regna germani petant ;
 pars summa magno patris e regno mea est,
 pater ipse. non hunc auferet frater mihi
 Thebana raptō sceptrā qui regno tenet,
 non hunc catervas alter Argolicas agens ;
 non si revulso Iuppiter mundo tonet
 mediumque nostros fulmen in nexus cadat, 60
 manum hanc remittam. prohibeas, genitor, licet ;
 regam abnuentem, dirigam inviti gradum.
 in plana tendis? vado ; praerupta appetis ?
 non obsto, sed praecedo ; quo vis utere
 duce me : duobus omnis eligitur via.
 perire sine me non potes, mecum potes.
 hic alta rupes arduo surgit iugo
 spectatque longe spatia subiecti maris,
 vis hanc petamus? nudus hic pendet silex,
 hic scissa tellus faucibus ruptis hiat ; 70
 vis hanc petamus? hic rapax torrens cadit
 partesque lapsi montis exesas rotat ;
 in hunc ruamus? dum prior, quo vis eo.
 non deprecor, non hortor. extingui cupis
 votumque, genitor, maximum mors est tibi ?
 si moreris, antecedo ; si vivis, sequor.
 sed flecte mentem, pectus antiquum advoca
 victasque magno robore aerumnas doma ;
 resiste ; tantis in malis vinci mori est.

PHOENISSAE

ANTIGONE

No force, my father, shall loose my hold of thee ; no one shall ever tear me from thy side. The sovereignty of Labdacus' noble house and all its riches—let my brothers fight over these ; the best part of my father's mighty kingdom is my own, my father's self. Him no brother shall take from me, not he¹ who holds the Theban sceptre by stolen right, not he² who is leading the Argive hosts ; no, though Jove should rend the universe with his thunders, and his bolt fall 'twixt our embrace, I will not let go my hands. Thou mayst forbid me, father ; I'll guide thee against thy will, I'll direct thine unwilling feet. Wouldst go to the level plain ? I go. Wouldst seek the craggy mountains ? I oppose not, but I go before. Whither thou wilt, use me as guide ; by two will all paths be chosen. Without me thou canst not perish ; with me thou canst. Here rises a cliff, lofty, precipitous, and looks out upon the long reaches of the underlying sea ; wouldst have us seek it ? Here is a bare rock overhanging, here the riven earth yawns with gaping jaws ; shall we go here ? Here a raging torrent falls and rolls along worn fragments of the fallen mountains ; shall we plunge to this ? Where'er thou wilt, I go, so it be first. I neither oppose nor urge. Art eager to be destroyed, and is death, father, thy highest wish ? If thou diest, I go before thee ; if thou livest, I follow. But change thy purpose ; summon up thine old-time courage ; conquer thy sorrows and with all thy might be master of them, resist them ; amidst such woes, to be conquered is to die.

¹ Eteocles.

² Polynices.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

OEDIPVS

Vnde in nefanda specimen egregium domo? 80
 unde ista generi virgo dissimilis suo?
 Fortuna, credis? aliquis est ex me pius?
 non esset umquam, fata bene novi mea,
 nisi ut noceret. ipsa se in leges novas
 natura vertit; regeret in fontem citas
 revolutus undas amnis, et noctem afferet
 Phoebea lampas, Hesperus faciet diem;
 ut ad miserias aliquid accedat meas,
 pii quoque erimus. unica Oedipodae est salus,
 non esse salvum. liceat ulcisci patrem 90
 adhuc inultum; dextra quid cessas iners
 exigere poenas? quidquid exactum est adhuc,
 matri dedisti. mitte genitoris manum,
 animosa virgo; funus extendis meum
 longasque vivi ducis exequias patris.
 aliquando terra corpus invisum tege;
 peccas honesta mente, pietatem vocas
 patrem insepultum trahere. qui cogit mori
 nolentem in aequo est quique properantem impedit;
 occidere est vitare cupientem mori,¹ 100
 nec tamen in aequo est; alterum gravius reor.
 malo imperari quam eripi mortem mihi.
 desiste coepto, virgo; ius vitae ac necis
 meae penes me est. regna deserui libens,
 regnum mei retineo. si fida es comes,
 ensem parenti trade, sed notum nece
 ensem paterna. tradis? an nati tenent
 cum regno et illum? facinore ubicumque est opus,
 ibi sit—relinquo; natus hunc habeat meus,

¹ *Leo deletes this line.*

PHOENISSAE

OEDIPUS

Whence this rare type in a house so impious?
Whence this maid so unlike her race? Is it fortune,
thinkst thou? Has any dutiful child sprung from
me? Never would it be so, for well I know my fate,
save for harmful ends. Nature herself has reversed
her laws; now will the river turn and bear its swift
waters backward to their source, Phoebus' torch
will bring in the night, and Hesperus herald the
day; and, that something be added to my woes, I, too,
shall become holy. For Oedipus the only salvation
is not to be saved. Let me avenge my father, till
now unavenged; why, sluggish hand, dost thou hesi-
tate to exact penalty? All thou hast as yet exacted,
to my mother hast thou given. Let go thy father's
hand, courageous girl; thou dost but protract my
burying, and prolong the funeral rites of a living
sire. Bury in the earth at last this hateful body;
thou wrongst me, though with kind intent, and
thou deemst it piety to drag along an unburied
father. 'Tis all one—to force him who shrinks from
death, and stay him who seeks to die; 'tis the same
as killing to forbid death to him who wants it; and
yet 'tis not all one; the second course I count the
worse. Rather would I have death enforced than
snatched from me. Desist, girl, from thine attempt;
the right to live or die is in my own hands. The
sovereignty over my realm have I yielded gladly;
the sovereignty over myself I keep. If thou art
true comrade, hand thy sire a sword, but be it the
sword made famous by his father's slaughter. Dost
give it? or hold my sons that, too, together with my
kingdom? Wherever is need of crime, there let it be
—I relinquish it; let my son have it—nay, both my

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

sed uterque. flammæ potius et vastum aggerem 110
 compone; in altos ipse me immittam rogos,
 haerebo ad ignes, funebri abscondar strue;
 pectusque solvam durum et in cinerem dabo
 hoc quidquid in me vivit. ubi saevum est mare?
 duc ubi sit altis prorutum saxis iugum,
 ubi torva rapidus ducat Ismenos vada.¹ 116
 si dux es, illuc ire morituro placet, 118
 ubi sedit alta rupe semifero dolos
 Sphinx ore nectens. dirige huc gressus pedum, 120
 hic siste patrem. dira ne sedes vacet,
 monstrum repone maius. hoc saxum insidens
 obscura nostrae verba fortunæ loquar,
 quæ nemo solvat. quisquis Assyrio loca
 possessa regi scindis et Cadmi nemus
 serpente notum, sacra quo Dirce latet,
 supplex adoras, quisquis Eurotan bibis
 Spartamque fratre nobilem gemino colis,
 quique Elin et Parnason et Boeotios
 colonus agros uberis tondes soli, 130
 advertè mentem—sæva Thebarum lues
 luctifica caecis verba committens modis
 quid simile posuit? quid tam inextricabile?
 avi gener patrisque rivalis sui,
 frater suorum liberum et fratrum parens;
 uno avia partu liberos peperit viro,
 sibi et nepotes. monstra quis tanta explicat?
 ego ipse, victæ spolia qui Sphingis tuli,
 haerebo fati tardus interpres mei.

* * * * *

¹ *Leo deletes line 117: duc ubi ferae sunt, ubi fretum, ubi praeceps locus.*

² *A speech of Antigone may have dropped out at this point, or Oedipus may hark back to the earlier speech of Antigone*

PHOENISSAE

sons. Flames, if thou prefer, and a huge mound prepare; myself, will I fling me on the lofty pyre, embrace the flames, and hide in the funeral pile. There will I set free this stubborn soul and give up to ashes this—all that is left of me alive. Where is the raging sea? Lead me where some beetling crag juts out with its high, rocky cliff, or where swift Ismenus rolls his wild waters. If thou art my guide, thither would I go to die where on a high cliff the Sphinx once sat and wove crafty speech with her half-bestial lips. Guide my feet thither, there set thy father. Let not that dreadful seat be empty, but place thereon a greater monster. On that rock will I sit and propound the dark riddle of my fate which none may answer. All ye who till the fields once ruled by the Assyrian king,¹ who suppliant worship in the grove of Cadmus for the serpent famed, where sacred Dirce lies; all ye who drink of the Eurotas, who dwell in Sparta for its twin brethren² famous; ye farmers who reap Elis and Parnassus and Boeotia's fertile fields, give ear. That dire pest of Thebes, who wrapped death-dealing words in puzzling measures, what riddle like this did she ever propound? What maze so bewildering? *He was his grandfather's son-in-law and his father's rival, brother of his children and father of his brothers; at one birth the grandmother bore children to her husband and grandchildren to herself.* Who can unfold a coil so monstrous? Even I, who gained spoils from the conquered Sphinx, shall prove but slow in unriddling mine own doom.

* * * * *

¹ Cadmus. ² Castor and Pollux.

after a dramatic pause. Leo holds that the hiatus is, as Swoboda thinks, left by the poet himself.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Quid perdis ultra verba? quid pectus ferum 140
 mollire temptas precibus? hoc animo sedet
 effundere hanc cum morte luctantem diu
 animam et tenebras petere; nam scelerei haec meo
 parum alta nox est; Tartaro condi iuvat,
 et si quid ultra Tartarum est; tandem libet
 quod olim oportet. morte prohiberi haud queo.
 ferrum negabis? noxias lapsu vias
 cludes et artis colla laqueis inseri
 prohibebis? herbas quae ferunt letum auferes?
 quid ista tandem cura proficiet tua? 150
 ubique mors est. optume hoc cavet deus:
 eripere vitam nemo non homini potest,
 at nemo mortem; mille ad hanc aditus patent.
 nil quaero. dextra noster et nuda solet
 bene animus uti—dextra, nunc toto impetu,
 toto dolore, viribus totis veni.
 non destino unum vulneri nostro locum—
 totus nocens sum; qua voles mortem exige.
 effringe pectus corque tot scelerum capax
 evelle, totos viscerum nuda sinus. 160
 fractum incitatis ictibus guttur sonet
 laceraeque fixis unguibus venae fluant.
 aut dirige iras quo soles; haec vulnera
 rescissa multo sanguine ac tabe inriga,
 hac extrahe animam duram, inexpugnabilem.
 et tu, parens, ubicumque poenarum arbiter
 adstas mearum—non ego hoc tantum scelus
 ulla expiari credidi poena satis
 umquam, nec ista morte contentus fui,
 nec me redemi parte; membratim tibi 170

PHOENISSAE

140 Why dost thou waste further words? Why dost try to soften my hard heart with prayers? My will is fixed to pour forth this life which has long been struggling with death, and to seek the nether darkness; for this deep night is not deep enough for my crime; in Tartarus would I be buried, or if there be aught deeper than Tartarus; 'tis pleasing to do at last what long ago I should have done. I cannot be kept from death. Wilt withhold the sword? Wilt bar paths where I might fall to death? Wilt keep my neck from the choking noose? Wilt remove death-bringing herbs? What, pray, will that care of thine accomplish? Death is everywhere. This hath God with wisdom excellent provided: of life anyone can rob a man, but of death no one; to this a thousand doors lie open. I ask for naught. This right hand, though bare, my soul hath practice to use well—O hand of mine, come now with all thy force, with all thy smarting rage, with all thy might. Not one spot only do I mark out for the wound—I am all sin; inflict death where thou wilt. Break through my breast and tear out my heart, which has room for so many crimes; lay bare my vitals, every nook; rain resounding blows upon my neck until it break, and let my veins flow, torn by my gouging fingers. Or aim thy mad attack at the accustomed place;¹ these wounds reopen; bathe them in streams of blood and gore; through this passage drag out my stubborn life, impregnable. And do thou, my father, where'er thou standst as arbiter of my sufferings—I have never deemed that this grievous crime of mine was sufficiently atoned by any suffering, nor have I been content with such death as this, nor have I bought my pardon with a portion of myself; limb by limb

¹ His eyes.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

perire volui—debitum tandem exige.
 nunc solvo poenas, tunc tibi inferias dedi.
 ades atque inertem dexteram introrsus preme
 magisque merge; timida tunc parvo caput
 libavit haustu vixque cupientes sequi
 eduxit oculos. haeret etiam nunc mihi
 ille animus, haeret, cum recusantem manum
 pressere vultus. audies verum, Oedipus:
 minus eruisti lumina audacter tua,
 quam praestitisti. nunc manum cerebro indue; 180
 hac parte mortem perage qua coepi mori.

ANTIGONA

Pauca, o parens magnanime, miserandae precor
 ut verba natae mente placata audias.
 non te ut reducam veteris ad speciem domus
 habitumque regni flore pollentem inclito
 peto aut ut iras, temporum haut ipsa mora
 fractas, remisso pectore ac placido feras;
 at hoc decebat roboris tanti virum,
 non esse sub dolore nec victum malis
 dare terga; non est, ut putas, virtus, pater 190
 timere vitam, sed malis ingentibus
 obstare nec se vertere ac retro dare.
 qui fata proculcavit ac vitae bona
 proiecit atque abscidit et casus suos
 oneravit ipse, cui deo nullo est opus,
 quare ille mortem cupiat aut quare petat?
 utrumque timidi est; nemo contempsit mori
 qui concupivit. cuius haut ultra mala
 exire possunt, in loco tuto est situs.

PHOENISSAE

have I desired to die for thee—at length exact the debt. Now am I paying my penalty; before, I did but offer sacrifices to thy ghost. Come to my aid, help me to plunge my nerveless hand deep down and deeper; timidly, aforetime, and with but a meagre outpouring did it sprinkle my head, when it scarce drew forth the eyes that yearned to follow. Even now this soul of mine halts, yes halts, when my face has bent downward to my shrinking hands. Thou shalt hear the truth, Oedipus: less boldly didst thou pluck out thine eyes than thou didst undertake to do. Thrust now thy hand e'en to the brain; through that door whereby I began to die fulfil my death.

ANTIGONE

Father, great-souled, I beseech thee that with calm mind thou listen to some few words of thy wretched daughter. I seek not to lead thee back again to the splendours of thine ancient home, and to thy royal estate, flourishing in power and fame; nor do I ask that thou bear with calm and peaceful soul that tempest of passion which has not been allayed even by lapse of time; and yet 'twere fitting that one so stalwart should not yield to pain nor turn in flight, by disaster overcome. It is not manhood, father, as thou deemst it, to shrink from life, but to make stand against mighty ills and neither turn nor yield. He who has trodden destiny under foot, who has torn off and thrown away life's blessings, and himself piled up the burden of his woes, who has no need of God, wherefore should he desire death, or wherefore seek it? Each is a coward's act; no one despises death who yet yearns for it. He whose misfortunes can no further go, is safely lodged.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Quis iam deorum, velle fac, quicquam potest 200
 malis tuis adicere? iam nec tu potes
 nisi hoc, ut esse te putes dignum nece.
 non es nec ulla pectus hoc culpa attigit.
 et hoc magis te, genitor, insontem voca,
 quod innocens es dis quoque invitis. quid est
 quod te efferarit, quod novos suffixerit
 stimulos dolori? quid te in infernas agit
 sedes, quid ex his pellit? ut careas die?
 cares. ut altis nobilem muris domum
 patriamque fugias? patria tibi vivo perit. 210
 natos fugis matremque? ab aspectu omnium
 fortuna te summovit, et quidquid potest
 auferre cuiquam mors, tibi hoc vita abstulit.
 regni tumultus? turba fortunae prior
 abcessit a te iussa—quem, genitor, fugis?

OEDIPVS

Me fugio, fugio conscium scelerum omnium
 pectus, manumque hanc fugio et hoc caelum et deos;
 et dira fugio scelera quae feci innocens.¹
 ego hoc solum, frugifera quo surgit Ceres,
 premo? has ego auras ore pestifero traho? 220
 ego laticis haustu satior aut ullo fruor
 almae parentis munere? ego castam manum
 nefandus incestificus execrabilis
 attrecto? ego ullus aure concipio sonos,
 per quos parentis nomen aut nati audiam?
 utinam quidem rescindere has quirem vias

¹ *Leo deletes this line.*

PHOENISSAE

²⁰⁰ Who now of the gods, granting he wills it so, can add aught to thy misfortunes? Now not even canst thou add aught save this, to deem thyself worthy of death. Thou art not worthy, nor has any taint of guilt touched thy heart. And for this all the more, father, call thyself guiltless; for thou art guiltless, though even the gods willed otherwise. What is it which has so maddened thee, which has goaded thy grief afresh? What drives thee to the infernal regions? What forces thee out of these? That thou mayst avoid the light of day? Thou dost avoid it. That thou mayst flee thy noble palace with its high walls, and thy native land? Thy native land, though thou still livest, is dead to thee. Dost flee from thy sons and mother? From the sight of all men fate has removed thee, and whatever death can take away from any man, this has life taken from thee. Wouldst avoid the tumult around a throne? They who once in prosperity thronged around thee, at thy command have left thee. Whom dost thou flee, my father?

OEDIPUS

Myself I flee; I flee my heart conscious of all crimes; I flee this hand, this sky, the gods; I flee the dread crimes which I committed, though in innocence. Do I tread this earth from which wholesome grain springs up? This air do I inhale with pestilential lips? Does water quench my thirst, or do I enjoy any gift of kindly mother earth? Do I, impious, incestuous, accursed, touch thy pure hand? Do my ears take in sound by which I may still hear the name of parent or of son? I would indeed that I might destroy these paths and might

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

manibusque adactis omne qua voces meant
 aditusque verbis tramite angusto patet
 eruere possem ; nata, iam sensum tui,
 quae pars meorum es criminum, infelix pater 230
 fugissem.

Inhaeret ac recrudesceat nefas
 subinde, et aures ingerunt quidquid mihi
 donastis, oculi. cur caput tenebris grave
 non mitto ad umbras Ditis aeternas? quid hic
 manes meos detineo? quid terram gravo
 mixtusque superis erro? quid restat mali?
 regnum parentes liberi, virtus quoque
 et ingeni sollertis eximium decus
 periire, cuncta sors mihi infesta abstulit.
 lacrimae supererant—has quoque eripui mihi. 240

Absiste! nullas animus admittit preces
 novamque poenam sceleribus quaerit parem.
 et esse par quae poterit? infanti quoque
 decreta mors est. fata quis tam tristia
 sortitus umquam? videram nondum diem
 uterique nondum solveram clausi moras,
 et iam timebar. protinus quosdam editos
 nox occupavit et novae luci abstulit;
 mors me antecessit; aliquis intra viscera
 materna letum praecoquis fati tulit; 250
 sed numquid et peccavit? abstrusum, abditum
 dubiumque an essem sceleris infandi reum
 deus egit; illo teste damnavit parens
 calidoque teneros transiit ferro pedes
 et in alta nemora pabulum misit feris

PHOENISSAE

with my hands driven deep pluck out every part where voices enter and where a narrow passage gives access to the words of men; then, daughter, thy wretched father would have escaped all consciousness of thee, who art part and parcel of my crimes.

²³¹ My guilt sticks fast within me, threatens each moment to break out afresh, and my ears pour in upon me all that you, my eyes, have bestowed.¹ Why do I not plunge this life, weighted with gloom, down to the everlasting shades of Dis? Why here do I detain my ghost? Why do I burden the earth and wander amongst the living? What evil is left for me? My kingdom, parents, children, my manhood, too, and the illustrious fame of my cunning wit—all these have perished, all have been stripped from me by hostile chance. Tears were still left me—of these, too, have I robbed myself.

²⁴¹ Stand off! My soul will not listen to any prayers and seeks some new punishment to match its crimes. And what match can there be? Even in my infancy I was doomed to death. Who ever drew lot so sad? I had not yet seen the light, was still imprisoned in the womb, and already I was held in fear. Some there are whom straightway at birth night hath seized upon and snatched from their first dawn; but on me death came ere birth. Some, while still within the mother's womb, have suffered untimely death; but have they sinned also? Hidden away, confined, my very being in doubt, the god made me guilty of a charge unspeakable. On that charge my sire condemned me, spitted my slender ankles on hot iron, and sent me to the deep forest as prey

¹ Oedipus paradoxically deems that his eyes in their blindness bestow on him the boon of avoiding sight; but his ears still bring Antigone to his consciousness.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

avibusque saevis quas Cithaeron noxius
 cruore saepe regio tinctas alit.
 sed quem deus damnavit, abiecit pater,
 mors quoque refugit. praestiti Delphis fidem ;
 genitorem adortus impia stravi nece. 260
 hoc alia pietas redimet : occidi patrem,
 sed matrem—amavi. proloqui hymenaeum pudet
 taedasque nostras. has quoque invitum pati
 te coge poenas ; facinus ignotum effærum
 inusitatum effare quod populi horreant,
 quod esse factum nulla non aetas neget,
 quod parricidam pudeat : in patrios toros
 tuli paterno sanguine aspersas manus
 scelerisque pretium maius accepi scelus.

Leve est paternum facinus ; in thalamos meos 270
 deducta mater, ne parum sceleris foret,
 fecunda—nullum crimen hoc maius potest
 natura ferre. si quod etiamnum est tamen,
 qui facere possunt dedimus. abieci necis
 pretium paternae sceptrum et hoc iterum manus
 armavit alias ; optime regni mei
 fatum ipse novi ; nemo sine sacro feret
 illud cruore. magna praesagit mala
 paternus animus. iacta iam sunt semina
 cladis futurae ; spernitur pacti fides. 280
 hic occupato cedere imperio negat,
 ius ille et icti foederis testes deos
 invocat et Argos exul atque urbes movet
 Graias in arma. non levis fessis venit
 ruina Thebis ; tela flammae vulnera

PHOENISSAE

for wild beasts and savage birds which baleful Cithaeron, oft stained with royal blood, doth breed. Yet him whom God condemned, whom his sire cast away, hath death also shunned. I kept faith with Delphi; I assailed my father and with impious death-stroke slew him. For this another act of piety will atone; I killed my father, true, but my mother—I loved. Oh, 'tis shame to speak of wedlock and my marriage torches. But this punishment also force thyself to bear though against thy will; proclaim thy crime, unheard of, bestial, unexampled, at which nations would shudder, which no age would believe ever befell, which would put even a parricide to shame: *into my father's bed I bore hands smeared with my father's blood, and there, as the reward of my crime, I did worse crime.*

²⁷⁰ A trivial sin is my father's murder; my mother, brought to my marriage chamber, that my guilt might be complete, conceived—no greater crime than this can nature brook. And yet, if there is even now worse crime, we have given the world those who can commit it. I have flung away the sceptre, price of my father's murder, and this, again, has armed other hands. I myself best know my kingdom's destiny; no one unstained by sacred blood shall bear sway there. Dire misfortunes my father-soul presages. Already are sown the seeds of calamity to come; the plighted pact¹ is scorned. The one will not retire from the throne he has usurped; the other proclaims his right, calls on the gods to witness the broken bond, and, wandering in exile, is rousing Argos and the cities of Greece to arms. 'Tis no light destruction that is coming on weary Thebes; weapons, flames, wounds

¹ *i. e.* between Eteocles and Polynices.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

instant et istis si quod est maius malum,—
ut esse genitos nemo non ex me sciat.

ANTIGONA

Si nulla, genitor, causa vivendi tibi est,
haec una abunde est, ut pater natos regas
graviter furentes. tu impii belli minas 290
avertere unus tuque vaecordes potes
inhibere iuvenes, civibus pacem dare,
patriae quietem, foederi laeso fidem.
vitam tibi ipse si negas, multis negas.

OEDIPVS

Illis parentis ullus aut aequi est amor,
avidis cruoris imperi armorum doli,
diris, scelestis, breviter ut dicam—meis?
certant in omne facinus et pensi nihil
ducunt, ubi ipsos ira praecipites agit,
nefasque nullum per nefas nati putant. 300
non patris illos tangit afflicti pudor,
non patria; regno pectus attonitum furit.
scio quo ferantur, quanta moliri parent,
ideoque leti quaero maturam viam
morique propero, dum in domo nemo est mea
nocentior me. nata, quid genibus meis
fles advoluta? quid prece indomitum domas?
unum hoc habet fortuna quo possim capi,
invictus aliis; sola tu affectus potes
mollire duros, sola pietatem in domo 310
docere nostra. nil grave aut miserum est mihi
quod te sciam voluisse; tu tantum impera;

PHOENISSAE

press round her and a greater ill than these, if greater there be,—that all may know I have begotten sons.

ANTIGONE

If, my father, thou hast no other cause for living, this one is more than enough, that as father thou mayst restrain thy sons from their fatal frenzy. Thou alone canst avert the threats of impious war, canst check these mad youths, give peace to our citizens, rest to our land, faith to the broken pact. If life to thyself thou dost deny, to many dost thou deny it.

OEDIPUS

Have they any love for father or for right, they who lust for blood, power, arms, treachery, they the cruel, the accursed,—in brief, *my* sons? They vie one with the other in every crime, and have no scruple where passion drives them headlong; impiously born, they count nothing impious. No feeling for their stricken father, none for their fatherland, moves them; their hearts are mad with lust of empire. I know well whither they tend, what monstrous deeds they are planning, and for this cause I seek an early path to destruction, rush on my death, while still there is none in my house more guilty than myself. Daughter, why dost thou fall weeping at my knees? Why seekst with prayer to conquer my unconquerable resolve? This is the one means by which fortune can take me captive, invincible in all else; thou only canst soften my hard heart, thou only canst teach piety in our house. Nothing is heavy or grievous to me which I know thou hast desired. Do thou but command; I,

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

hic Oedipus Aegaea transnabit freta
iubente te, flammisque quas Siculo vomit
de monte tellus igneos volvens globos,
excipiet ore seque serpenti offeret,
quae saeva furto nemoris Herculeo furit;
iubente te praebebit alitibus iecur—
iubente te vel vivet.

PHOENISSAE

Oedipus, at thy bidding will swim the Aegean sea,
will drink the flames which earth from the Sicilian
mountains belches forth, pouring down balls of fire,
will beard the dragon still savagely raging in the
grove at the theft of Hercules; at thy bidding will
offer my liver to the birds—at thy bidding e'en will
live.

*The first episode seems to be complete here, except for the
commenting chorus which would naturally follow.
OEDIPUS has temporarily yielded to his daughter's
will.*

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

NUNTIUS¹

* * * * *

Exemplum in ingens regia stirpe editum 320
 Thebae paventes arma fraterna invocant
 rogantque tectis arceas patriis faces.
 non sunt minae, iam propius accessit malum ;
 nam regna repetens frater et pactas vices
 in bella cunctos Graeciae populos agit.
 septena muros castra Thebanos premunt.
 succurre, prohibe pariter et bellum et scelus.

OEDIPVS

Ego ille sum qui scelera committi vetem
 et abstineri sanguine a caro manus
 doceam ? magister iuris et amoris pii 330
 ego sum ? meorum factorum exempla appetunt,
 me nunc secuntur ; laudo et agnosco libens,
 exhortor, aliquid ut patre hoc dignum gerant.
 agite, o propago cara, generosam indolem

¹ *Leo, with Eψ, assigns this speech to Antigone: Richter, with A, gives it to Nuntius.*

PHOENISSAE

The following passage fittingly opens the second episode. Although some editors would assign it to ANTIGONE, it seems more properly to belong to a messenger who has just arrived, for the double reason that it gives fresher information from Thebes than ANTIGONE would naturally possess; and that OEDIPUS, after the speech to his daughter with which the previous episode ended, would hardly address to her as rough a reply as he uses in his next speech.

MESSENGER

Thee, sprung from regal ancestry to be our great exemplar, Thebes calls to her aid, trembling at fratricidal strife, and prays that thou fend off from thy country's homes the brands of war. These are no mere threats; already is destruction at our gates; for the brother¹ demands his turn to rule according to the bond, and is marshalling to war all the peoples of Greece. Seven bands are encamped against the walls of Thebes. Haste to our aid; prevent in one act both war and crime.

OEDIPUS

Am I one to forbid crime and teach hands to refrain from the blood of loved ones? Am I a teacher of righteousness and love of kin? 'Tis from my crimes they seek their pattern, 'tis my example they follow now. I praise them and gladly acknowledge them as sons; I urge them on to do something worthy of such a father. Go on, dear offspring, prove your noble breeding by your deeds; surpass

¹ Polynices.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

probate factis, gloriam ac laudes meas
 superate et aliquid facite propter quod patrem
 adhuc iuuet vixisse. facietis, scio :
 sic estis orti. scelere defungi haut levi,
 haut usitato tanta nobilitas potest.
 ferte arma, facibus petite penetrales deos . 340
 frugemque flamma metite natalis soli,
 miscete cuncta, rapite in exitium omnia,
 discite passim moenia, in planum date,
 templis deos obruite, maculatos lares
 conflante, ab imo tota considat domus ;
 urbs concremetur—primus a thalamis meis
 incipiat ignis.

ANTIGONA

Mitte violentum impetum
 doloris ac te publica exorent mala,
 auctorque placidae liberis pacis veni.

OEDIPVS

Vides modestae deditum menti senem 350
 placidaeque amantem pacis ad partes vocas ?
 tumet animus ira, fervet immensus dolor,
 maiusque quam quod casus et iuvenum furor
 conatur aliquid cupio. non satis est adhuc
 civile bellum ; frater in fratrem ruat ;
 nec hoc sat est ; quod debet, ut fiat nefas
 de more nostro, quod meos deceat toros,
 date arma matri. nemo me ex his eruat
 silvis ; latebo rupis exesae cavo
 aut sepe densa corpus abstrusum tegam. 360
 hinc aucupabor verba rumoris vagi
 et saeva fratrum bella, quod possum, audiam.

PHOENISSAE

my fame and praises and do some deed whereat your father may rejoice that he has lived till now. You will do it, I know: of such mind were you born; no trivial, no common crime can such high birth perform. Forward your arms! With torches have at your household gods; reap with fire the ripened grain of your native land; confound all things, hurry all to destruction; on all sides throw down the walls, raze them to the ground; bury the gods beneath their own temples; the defiled deities of your hearths melt in the fire, and let our whole house from its foundations fall; let the city be consumed—and be my marriage chamber the first to feel the flames.

ANTIGONE

Give o'er this raging storm of grief; let the public calamities prevail with thee; go to thy sons as the adviser of calm peace.

OEDIPUS

Seest thou an old man given to gentle thoughts? dost summon me as lover of calm peace to take her part? My heart swells with rage, my smarting grief burns measureless, and I long for some crime more dreadful than what the casual madness of young men attempts. Not enough for me is war that as yet is between citizens; let brother rush on brother. Nor is that enough; that, as is due, a horror may be wrought after my fashion, one that may befit my marriage-couch, arm ye your mother. Let no one drag me from these woods! I'll lurk in the cliffs' wave-worn caves or hide away in the thick underbrush. Here will I catch at vague rumours and hear of the dire strife of brothers as I may.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

IOCASTA

Felix Agaue! facinus horrendum manu,
 qua fecerat, gestavit et spoliū tulit
 cruenta nati maenas in partes dati;
 fecit scelus, sed misera non ultro suo
 sceleri occurrīt. hoc leve est quod sum nocens;
 feci nocentes. hoc quoque etiā nunc leve est;
 peperī nocentes. derat aerumnis meis,
 ut et hostem amarem. bruma ter posuit nives 370
 et tertia iam falce decubuit Ceres,
 ut exul errat natus et patria caret
 profugusque regum auxilia Graiorum rogat.
 gener est Adrasti, cuius imperio mare
 quod scindit Isthmos regitur; hic gentes suas
 septemque secum regna ad auxilium trahit
 genero. quid optem quidve decernam haut scio.
 regnum reposit; causa repetentis bona est,
 mala sic petentis. vota quae faciam parens?
 utrimque natum video; nil possum pie 380
 pietate salva facere. quodcumque alteri
 optabo nato fiet alterius malo.
 sed utrumque quamvis diligam affectu pari,
 quo causa melior sorsque deterior trahit
 inclināt animus semper infirmo favens.
 miseros magis fortuna conciliat suis.

¹ *i.e.* Polynices, who has now become a public foe of Thebes.

PHOENISSAE

It is possible that the following fragments belong to another play. The presence of ANTIGONE in Thebes, notwithstanding her resolve to remain with her father, would strengthen this view.

JOCASTA

Fortunate Agave! she carried her ghastly crime in the hand that wrought it, and as a bloody maenad bore spoil of her dismembered son. She wrought a crime, but not wantonly did the wretched woman go to meet her crime. 'Tis but a trivial thing that I am guilty; I have made others guilty. This, too, bad as it is, is trivial; I have borne guilty sons. 'Twas as yet lacking to my woes that I should love even my enemy.¹ Thrice have the snows of winter fallen, three harvests now have yielded to the sickle, while my son in exile wanders, expatriate, and as an outcast begs aid from the Greek kings. And now he is son-in-law of Adrastus, whose sway is over the waters which Isthmus cleaves, and who brings with him his own tribes and seven kingdoms to the aid of his son-in-law. What I should pray for, or which side espouse, I know not. He demands back the kingdom; to reseek it is an honest plea, but ill to seek it thus. What should be a mother's prayer? On either side I see a son; I can do nothing piously that is not impious. Whatever blessing I shall ask for one, to the other will prove a curse. But, though I love both equally, whither the better cause and the worse fortune draw, my heart inclines, which always takes the weaker side. Misfortune knits the wretched closer to their kin.

[*Enter MESSENGER in haste.*]

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

SATELLES

Regina, dum tu flebiles questus cies
terisque tempus, saeva nudatis adest
acies in armis ; aera iam bellum cient
aquilaque pugnam signifer mota vocat ; 390
septena reges bella dispositi parant,
animo pari Cadmea progenies subit,
cursu citato miles hinc atque hinc ruit.
viden ? atra nubes pulvere abscondit diem
fumoque similes campus in caelum erigit
nebulas, equestri fracta quas tellus pede
summittit et, si vera metuentes vident,
infesta fulgent signa, subrectis adest
frons prima telis, aurea clarum nota
nomen ducum vexilla praescriptum ferunt. 400
i, redde amorem fratribus, pacem omnibus,
et impia arma matris oppositu impedi.

ANTIGONA

Perge, o parens, perge et cita celerem gradum,
compesce tela, fratribus ferrum excute,
nudum inter enses pectus infestos tene !
aut solve bellum, mater, aut prima excipe.

IOCASTA

Ibo, ibo et armis obvium opponam caput,
stabo inter arma ; petere qui fratrem volet,
petat ante matrem. tela, qui fuerit pius,
rogante ponat matre ; qui non est pius 410
incipiat a me. fervidos iuvenes anus
tenebo, nullup teste me fiet nefas ;
376

PHOENISSAE

MESSENGER

O queen, whilst thou art uttering tearful complaints and wasting time, the fierce battle-line with bared swords is at hand; the trumpets' blare sounds to war, the standard-bearer with eagle advanced signals for contest; the kings, each in his place, are setting their sevenfold battle in array, while with equal courage Cadmus' race advances; at the double-quick the soldiers on either side rush on. Dost see them? A dark cloud of dust hides the day; the plain lifts heavenward dense, smoke-like billows which the earth, beaten by horses' hoofs, sends up; and, if terror-stricken eyes see aught aright, hostile standards are gleaming there; the front rank, with lifted spears, is close at hand, and the battle-flags have the leaders' names clearly limned in golden characters. Go, restore love to brothers, peace to us all, and let a mother be the barrier to stay unholy arms.

ANTIGONE

Hasten, mother, hasten on flying feet! hold back their weapons, strike the steel from my brothers' hands, set thy bared breast between their hostile swords! Either stop the war, mother, or be the first to feel it.

JOCASTA

I go, I go, and my own life will I set against their arms; I'll stand between their arms; and he who shall wish to attack his brother must attack his mother first. Let the more filial lay down his arms at a mother's prayer; let the unfilial begin with me. These fiery youths, old though I be, will I restrain; there shall be no impious crime committed in my sight; or, if

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

aut si aliquod et me teste committi potest,
non fiet unum.

ANTIGONA

Signa collatis micant
vicina signis, clamor hostilis fremit ;
scelus in propinquo est ; occupa, mater, preces.
et ecce motos fletibus credas meis,
sic agmen armis segne compositis venit.

SATELLES

Procedit acies tarda, sed properant duces.

IOCASTA

Quis me procellae turbine insano vehens 420
volucer per auras ventus aetherias aget ?
quae Sphinx vel atra nube subtexens diem
Stymphalis avidis praepetem pennis feret ?
aut quae per altas aeris rapiet vias
Harpyia saevi regis observans famem
et inter acies proiciet raptam duas ?

SATELLES

Vadit furenti similis aut etiam furit.
sagitta qualis Parthica velox manu
excussa fertur, qualis insano ratis
premente vento rapitur, aut qualis cadit 430
delapsa caelo stella, cum stringens polum
rectam citatis ignibus rumpit viam,
attonita cursu fugit et binas statim
diduxit acies. victa materna prece
haesere bella, iamque in alternam necem

PHOENISSAE

e'en in my sight one crime can be committed, it shall not be only one.

[*Exit towards the scene of conflict.*]

ANTIGONE [*looking after her*]

The opposing standards gleam face to face, the hostile battle-cry is sounding, the crime is near at hand; forestall it, mother, with thy prayers! And see, you might deem them moved by tears of mine, so sluggishly moves the line with weapons held at rest.

MESSENGER

The line advances slowly, but the leaders haste.

JOCASTA [*hurrying on*]

What swift wind with the storm-blast's mad whirl will carry me through the air of heaven? What Sphinx, what Stymphalian bird, with its dark cloud veiling day, will speed me headlong on eager wings? Or what Harpy, hovering over the barbarian king's¹ famished board, will hurry me along the highways of the air, hurry and fling me 'twixt the two battle-lines?

MESSENGER [*looking after her*]

She goes like a mad thing, or is mad indeed. Swift as a dart hurled by some Parthian's hand, or as a vessel driven on by wild, raging winds, or as a star, dislodged from the firmament, when, sweeping o'er the heavens, with swift fire it cleaves its unswerving way, so has the frenzied queen sped on and at once has parted the two battle-lines. Stayed by a mother's prayer the battle hangs; and now the bands, eager to

¹ See Index *s.v.* "Phineus."

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

illinc et hinc miscere cupientes manus
 librata dextra tela suspensa tenent.
 paci favetur, omnium ferrum iacet
 cessatve tectum; vibrat in fratrum manu.
 laniata canas mater ostendit comas, 440
 rogat abnuentes, inrigat fletu genas.
 negare matri, qui diu dubitat, potest.

IOCASTA

In me arma et ignes vertite, in me omnis ruat
 unam iuventus quaeque ab Inachio venit
 animosa muro quaeque Thebana ferox
 descendit arce; civis atque hostis simul
 hunc petite ventrem, qui dedit fratres viro.
 haec membra passim spargite ac divellite.
 ego utrumque pepererim—ponitis ferrum ocus?
 an dico et ex quo? dexteras matri date, 450
 date dum piaae sunt. error invitos adhuc
 fecit nocentes, omne Fortunae fuit
 peccantis in nos crimen; hoc primum nefas
 inter scientes geritur. in vestra manu est,
 utrum velitis: sancta si pietas placet,
 donate matri pacem¹; si placuit scelus,
 maius paratum est—media se opponit parens.
 proinde bellum tollite aut belli moram.

¹ So *Leo and Richter*, with ω : matri pacta *L. Müller*: date arma matri saeva *Tachau*: domate Martem pace *M. Müller*.

PHOENISSAE

join from both sides in mutual slaughter, hold their swords poised in lifted hands. They incline to peace, the swords of all are lowered, or idly sheathed; but they still quiver in the brothers' hands. The mother shows them her hoary hair, tearing it, beseeching them as they stubbornly refuse, and floods her cheeks with weeping. Who wavers long may say his mother "No!"

[*The scene shifts to the field before Thebes, between the battle-lines.*]

JOCASTA

[*Kneeling between her two hostile sons.*]

Against me turn your arms and torches; against me only let every warrior charge, both those who come with high courage from the city of Inachus,¹ and those who from the Theban citadel descend thirsting for the fray. Townsman and enemy, together attack this womb which bore my husband brothers. Rend these limbs asunder and scatter them everywhere. I bore you both—lay you not down your arms with speed? Or shall I tell from what father, too? Your right hands—to your mother give them, give while they are still filial. Ignorance till now against our will hath made us² guilty; the whole crime was Fortune's, who sinned against us; this is the first crime wrought between those who know. It is yours to choose which thing you will: if holy affection please you, grant to your mother peace; if crime has pleased, a greater is to hand—your mother sets herself between you. Therefore rid ye of strife or of this stay of strife.³

¹ Argos. ² *i.e.* Oedipus and Jocasta especially.

³ *i.e.* or kill me who stand between you to stay your fighting.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Sollicita cui nunc mater alterna prece
 verba admovebo? misera quem amplectar prius? 460
 in utramque partem ducor affectu pari.
 hic a fuit; sed pacta si fratrum valent,
 nunc alter aberit. ego iam numquam duos
 nisi sic videbo?

Iunge complexus prior,
 qui tot labores totque perpessus mala
 longo parentem fessus exilio vides.
 accede propius, clude vagina impium
 ensem et trementem iamque cupientem excuti
 hastam solo defige; maternum tuo
 coire pectus pectori clipeus vetat; 470
 hunc quoque repone. vinculo frontem exue
 tegumenque capitis triste belligeri leva
 et ora matri redde. quo vultus refert
 acieque pavida fratris observas manum?
 affusa totum corpus amplexu tegam,
 tuo cruori per meum fiet via.
 quid dubius haeres? an times matris fidem?

POLYNICES

Timeo; nihil iam iura naturae valent.
 post ista fratrum exempla ne matri quidem
 fides habenda est.

IOCASTA

Redde iam capulo manum, 480
 astringe galeam, laeva se clipeo inserat;
 dum frater exarmatur, armatus mane.

¹ i. e. in enmity.

PHOENISSAE

⁴⁵⁹ To which of you now shall your anxious mother with alternate prayers address her words? Whom shall I in my wretchedness first embrace? To both sides am I drawn with equal love. This son has been absent from me; but if the brothers keep their pact, now will the other be away. And shall I never see you both, save thus? ¹

[*Turning to POLYNICES*]

⁴⁶⁴ Come thou first to thy mother's arms, thou who hast endured so many toils, so many misfortunes, and, worn with long exile, seest thy mother at last. Come nearer, sheathe thine impious sword, and thy spear, which is even now quivering and eager to be thrown, thrust it in the ground. Thy shield keeps thee from coming close to thy mother, breast to breast; put that by, too. Unbind thy brow, take the grim helmet from thy warlike head, and let thy mother see thy face. Why dost thou look away, and with fearful glance watch thy brother's hand? I will cover thy whole body with my protecting embrace and allow way to thy blood only through my own. Why dost thou still halt in doubt? Dost fear thy mother's pledge?

POLYNICES

I am in fear; no longer do nature's laws avail. Since this example of a brother's faithlessness, even a mother's pledge may not be trusted.

JOCASTA

Put now hand to hilt again, bind on thy helmet, let thy left hand clasp its shield; and while thy brother unarms, remain thou armed.

[*She turns to ETEOCLES.*]

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Tu pone ferrum, causa qui ferri es prior.
 si pacis odium est, furere si bello placet,
 inducias te mater exiguas rogat,
 ferat ut reverso post fugam nato oscula
 vel prima vel suprema. dum pacem peto,
 audite inermes. ille te, tu illum times ?
 ego utrumque, sed pro utroque. quid strictum abnuis
 recondere ensem ? qualibet gaude mora ; 490
 id gerere bellum cupitis, in quo est optimum
 vinci. vereris fratris infesti dolos ?
 quotiens necesse est fallere aut falli a suis,
 patiare potius ipse quam facias scelus.
 sed ne verere ; mater insidias et hinc
 et rursus illinc abiget. exoro ? an patri
 invideo vestro ? veni ut arcerem nefas
 an ut viderem propius ? hic ferrum abdidit,
 reclinis hasta est, arma defixa incubant.

Ad te preces nunc, nate, maternas feram, 500
 sed ante lacrimas. teneo longo tempore
 petita votis ora. te profugum solo
 patrio penates regis externi tegunt,
 te maria tot diversa, tot casus vagum
 egere. non te duxit in thalamos parens
 comitata primos, nec sua festas manu
 ornavit aedes, nec sacra laetas faces
 vitta revinxit ; dona non auro graves
 gazas socer, non arva, non urbes dedit ;
 dotale bellum est. hostium es factus gener, 510
 patria remotus hospes alieni laris,

PHOENISSAE

483 Do thou put by the sword, who art the sword's first cause. If thou hatest peace, if 'tis thy pleasure to rage in war, thy mother begs brief truce of thee, that to her son returned from exile she may give a kiss—the first, perchance the last. While I beg for peace, hearken ye, unarmed. Doth he fear thee; thou, him? I fear you both, but for the sake of both. Why dost refuse to sheathe thy drawn sword? Be glad of any delay; ye both seek to wage a war wherein 'twere best to be o'ercome. Dost thou fear thy hostile brother's wiles? When one must either cheat or be cheated by one's own, do thou thyself suffer rather than commit the crime. But do not fear; thy mother will shield thee from snares on either hand. Do I prevail? or must I envy¹ your father? Have I come to prevent crime? or to see it done before my eyes? [ETEOCLES yields to her.] He has sheathed his sword, his spear droops, his arms are laid aside.

[*She turns back to POLYNICES.*]

500 Now to thee, son, thy mother will bring her prayers, but her tears first. After a weary time I hold the face I prayed to see. Thee, an outcast from thy native soil, the gods of a foreign king protect; thee many seas far distant, many fates have driven wandering. Thy mother, at thy side, did not lead thee to thy first bridal chamber, nor with her own hand deck the festal hall, nor with sacred fillets wreath the glad torches. As wedding gifts no rich golden treasure, no fields, no cities did thy father-in-law bestow: war is thy bridal gift. Thou hast become thine enemy's son, far from thy land, guest of an

¹ *i.e.* his blindness, which would shield her from unhallowed sights.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

externa consecutus, expulsus tuis,
sine crimine exul. ne quid e fatis tibi
desset paternis, hoc quoque ex illis habes,
errasse thalamis.

Nate post multos mihi
remisse soles, nate suspensae metus
et spes parentis, cuius aspectum deos
semper rogavi, cum tuus reditus mihi
tantum esset erepturus, adventu tuo
quantum daturus: "quando pro te desinam" 520
dixi "timere?" dixit inridens deus:
"ipsum timebis." nempe nisi bellum foret,
ego te carerem; nempe si tu non fores,
bello carerem. a, triste conspectus datur
pretium tui durumque, sed matri placet.
hinc modo recedant arma, dum nullum nefas
Mars saevus audet; hoc quoque est magnum nefas,
tam prope fuisse. stupeo et exanguis tremo,
cum stare fratres hinc et hinc video duos
sceleris sub ictu. membra quassantur metu; 530
quam paene mater maius aspexi nefas,
quam quod miser videre non potuit pater.
licet timore facinoris tanti vacem
videamque iam nil tale, sum infelix tamen
quod paene vidi.

Per decem mensum graves
uteri labores perque pietatem inclitae
precor sororis et per irati sibi
genas parentis, scelere quas nullo nocens,
erroris a se dira supplicia exigens,
hausit—nefandas moenibus patriis faces 540
averte, signa bellici retro agminis
flecte. ut recedas, magna pars sceleris tamen
vestri peracta est; vidit hostili grege

PHOENISSAE

alien house, seeking another's, driven from thine own, exiled for no fault. That thou mightst lack nothing of thy father's fates, this also thou hast of them, that thou hast erred in marriage.

⁵¹⁵ O son, returned to me after so many years, son, fear and hope of thy anxious mother, for sight of whom I have ever prayed the gods, though thy return was destined to take as much from me as by thy coming it could give: "When shall I cease to fear for thee?" I cried; and the god, mocking me, answered: "'Tis himself thou shalt fear." Surely if there were no war, I should be without thee; surely if thou wert not here, I should be free from war. Oh, bitter price and hard, to pay for a sight of thee; but thy mother pays it willingly. Only let thy hostile hosts fall back while as yet savage Mars dares no impious crime. Even this is an outrageous crime, that they have come so near. I am appalled; pale am I and I tremble to see two brothers stand, one here, one there, 'neath guilt's o'erhanging stroke. My limbs quake with fear: how near did I, thy mother, come to seeing greater infamy than that which thy wretched father could not bear to see. Though I am free from fear of so great a crime, and now see no such thing, still I am unhappy because I almost saw it.

⁵³⁵ By the womb that bore thee for ten weary months, by the devotion of thy noble sister, by thy self-hating father's eyes which he, though innocent, yet, seeking to inflict on himself dire punishment for his mistake, tore from their sockets—save thy country's walls from the accursed torch; turn back again the standards of this warring host. Though thou shouldst retire, still is the great part of your sin already done; thy country has seen its plains o'errun

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

campos repleti patria, fulgentes procul
 armis catervas vidit, equitatu levi
 Cadmea frangi prata et excelsos rotis
 volitare proceres, igne flagrantibus trabes
 fumare, cineri quae petunt nostras domos,
 fratresque (facinus quod novum et Thebis fuit)
 in se ruentes. totus hoc exercitus, 550
 hoc populus omnis; utraque hoc vidit soror
 genetrixque vidi: nam pater debet sibi
 quod ista non spectavit. occurrat tibi
 nunc Oedipus, quo iudice erroris quoque
 poenae petuntur. ne, precor, ferro erue
 patriam ac penates neve, quas regere expetis,
 evertes Thebas. quis tenet mentem furor?
 petendo patriam perdis? ut fiat tua,
 vis esse nullam? quin tuae causae nocet
 ipsum hoc quod armis uris infestis solum 560
 segetesque adultas sternis et totos fugam
 edis per agros. nemo sic vastat sua;
 quae corripitur igne, quae meti gladio iubetur
 aliena credis. rex sit ex vobis uter,
 manente regno quaerite. haec telis petis
 flammisque tecta? poteris has Amphionis
 quassare moles? nulla quas struxit manus
 stridente tardum machina ducens onus,
 sed convocatus vocis et citharae sono
 per se ipse summas venit in turrem lapis— 570
 haec saxa franges? victor hinc spolia auferes
 vinctosque duces patris aequales tui,
 matresque ab ipso coniugum raptas sinu
 saevus catena miles imposita trahet?
 adulta virgo, mixta captivo gregi,
 Thebana nuribus munus Argolicis eat?

PHOENISSAE

by hostile hordes, has seen armed squadrons gleaming from afar, the Cadmean meadows trampled by flying hoofs, princes in their chariots careering high, the smoke and flames of blazing torches which seek to burn our homes, and brothers (a crime new even to Thebes) rushing upon each other. This crime the whole army saw, this, all the people, this, both thy sisters saw and I, thy mother, saw—for thy father owes it to his own act that he beheld not such deeds. Let Oedipus stand before thee now, in whose judgment even for error is penalty demanded. Do not, I beg of thee, with the sword destroy thy country and thy household gods, nor overthrow Thebes, which thou seekst to rule. What madness holds thee? By seeking thy land wouldst wreck it? to make it thine, wouldst have it no land at all? Nay, thou harmst thine own cause in this very act of harrying the land with hostile arms, trampling the full-grown crops, and spreading terror through the whole country-side. No one works such havoc on his own; what thou bidst be plundered with fire and reaped with sword, thou deemst another's. Question whether of you be king, but let the kingdom stand. These homes dost thou seek with sword and fire? Wilt have the heart to batter these walls which Amphion built, whose stones no hand set in place, moving the slow weight with creaking crane, but, marshalled by sound of singing and of lyre, each stone of its own accord came to the turrets' top—wilt batter down these stones? Wilt thou bear spoils hence as victor, and shall conquered chieftains, thy father's friends, and matrons torn from their husbands' very arms, be led off in chains by thy rough soldiery? Shall Thebes' grown maidens, mingled with the captive herd, go as gifts to the dames of Argos? Or shall

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

an et ipsa, palmas vineta post tergum datas,
 mater triumphi praeda fraterni vehar?
 potesne cives leto et exitio datos
 videre passim? moenibus caris potes 580
 hostem admovere, sanguine et flamma potes
 implere Thebas? tam ferus durum geris
 saevumque in iras pectus? et nondum imperas—
 quid sceptrata facient? pone vaesanos, precor,
 animi tumores teque pietati refer.

POLYNICES

Vt profugus errem? semper ut patria arcear
 opemque gentis hospes externa sequar?
 quid paterer aliud, si fefellissem fidem?
 si peierassem? fraudis alienae dabo 590
 poenas, at ille praemium scelerum feret?
 iubes abire; matris imperio obsequor.
 da quo revertar. regia frater mea
 habitet superbus, parva me abscondat casa,
 hanc date repulso, liceat exiguo lare
 pensare regnum. coniungi donum datus
 arbitria thalami dura felicitis feram
 humilisque socerum lixa dominantem sequar?
 in servitutum cadere de regno grave est.

IOCASTA

Si regna quaeris nec potest sceptrata manus
 vacare saevo, multa quae possunt peti 600
 in orbe toto quaelibet tellus dabit.
 hinc nota Baccho Tmolus attollit iuga
 qua lata terris spatia frugiferis iacent,
 390

PHOENISSAE

I myself, with hands bound behind my back, thy mother, be borne as prize in thy triumph o'er a brother? Canst thou bear to see thy countrymen given to death and destruction on every hand? Against these dear walls canst thou lead the enemy, canst fill Thebes with blood and fire? Art thou so wild, is thy heart so hard, so full of savage rage? And thou art not yet a king—what will the sceptre do? Oh, I beseech thee, allay the mad ferment of thy soul, and come back to duty's ways.

POLYNICES

That I may wander outcast? That I may be forever shut out from my country and as a stranger look to the bounty of an alien race? What worse should I suffer if I had broken faith, if I had forsworn myself? Am I to pay the penalty of another's sin, while he enjoys the profit of his crimes? Thou bidst me go; I bend to my mother's will. Show me whither I shall get me back. Let my haughty brother dwell in my palace, let a little hut hide me away; this grant to the banished brother, let it be mine to match a kingdom with a paltry hearth. A wife's mere chattel, shall I bear the harsh sway of a rich bride and, like a humble camp-follower, attend upon her domineering father? To fall from a king's estate to slavery is hard.

JOCASTA

It thou seekst a king's estate, and the harsh sceptre thy hand cannot forego, any land in the whole world will offer many kingdoms to be won. Here Tmolus lifts his ridges, the Wine-god's haunts, where stretch broad plains of grain-producing lands,

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

et qua trahens opulenta Pactolus vada
 inundat auro rura ; nec laetis minus
 Maeandros arvis flectit errantes aquas,
 rapidusque campos fertiles Hermus secat.
 hinc grata Cereri Gargara et dives solum
 quod Xanthus ambit nivibus Idaeis tumens ;
 hinc qua relinquit nomen Ionii mare ¹ 610
 faucesque Abydo Sestos opposita premit ;
 aut qua latus ² iam propior orienti dedit
 tutamque crebris portibus Lyciam videt.
 haec regna ferro quaere, in hos populos ferat
 socer arma fortis, has tuo sceptro paret
 tradatque gentes. hoc adhuc regnum puta
 tenere patrem. melius exilium est tibi
 quam reditus iste. crimine alieno exulas,
 tuo redibis. melius istis viribus
 nova regna nullo scelere maculata appetes. 620
 quin ipse frater arma comitatus tua
 tibi militabit.

Vade et id bellum gere
 in quo pater materque pugnanti tibi
 favere possint. regna cum scelere omnibus
 sunt exiliis graviora. nunc belli mala
 propono, dubias Martis incerti vices :
 licet omne tecum Graeciae robur trahas,
 licet arma longe miles ac late explicet,
 fortuna belli semper ancipiti in loco est,
 quodcumque Mars decernit. exaequat duos, 630
 licet impares sint, gladius ; et spes et metus
 Fors caeca versat. praemium incertum petis,
 certum scelus. favisse fac votis deos

¹ So Richter : *Leo*, with ω , maris : *Bücheler* conjectures Ionium Thetis : *Wilamowitz* qua reliquit nomen Inois mari.

² So *Leo*, with ω : *Richter* quae : *N. Heinsius* aut qua Thetis se.

PHOENISSAE

and where Pactolus, rolling his rich waves, o'erflows the fields with gold; nor does Meander through meadows less joyful bend his wandering waters, and swift Hermus cleaves the fertile plains. Here is Gargara, beloved of Ceres, and the soil which rich Xanthus compasses, swollen by Ida's snows; here the land where the Ionian sea gives up its name, and Sestos, over against Abydos, hugs the narrow strait¹; or where, now nearer to the east, it curves and sees Lycia secure with its many harbours. These kingdoms seek thou with the sword; against these peoples let thy brave father-in-law bear arms; these tribes let him acquire and deliver to thy sway. As for this kingdom, deem that thy father still holds it fast. Better is exile for thee than such return as this. Through another's sin thou livest in exile, through thine own wilt thou return. With yonder forces, 'twere better to seek new realms, stained by no crime. Nay, thy brother's self, accompanying thine arms, will fight for thee.

⁶²² Go thou, then, and wage such warfare that, as thou fightest, thy father and thy mother may pray for thy success. Kingdoms won by crime are heavier than any exile. Now picture to thyself war's mishaps, the wavering chances of uncertain Mars: though thou bring with thee the whole strength of Greece, though thy armed soldiery spread far and wide, the fortune of war hangs ever in doubtful scale, according as Mars determines. The sword makes two warriors equal though they be ill-matched; both hope and fear are in blind Fortune's hand. The prize thou seekst is uncertain; certain, the crime. Grant that all the gods have been

¹ The Hellespont.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

omnes tuis ; cessere et aversi fugam
 petiere cives, clade funesta iacens
 obtexit agros miles—exultes licet
 victorque fratris spolia deiecti geras,
 frangenda palma est. quale tu hoc bellum putas,
 in quo execrandum victor admittit nefas,
 si gaudet? hunc quem vincere infelix cupis, 640
 cum viceris, lugebis. infaustas age
 dimitte pugnas, libera patriam metu,
 luctu parentes.

POLYNICES

Sceleris et fraudis suae
 poenas nefandus frater ut nullas ferat ?

IOCASTA

Ne metue. poenas et quidem solvet graves :
 regnabit. est haec poena. si dubitas, avo
 patrique crede ; Cadmus hoc dicet tibi
 Cadmique proles. sceptrum Thebano fuit
 impune nulli gerere, nec quisquam fide
 rupta tenebit illa. iam numeres licet 650
 fratrem inter istos.

ETEOCLES

Numeret, est tanti mihi
 cum regibus iacere. te turbae exulum
 ascribo.

IOCASTA

Regna, dummodo invisus tuis.

PHOENISSAE

favourable to thy prayers; grant that the citizens have given way, that they have turned and fled, that soldiers, lying in bloody heaps, cover the fields—though thou shouldst triumph and as victor bear off the spoils of thy conquered brother, broken must be the victor's palm. What manner of war deemst thou that, wherein the conqueror takes on him the curse of guilt if he rejoices? Him whom, unhappy man, thou art so eager to o'ercome, when thou hast o'ercome thou wilt lament. Oh, then, forego this unhallowed strife, free thy country from fear, from agony thy parents.

POLYNICES

That my cursed brother may receive no penalty for his crime and treachery?

JOCASTA

Have no fear. Penalty, yes, heavy penalty shall he pay: he shall reign. That is the penalty. If thou dost doubt it, believe thy grandsire and thy sire; Cadmus will tell thee this, and the race of Cadmus. No Theban hath e'er borne sceptre without penalty, nor will any hold it who has broken faith. Now mayst thou count thy brother amongst these.

ETEOCLES

So let him count me; 'tis worth the price, methinks, to lie with kings.

[*To POLYNICES.*]

⁶⁵² Thee I enrol amongst the exiled throng.

JOCASTA

Reign, then, but hated by thy people.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

ETEOCLES

Regnare non vult esse qui invisus timet ;
simul ista mundi conditor posuit deus,
odium atque regnum. regis hoc magni reor,
odia ipsa premere. multa dominantem vetat
amor suorum ; plus in iratos licet.
qui vult amari, languida regnat manu.

IOCASTA

Invisa numquam imperia retinentur diu. 660

ETEOCLES

Praecepta melius imperi reges dabunt ;
exilia tu dispone. pro regno velim—

IOCASTA

Patriam penates coniugem flammis dare ?

ETEOCLES

Imperia pretio quolibet constant bene.

* * * * *

PHOENISSAE

ETEOCLES

To reign he hath no will who feareth to be hated ;
the god who made the world set those two things
together, hatred and sovereignty. This is the part
of a great sovereign, I think, to tread e'en hatred
under foot. A people's love forbids a ruler many
things ; against their rage he has more rights. Who
would be loved reigns with a nerveless hand.

JOCASTA

But hated sovereignty is never long retained.

ETEOCLES

The rules for sovereignty kings will better give ;
do thou make rules for exiles. For sovereignty I
would fain—

JOCASTA

Give country, home, wife to the flames ?

ETEOCLES

Sovereignty is well bought at any price.

* * * * *

OCTAVIA

1771

OCTAVIA

A FABULA PRAETEXTA

THE ONLY EXTANT ROMAN HISTORICAL DRAMA

INTRODUCTION

THE Roman historical drama had a place among the earliest products of Roman literature, and seems to have enjoyed a degree of popularity through all succeeding periods. That Roman literary genius did not find a much fuller expression through this channel was not due to a lack of national pride and patriotism, nor yet to a dearth of interesting and inspiring subjects in Roman history. The true reason is probably to be found in the fact that by the time national conditions were ripe for the development of any form of literature, the Greeks had already worked, and well worked, nearly all available fields, and had produced a mass of literature which dazzled the Roman mind when at last circumstances brought these two nations into closer contact.

The natural and immediate result was an attempt on the part of the Romans to imitate these great models. And hence we have in drama, both in tragedy and in comedy, a wholesale imitation of the Greek dramas, oftentimes nothing more than a translation of these, with only here and there an attempt to produce something of a strictly native character, entirely independent of the Greek influence.

This imitative impulse was augmented by the fact

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

that the Romans were following the line of least resistance, since it is always easier to imitate than to create. Furthermore, they had as yet developed no national pride of literature to hold them to their own lines of national development; they had no forms of their own so well established that the mere force of literary momentum would carry them steadily on toward a fuller development, in spite of the disturbing effects of the influx of other and better models. They had, indeed, developed a native Saturnian verse which, had it been allowed a free field, might have reached a high pitch of literary excellence. But it speedily gave way at the approach of the more elegant imported forms.

The overwhelming influence of Greek tragedy upon the Roman dramatists can be seen at a glance as we review the dramatic product of the Roman tragedians. We have titles and fragments of nine tragedies by Livius Andronicus, seven by Naevius, twenty-two by Ennius, thirteen by Pacuvius, forty-six by Accius, and many fragments from each of these, unassignable to definite plays, which indicate numerous other plays of the same character. To these should be added additional fragments from nearly a score more of Roman writers during the next two hundred years after Accius. All the above-mentioned plays are on Greek subjects; and most of those whose fragments are sufficiently extensive to allow us to form an opinion of their character are either translations or close imitations of the Greeks, or are so influenced by these as to be decidedly Greek rather than Roman in character.

And what of the genuine Roman dramatic product? Speaking for the *fabula praetexta*, or Roman historical drama, alone, the entire output, so far as our records go, is contained in the following list of authors and titles.

OCTAVIA

From Naeivius (265-204 B.C.) we have the *Clastidium*, written in celebration of the victory of Marcellus (at Clastidium in 222 B.C.) over Vidumarus, king of the Transpadane Gauls, whom Marcellus slew and stripped of his armour, thus gaining the rare *spolia opima*. The play was probably written for the especial occasion either of the triumph of Marcellus or of the celebration of his funeral.

We have also from Naeivius a play variously entitled *Lupus* or *Romulus* or *Alimonium Remi et Romuli*, evidently one of those dramatic reproductions of scenes in the life of a god, enacted as a part of the ceremonies of his worship. This play is comparable to dramatic representations among the Greeks in the worship of Dionysus.

The *Ambracia* and the *Sabinae* of Ennius (239-169 B.C.) are ordinarily classed as *fabulae praetextae*, although Lucian Müller classes the fragments of the *Ambracia* among the *Saturae* of Ennius; while Vahlen puts the *Ambracia* under the heading *Comoediarum et ceterorum carminum reliquiae*, and classifies the fragments of the *Sabinae* under *ex incertis saturarum libris*. The *Ambracia* is evidently called after the city of that name in Epirus, celebrated for the long and remarkable siege which it sustained against the Romans under M. Fulvius Nobilior. That general finally captured the city in 189 B.C. If the piece is to be considered as a play, it was, like the *Clastidium*, written in honour of the Roman general, and acted on the occasion either of his triumph or of his funeral.

We have four short fragments from the *Paulus* of Pacuvius (220-130 B.C.), written in celebration of the exploits of L. Aemilius Paulus who conquered Perseus, king of Macedonia, in the battle of Pydna, 168 B.C.

The fragments of the plays already mentioned

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

are too brief to afford any adequate idea of their character or content. But in the *Brutus* of Accius (b. 170. B.C.), which centres around the expulsion of the Tarquins and the establishment of the Republic, we have a larger glimpse into the play through two most interesting fragments consisting of twelve iambic trimeters and ten trochaic tetrameters, respectively. In the first, King Tarquin relates to his seer an ill-ominous dream which he has had; the second is the seer's interpretation of this dream, pointing to Tarquin's dethronement by Brutus. Other short fragments give glimpses of the outrage of Lucretia by Sextus at Collatia, and the scene in the forum where Brutus takes his oath of office as first consul. This play, unlike its predecessors, was not written at the time of the events which it portrays, but may still be classed with them, so far as its object is concerned, since it is generally thought to have been written in honour of D. Junius Brutus, who was consul in 138 B.C., and with whom the poet enjoyed an intimate friendship.

Another *praetexta* of Accius is preserved, the *Decius*, of which eleven short fragments remain. This play celebrates the victory of Quintus Fabius Maximus and P. Decius Mus over the Samnites and Gauls at Sentinum in 295 B.C. The climax of the play would be the self-immolation of Decius after the example of his father in the Latin war of 340 B.C.

In addition to these plays of the Roman dramatists of the Republic, we have knowledge of a few which date from later times. There was a historical drama entitled *Iter*, by L. Cornelius Balbus, who dramatized the incidents of a journey which he made to Pompey's camp at Dyrrachium at the opening of civil war in 49 B.C. Balbus was under commission from Caesar

OCTAVIA

to treat with the consul, L. Cornelius Lentulus, and other optimates who had fled from Rome, concerning their return to the city. The journey was a complete fiasco, so far as results were concerned; but the vanity of Balbus was so flattered by this (to him) important mission that he must needs dramatize his experiences and present the play under his own direction in his native city of Gades.

We have mention also of an *Aeneas* by Pomponius Secundus, and of two *praetextae* by Curiatius Maternus, entitled *Domitius* and *Cato*.

These eleven historical plays are, as we have seen, for the most part, plays of occasion, and would be at best of but temporary interest, born of the special circumstances which inspired them. They are in no way comparable with such historical dramas on Roman subjects as Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* or *Coriolanus*, whose interest is for all times.

We have still a twelfth play of this class, which enjoys the unique distinction of being the only Roman historical drama which has come down to us in its complete form—the *Octavia*. Its authorship is unknown, although tradition gives it a place among the tragedies of Seneca, the philosopher. The general opinion of modern critics, however, is against this tradition, chiefly because one passage in the play, in the form of a prophecy, too circumstantially describes the death of Nero, which occurred three years after the death of Seneca. It is generally agreed that the play must have been written soon after the death of Nero, and by some one, possibly Maternus, who had been an eye-witness of the events, and who had been inspired by his sympathies for the unfortunate Octavia to write this story of her sufferings.

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SUMMARY OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY HISTORY WHICH FORMS A BACKGROUND TO THE *Octavia* AND TO WHICH REFERENCES ARE MADE THROUGHOUT THE PLAY.

TIBERIUS CLAUDIUS DRUSUS NERO CAESAR GERMANICUS, more commonly known as Claudius, fourth emperor of Rome, had taken for his third wife the daughter of M. Valerius Messala, Messalina, who bore to him two children, Britannicus and Octavia. Always notorious for her profligacy and licentiousness, Messalina crowned her career by publicly marrying C. Silius at Rome during the temporary sojourn of her imperial husband at Ostia. Claudius long wavered as to her punishment, but at last, through the influence of his favourite, Narcissus, he signed her death warrant, and she was executed by a tribune of the guards in 48 A.D.

In the following year, through the intrigue of the freedman Pallas, Claudius married his brother's daughter, Agrippina, who brought with her into the emperor's household Lucius Domitius, her son by her first husband, Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus.

Immediately Agrippina began to plot for the succession of her son to the throne of the Caesars. In 50 A.D. she prevailed upon Claudius to adopt, to the prejudice of Britannicus, her own son, who was thereafter known as Nero. She had already caused Seneca, who had been exiled at the instance of Messalina, to be recalled that he might serve as

OCTAVIA

Nero's tutor. In 53 A.D. she further advanced her plans by compassing the marriage of her son to Octavia, the emperor's daughter. Octavia had already been betrothed by Claudius to L. Silanus, who now, to escape the vengeance of Agrippina, committed suicide.

Her plans being now fully laid for the final act, Agrippina secretly poisoned Claudius on October 12th, 54 A.D., and on the following day Nero succeeded to the throne, being then seventeen years of age. In the following year, by the joint plotting of mother and son, the young Britannicus, also, was poisoned.

Because of the youth and inexperience of her son Agrippina enjoyed four years of practically imperial power; but at last, in 59 A.D., Nero, tired of his mother's ascendancy, caused her to be assassinated, after an unsuccessful attempt upon her life by means of a treacherous vessel, in which death-trap he had sent her to sea.

Nero had long since become enamoured of Poppaea, a beautiful profligate, who had left her husband, Rufinus Crispinus, to live with Otho, and who now became mistress of the emperor. Aspiring to be his wife, she had plotted to bring about the death of Agrippina and later the divorce of Octavia. Through these machinations of his mistress and Nero's own more than ready acquiescence, Octavia was falsely accused of adultery and in 62 A.D. she was banished to Pandataria, where she was shortly afterwards put to death.

Poppaea herself died in 65 A.D. as the result, it was said, of a kick by her brutal husband when she was far advanced in pregnancy. In the same year, at the command of the emperor, Seneca committed

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

suicide; and three years thereafter, in 68 A.D., Nero himself, deposed by the praetorian guards, who had espoused the cause of Galba, and condemned to death by the Senate, fled from Rome and, after vain efforts to escape, received his death-stroke by his own request at the hands of a faithful attendant who had fled with him.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

OCTAVIA, *step-sister and wife of Nero.*

NURSE of *Octavia.*

POPPAEA, *mistress and afterward wife of Nero.*

NURSE of *Poppaea.*

GHOST OF AGRIPPINA, *mother of Nero, slain by him.*

NERO, *Emperor of Rome.*

SENECA, *former tutor of Nero, and later one of his chief
counsellors.*

PREFECT OF ROMAN SOLDIERS.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS OF ROMANS, *sympathetic with Octavia.*

CHORUS, *attached to the interests of the court.*

THE SCENE is laid throughout in different apartments of the palace of Nero, and is concerned with the events of the year 62 A. D.

OCTAVIA

OCTAVIA

IAM vaga caelo sidera fulgens
Aurora fugat, surgit Titan
radiante coma mundoque diem
reddit clarum.

age, tot tantis onerata malis,
repete assuetos iam tibi questus
atque aequoreas vince Alcyonas,
vince et volucres Pandionias;
gravior namque his fortuna tua est.

semper, genetrix, deflenda mihi,
prima meorum causa malorum,
tristes questus natae exaudi,
si quis remanet sensus in umbris.
utinam ante manu grandaeva sua
mea rupisset stamina Clotho,
tua quam maerens vulnera vidi
oraque foedo sparsa cruore!
o lux semper funesta mihi,
tempore ab illo

10

lux es tenebris invisae magis!
tulimus saevae iussa novercae,
hostilem animum vultusque truces.
illa illa meis tristis Erinys
thalamis Stygios praetulit ignes
teque extinxit, miserande pater,
modo cui totus paruit orbis
ultra Oceanum

20

OCTAVIA

OCTAVIA

Now doth flushing dawn drive the wandering stars from heaven ; with radiant beams the sun arises and gives the world once more the light of day. On then, with all thy woes weighed down, resume thy now accustomed plaints and out-wail the sea-bred Halcyons,¹ out-wail the birds² of old Pandion's house ; for more grievous is thy lot than theirs. O mother, constant source of tears to me, first cause of my misfortunes, hearken to thy daughter's sad complaints, if any consciousness remains among the shades. Oh, that the ancient Clotho with her own hand had clipped my threads before sadly I saw thy wounds, thy face with foul gore besmeared ! O light, ever calamitous to me, from that time, O light, thou art more hateful than the dark ! We have endured a cruel step-dame's³ orders, her hostile spirit and her aspect fierce. 'Twas she, 'twas she, the baleful fury, who bore the Stygian torches to my bridal chamber, and quenched thy light, O wretched father, whom but yesterday the whole world obeyed, even beyond Ocean's bounds, before whom the

¹ See Index *s.v.* "Ceyx."

² See Index *s.v.* "Philomela."

³ Agrippina.

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cuique Britanni terga dedere,
 ducibus nostris ante ignoti
 iurisque sui. 30
 coniugis, heu me, pater, insidiis
 oppresse iaces servitque domus
 cum prole tua capta tyranno.

NVTRIX

Fulgore primo captus et fragili bono¹
 fallacis aulae quisquis attonitus stupet,
 subito² latentis ecce Fortunae impetu
 modo praepotentem cernat eversam domum
 stirpemque Claudii, cuius imperio fuit
 subiectus orbis, paruit liber diu
 Oceanus et recepit invitus rates. 40
 en qui Britannis primus imposuit iugum,
 ignota tantis classibus textit freta
 interque gentes barbaras tutus fuit
 et saeva maria, coniugis scelere occidit;
 mox illa nati; cuius extinctus iacet
 frater venenis. maeret infelix soror
 eademque coniunx nec graves luctus valet
 ira coacta tegere crudelis viri;
 quem sancta refugit semper, atque odio pari
 ardens maritus impia flagrat face. 50
 animum dolentis nostra solatur fides
 pietasque frustra; vincit immitis dolor
 consilia nostra nec regi mentis potest
 generosus ardor, sed malis vires capit.
 heu quam nefandum prospicit noster timor
 scelus, quod utinam numen avertat deum.

¹ So Richter: *Leo conjectures facie nova.*

² So Richter: *Leo sub uno, with ΠΦ, but conjectures subito involantis.*

OCTAVIA

Britons¹ fled, erstwhile to our leaders all unknown
and unsubdued. Alas, my father, by thy wife's plots
thou liest crushed, and thy house together with thy
child² bends to a tyrant's³ will.

[*Exit to her chamber. Enter NURSE.*]

NURSE

Whoso, o'erpowered by the novel splendour and
the frail blessings of deceitful royalty, stands awe-
struck and amazed, lo, 'neath the sudden blow of
lurking Fate, let him behold, o'erthrown, the house
and stock of Claudius, but now all powerful, under
whose rule the whole world was brought, whom the
Ocean, long to sway unknown, obeyed and, all un-
willingly, received his ships. Lo, he who first on
the Britons set a yoke, who covered unknown floods
with his mighty fleets, who was safe midst tribes
barbaric, midst raging seas, by his wife's⁴ crime is
fallen; she soon by her son's hand fell; and by his
poison lies my brother⁵ slain. The unhappy sister,⁶
yea, the unhappy wife grieves on, nor can she hide
her bitter sufferings, forced to the angry will of her
cruel husband. From him ever the pure girl recoils,
and her husband, though by equal hate inspired,
with incestuous passion burns. Our fond love strives
in vain to console her grieving heart; her cruel
smart o'ercomes our counsels, nor can the noble pas-
sion of her soul be governed, but from her woes she
draws new strength. Alas! how my fears forbode
some desperate deed, which may the gods forbid.

¹ Claudius had made an expedition to Britain in 43 A. D.

² *i.e.* herself. ³ Nero.

⁴ Agrippina. ⁵ Britannicus.

⁶ *i.e.* step-sister, Octavia; she was also Nero's sister by adoption.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

OCTAVIA

O mea nullis aequanda malis
fortuna, licet
repetam luctus, Electra tuos.
tibi maerenti caesum licuit 60
flere parentem,
scelus ulcisci vindice fratre,
tua quem pietas hosti rapuit
textitque fides ;
me crudeli sorte parentes
raptos prohibet lugere timor
fratrisque necem defflere vetat,
in quo fuerat spes una mihi
totque malorum breve solamen.
nunc in luctus servata meos 70
magni resto nominis umbra.

NVTRIX

Vox en nostras perculit aures
tristis alumnae ; cesset thalamis
inferre gradus tarda senectus ?

OCTAVIA

Excipe nostras lacrimas, nutrix,
testis nostri fida doloris.

NVTRIX

Quis te tantis solvet curis,
miseranda, dies ?

OCTAVIA

Qui me Stygias mittet ad umbras.

NVTRIX

Omina quaeso sint ista procul. 80

OCTAVIA

OCTAVIA [*heard speaking from her chamber*]

O fate of mine, to be matched by no misfortunes, though I recall thy woes, Electra. Thou couldst weep out thy grief for thy father's murder, couldst take vengeance on the crime with thy brother as avenger, whom thy love snatched from the foe and thy faithful care protected; but me fear forbids to mourn my parents reft from me by cruel fate, forbids to bewail my brother's taking off, in whom was my sole hope, the fleeting solace of my many woes. And now, saved but to my suffering, I remain, the shadow of a noble name.

NURSE

Hark! the voice of my sad foster-child strikes on mine ears. Does thy slow age take thee to her chamber with lagging steps?

[*She advances toward the chamber, but is met by Octavia, coming forth.*]

OCTAVIA

Receive my tears, dear nurse, thou trusty witness of my suffering.

NURSE

What day will free thee from thy mighty cares, poor child?

OCTAVIA

The day that sends me to the Stygian shades.

NURSE

Far from us be the omen of that word, I pray.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

OCTAVIA

Non vota meos tua nunc casus,
sed fata regunt.

NVTRIX

Dabit afflictæ meliora deus
tempora mitis; tu modo blando
vince obsequio placata virum.

OCTAVIA

Vincam saevos ante leones
tigresque truces, fera quam saevi
corda tyranni.
odit genitos sanguine claro,
spernit superos hominesque simul, 90
nec fortunam capit ipse suam
quam dedit illi per scelus ingens
infanda parens. licet ingratum
diræ pudeat munere matris
hoc imperium cepisse, licet
tantum munus morte rependat,
feret hunc titulum post fata tamen
femina longo semper in aevo.

NVTRIX

Animi retine verba furentis,
temere emissam comprime vocem.

OCTAVIA

Toleranda quamvis patiar, haud umquam que-
ant 100
nisi morte tristi nostra finiri mala.
genetrice caesa, per scelus raptò patre,
orbata fratre, miseriis luctu obruta,
maerore pressa, coniugi invisà ac meae

OCTAVIA

OCTAVIA

No longer is it thy prayers that shape my life but the fates.

NURSE

God in his mercy will bring to thine affliction better days. Do thou but be soothed, and win thy husband with gentle courtesy.

OCTAVIA

Sooner shall I win savage lions and fierce tigers, than that savage tyrant's brutal heart. He hates all born of noble blood, scorns gods and men alike; nor can he of himself wield his high fortune which by a monstrous crime his impious mother bestowed on him. Yes! though the ungrateful wretch count it shame to take this empire as his cursed mother's gift, though he requite her mighty gift with death, still will the woman even after death win the fame thereof for ever through unending age.

NURSE

Check thou the utterance of thy raging heart; repress the words thou hast poured forth too rashly.

OCTAVIA

Though I should endure what must be borne, ne'er could my woes be ended, save by gloomy death. With my mother slain, my father by crime snatched from me, robbed of my brother, by wretchedness and grief o'erwhelmed, by sorrow crushed, by my husband

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THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

subiecta famulae luce non grata fruor,
 trepidante semper corde non mortis metu
 sed sceleris—absit crimen a fatis meis,
 mori iuvabit; poena nam gravior nece est
 videre tumidos et truces miserae mihi
 vultus tyranni iungere atque hosti oscula, 110
 timere nutus cuius obsequium meus
 haud ferre posset fata post fratris dolor
 scelere interempti, cuius imperium tenet
 et sorte gaudet auctor infandae necis.
 quam saepe tristis umbra germani meis
 offertur oculis, membra cum solvit quies
 et fessa fletu lumina oppressit sopor.
 modo facibus atris armat infirmas manus
 oculosque et ora fratris infestus petit,
 modo trepidus idem refugit in thalamos meos; 120
 persequitur hostis atque inhaerenti mihi
 violentus ense per latus nostrum rapit.
 tunc tremor et ingens excutit somnos pavor
 renovatque luctus et metus miserae mihi.
 adice his superbam paelicem, nostrae domus
 spoliis nitentem, cuius in munus suam
 Stygiae parentem natus imposuit rati,
 quam dira post naufragia superato mari
 ferro interemit saevior pelagi fretis.
 quae spes salutis post nefas tantum mihi? 130
 inimica victrix imminet thalamis meis
 odioque nostri flagrat et pretium stupri
 iustae maritum coniugis poscit caput.
 emergere umbris et fer auxilium tuae
 natae invocanti, genitor, aut Stygios sinus
 tellure rupta pande, quo praeceps ferar.

¹ *i.e.* Acte. See line 197, note.

² Nero, in divorcing Octavia, alleged adultery as the cause.

OCTAVIA

hated, and set beneath my slave,¹ the sweet light brings no joy to me; for my heart is ever trembling, not with the fear of death, but of crime²—be crime but lacking to my misfortunes, death will be delight. For 'tis a punishment far worse than death to look in the tyrant's face, all swollen with rage 'gainst wretched me, to kiss my foe, to fear his very nod, obedience to whom my smarting grief could not endure after my brother's death, most sinfully destroyed, whose throne he usurps, and rejoices in being the worker of a death unspeakable. How oft does my brother's sad shade appear before my eyes when rest has relaxed my body, and sleep weighed down my eyes, weary with weeping. Now with smoking torches he arms his feeble hands, and with deadly purpose aims at his brother's eyes and face; and now in trembling fright takes refuge in my chamber; his enemy pursues and, e'en while the lad clings in my embrace, savagely he thrusts his sword through both our bodies. Then trembling and mighty terror banish my slumbers, and bring back to my wretched heart its grief and fear. Add to all this the proud concubine, bedecked with our house's spoil, as gift for whom the son set his own mother on the Stygian bark; and, when she had o'ercome dread shipwreck and the sea, himself more pitiless than ocean's waves, slew her with the sword. What hope of safety, after crime so great, have I? My victorious foe threatens my chamber, blazes with hate of me, and, as the reward of her adultery, demands of my husband his lawful consort's head. Arise thou, my father, from the shades and bring help to thy daughter who calls on thee; or else, rending the earth, lay bare the Stygian abyss, that I may plunge thither headlong.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

NVTRIX

Frustra parentis invocas manes tui,
 miseranda, frustra, nulla cui prolis suae
 manet inter umbras cura ; qui nato suo
 praeferre potuit sanguine alieno satum 140
 genitamque fratris coniugem pactus sibi
 toris nefandis flebili iunxit face.

hinc orta series facinorum—caedes, doli,
 regni cupido, sanguinis clari sitis ;
 mactata soceri concidit thalamis gener
 victima, tuis ne fieret hymenaeis potens.
 pro facinus ingens ! feminae est munus datus
 Silanus et cruore foedavit suo
 patrios penates, criminis ficti reus.

intravit hostis, ei mihi, captam domum, 150
 dolis novercae principis factus gener
 idemque natus, iuvenis infandi ingeni,
 scelerum capacis, dira cui genetrix facem
 accendit et te iunxit invitam metu.

tantoque victrix facta successu ferox
 ausa imminere est orbis imperio sacri.
 quis tot referre facinorum formas potest
 et spes nefandas feminae et blandos dolos
 regnum petentis per gradus scelerum omnium ?

tunc sancta Pietas extulit trepidos gradus 160
 vacuamque Erinys saeva funesto pede
 intravit aulam, polluit Stygia face
 sacros penates, iura naturae furens
 fasque omne rupit. miscuit coniunx viro
 venena saeva, cecidit atque eadem sui
 mox scelere nati ; tu quoque extinctus iaces,
 deflende nobis semper infelix puer,
 modo sidus orbis, columen augustae domus,
 Britannice, heu me, nunc levis tantum cinis

OCTAVIA

NURSE

In vain dost thou call upon thy father's ghost, poor girl, in vain, for no care for his child abides amidst the shades with him who to his own son could prefer one born of other blood, and, taking his brother's child to wife, wed her with couch incestuous and gloomy torch. Thence sprung a train of crimes—murders, deceits, the lust for empire, thirst for illustrious blood; as victim offered to the father's marriage-bed the son-in-law was slain, lest, wedded to thee he might become too strong. Oh, monstrous crime! To a woman was Silanus given as a boon and with his blood defiled the ancestral gods, charged with a crime that was not his. Then entered the foe, ah me! into the conquered palace, by a step-mother's wiles made an emperor's son-in-law and son withal, a youth of bent unnatural, fertile in crime, whose passion thy cruel mother fanned, and forced thee by fear to wed him, 'gainst thy will. Triumphant and emboldened by such success, she dared aspire to the awful empire of the world. Who can rehearse the various forms of crime, the wicked hopes, the cozening wiles of her who by all crimes would mount to empire round by round? Then holy Piety with trembling step withdrew, and raging Fury with baleful feet entered the empty palace, defiled with Stygian torch the holy household-gods, and in mad rage rent nature's laws and all things sacred. The wife for her husband mingled deadly poison, and soon by her son's crime the same wife fell. Thou too dost lie dead, unhappy youth, ever to be mourned by us, but late the world's star, the prop of a noble house, Britannicus, and now, ah me! only light ashes

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

et tristis umbra; saeva cui lacrimas dedit 170
 etiam noverca, cum rogis artus tuos
 dedit¹ cremandos membraque et vultus deo
 similes volanti funebris flamma abstulit.²

OCTAVIA

Extinguat et me, ne manu nostra cadat!

NVTRIX

Natura vires non dedit tantas tibi.

OCTAVIA

Dolor ira maeror miseriae luctus dabunt.

NVTRIX

Vince obsequendo potius immitem virum.

OCTAVIA

Vt fratrem ademptum scelere restituat mihi?

NVTRIX

Incolumis ut sis ipsa, labentem ut domum
 genitoris olim subole restituas tua. 180

OCTAVIA

Expectat aliam principis subolem domus;
 me dira miseri fata germani trahunt.

NVTRIX

Confirmet animum civium tantus favor.

¹ So the MSS.: Leo, with Buecheler, dedi.

² Some editors suggest a lacuna of thirty or more lines following 173.

OCTAVIA

and a mournful shade, o'er whom e'en thy step-mother wept, when on the pyre she gave thy body to be burned, and when thy limbs and features, that were like a winged god's, were by the mournful flame consumed.

OCTAVIA

Let him¹ destroy me also, lest by my hand he fall.

NURSE

Nature has not bestowed on thee such strength.

OCTAVIA

Anguish, anger, sorrow, wretchedness, grief will bestow it.

NURSE

By compliance, rather, win thine unfeeling lord.

OCTAVIA

That he may give back to me my brother, wickedly destroyed?

NURSE

That thou mayst be thyself unharmed, that one day thou mayst restore thy father's tottering house with sons of thine.

OCTAVIA

The royal house expects another son;² me my poor brother's cruel fates drag down.

NURSE

Let thy soul be strengthened by the citizens' great love.

¹ Nero.

² *i.e.* Nero's by Poppaea.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

OCTAVIA

Solatur iste nostra, non relevat mala.

NVTRIX

Vis magna populi est.

OCTAVIA

Principis maior tamen.

NVTRIX

Respiciet ipse coniugem.

OCTAVIA

Paelex vetat.

NVTRIX

Invisa cunctis nempe.

OCTAVIA

Sed cara est viro.

NVTRIX

Nondum uxor est.

OCTAVIA

Iam fiet, et genetrix simul.

NVTRIX

Iuvenilis ardor impetu primo furit,
languescit idem facile nec durat diu
in Venere turpi, ceu levis flammae vapor;
amor perennis coniugis castae manet.
violare prima quae toros ausa est tuos
animumque domini famula possedit diu,
iam metuit eadem—

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OCTAVIA

OCTAVIA

That comforts my woes but does not lighten them.

NURSE

The people's power is mighty.

OCTAVIA

But the emperor's mightier.

NURSE

Of himself will he respect his wife.

OCTAVIA

His concubine forbids.

NURSE

Surely she is scorned by all.

OCTAVIA

But to her husband, dear.

NURSE

She is not yet a wife.

OCTAVIA

But soon will be, and a mother, too.

NURSE

Youthful passion burns fierce at the first rush but readily grows dull, nor long endures in foul adultery, like heat of flickering flame; but a chaste wife's love remains perpetual. She who first dared profane thy bed, and, though a slave, has long held in thrall her master's heart, already herself fears—

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

OCTAVIA

Nempe praelatam sibi.

NVTRIX

subiecta et humilis, atque monumenta extruit
quibus timorem fassa testatur suum.
et hanc levis fallaxque destituet deus
volucer Cupido; sit licet forma eminens,
opibus superba, gaudium capiet breve. 200

Passa est similes ipsa dolores
regina deum,
cum se formas vertit in omnes
dominus caeli divumque pater,
et modo pennas sumpsit oloris
modo Sidonii cornua tauri,
aureus idem fluxit in imbri;
fulgent caelo sidera Ledaë,
patrio residet Bacchus Olympo,
deus Alcides possidet Heben 210
nec Iunonis iam timet iras,
cuius gener est qui fuit hostis.
vicit sapiens tamen obsequium
coniugis altae pressusque dolor;
sola Tonantem tenet aetherio
secura toro maxima Iuno,
nec mortali captus forma
deserit altam Iuppiter aulam.
tu quoque, terris altera Iuno,
soror Augusti coniunxque, graves 220
vince dolores.

¹ It is the opinion of Gruterus that the common interpretation of this whole passage is wrong in its assumption that the poet has Poppaea in mind; he would have it that the freed-woman, Acte, is the concubine referred to here.

OCTAVIA

OCTAVIA

Aye ! a more favoured mistress.

NURSE

—subdued and humble, and gives signs by which she confesses her own great fear.¹ Even her shall winged Cupid, false and fickle god, betray ; though she be passing fair, boastful in power, hers shall be but a transitory joy.

²⁰¹ The queen of the gods herself like sorrows suffered, when the lord of heaven and father of the gods into all forms changed, and now wings of a swan² put on, now the horns of a bull³ of Sidon, and again in a golden shower⁴ poured down ; the stars of Leda glitter in the sky, Bacchus⁵ on his father's Olympus dwells, Alcides⁵ as a god possesses Hebe and now no more fears Juno's wrath ; he is her son-in-law who was her enemy. Yet wise compliance and controlled wrath won victory for the queenly wife ; without rival, without care does Juno hold the Thunderer on her heavenly couch, and no more does Jupiter, by mortal beauty smitten, desert the court of heaven. Thou too, on earth a second Juno, Augustus'⁶ wife and sister, thy grievous woes o'ercome.

² In which form he came to Leda.

³ Thus he appeared to Europa.

⁴ Thus he appeared to Danaë.

⁵ Son of Jove and a mortal woman. See Index.

⁶ A surname not only of the first, but of all the Roman emperors. Here, Nero.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

OCTAVIA

Iungentur ante saeva sideribus freta
 et ignis undae, Tartaro tristi polus,
 lux alma tenebris, roscidae nocti dies,
 quam cum scelesti coniugis mente impia
 mens nostra, semper fratris extincti memor.
 utinam nefandi principis dirum caput
 obruere flammis caelitem rector paret,
 qui saepe terras fulmine infesto quatit
 mentesque nostras ignibus terret sacris 230
 novisque monstris; vidimus caelo iubar
 ardens cometam pandere infestam facem,
 qua plaustra tardus noctis aeterna vice
 regit Bootes, frigore Arctoo rigens.
 en ipse diro spiritu saevi ducis
 polluitur aether, gentibus clades novas
 minantur astra, quas regit dux impius.
 non tam ferum Typhona neglecto Iove
 irata Tellus edidit quondam parens;
 hic gravior illo pestis, hic hostis deum 240
 hominumque templis expulit superos suis
 civesque patria, spiritum fratri abstulit,
 hausit cruorem matris—et lucem videt
 fruiturque vita noxiam atque animam trahit!
 pro summe genitor, tela cur frustra iacis
 invicta totiens temere regali manu?
 in tam nocentem dextra cur cessat tua?
 utinam suorum facinorum poenas luat
 Nero insitivus, Domitio genitus patre,
 orbis tyrannus, quem premit turpi iugo 250
 morumque vitiis nomen Augustum inquinat!

¹ A comet actually did appear at this time (Tacitus, *Annales*, xiv. 22). The appearance of a comet was portentous, and was supposed to prelude the death of a king.

OCTAVIA

OCTAVIA

Sooner shall savage seas unite with stars, water with fire, heaven with sad Tartarus, the kindly light with darkness, day with the dewy night, than with my accursed husband's impious soul this soul of mine, that ever broods upon my brother's death. And oh, that the lord of the heaven-dwellers, who often shakes the lands with deadly bolt and terrifies our souls with awful fires and portents strange, would make ready to whelm with flames this impious prince. We have seen a glowing radiance in the sky, a comet¹ spreading its baleful trail, where slow Boötes, numb with Arctic chill, with endless, nightlong wheeling, guides his wain. Lo, by the pestilential breath of this destructive leader the very air is tainted; the stars threaten unheard disasters for the nations which this godless leader rules. Not such a pest was Typhon, whom wrathful mother Earth produced in scorn of Jove; this scourge, worse than he, this enemy of gods and men, has driven the heavenly ones from their shrines, and citizens from their country, from his brother has he reft the breath of life, and drained his mother's blood—and he still sees the light of day, still lives and draws his baneful breath! O high exalted father, why vainly, why so oft at random dost thou hurl thy darts invincible with thine imperial hand? 'Gainst one so criminal why is thy right hand stayed? Would that he might pay penalty for his crimes, this spurious² Nero, son of Domitius, tyrant of a world he burdens with his shameful yoke, and with foul ways pollutes the name Augustus!

² Referring to the fact that Nero was not the true son and rightful heir of Claudius.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

NVTRIX

Indignus ille, fateor, est thalamis tuis ;
sed cede fatis atque fortunae tuae,
alumna, quaeso neve violenti movē
iram mariti. forsitan vindex deus
existet aliquis, laetus et veniet dies.

OCTAVIA

Gravi deorum nostra iam pridem domus
urgetur ira, prima quam pressit Venus
furore miserae dura genetricis meae,
quae nupta demens nupsit incesta face, 260
oblita nostri, coniugis, legum immemor.
illi soluta crine, succincta anguibus
ultrix Erinys venit ad Stygios toros
raptasque thalamis sanguine extinxit faces ;
incendit ira principis pectus truci
caedem in nefandam ; cecidit infelix parens,
heu, nostra ferro meque perpetuo obruit
extincta luctu ; coniugem traxit suum
natumque ad umbras, prodidit lapsam domum.

NVTRIX

Renovare luctus parce cum fletu pios, 270
manes parentis neve sollicita tuae,
graves furoris quae sui poenas dedit.

CHORVS

Quae fama modo venit ad aures ?
utinam falso credita perdat
frustra totiens iactata fidem,

¹ *i.e.* C. Silius.

OCTAVIA

NURSE

Unworthy he, I do confess it, to mate with thee ;
but yield thee to the fates and to thy lot, my child,
I beg, nor rouse thy violent husband's wrath. Per-
chance some god will arise as thine avenger, and a
day of happiness will come again.

OCTAVIA

Long since has the heavy wrath of the gods
pursued our house, which harsh Venus first o'er-
whelmed in my poor mother's madness ; for she,
already wed, in mad folly wed another¹ with un-
holy torch, of me, of her husband forgetful, and re-
gardless of the laws. Against her to that hellish
couch, with streaming hair and girt about with snakes,
came the avenging Fury and quenched those stolen
wedding fires in blood ; with rage she inflamed the
cruel emperor's heart to impious murder ; my ill-
starred mother fell, alas, and, by the sword destroyed,
o'erwhelmed me in endless suffering ; her husband
and her son did she drag down to death² and shame-
fully betrayed our fallen house.

NURSE

Forbear with weeping to renew thy filial griefs, and
vex not thy mother's spirit, who for her madness has
grievously atoned. [*Exeunt.*]

CHORUS

What rumour has but now come to our ears ?
May it prove false and gain no credence though
vainly told o'er and o'er ; and may no new wife the

² Because, after Messalina's death, Claudius married Agrippina who was responsible for the death of Claudius and Britannicus.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

nec nova coniunx nostri thalamos
 principis intret teneatque suos
 nupta penates Claudia proles ;
 edat partu pignora pacis
 qua tranquillus gaudeat orbis 280
 servetque decus Roma aeternum.
 fratris thalamos sortita tenet
 maxima Iuno ; soror Augusti
 sociata toris cur a patria
 pellitur aula ? sancta quid illi
 prodest pietas divusque pater,
 quid virginitas castusque pudor ?
 nos quoque nostri sumus immemores
 post fata ducis, cuius stirpem
 prodimus aegro¹ suadente metu. 290
 vera priorum virtus quondam
 Romana fuit verumque genus
 Martis in illis sanguisque viris.
 illi reges hac expulerunt
 urbe superbos ultique tuos
 sunt bene manes,
 virgo, dextra
 caesa parentis, ne servitium
 paterere grave et improba ferret
 praemia victrix dira libido. 300
 te quoque bellum triste secutum est,²
 mactata tua miseranda manu,
 nata Lucreti, stuprum saevi
 passa tyranni.
 dedit infandi sceleris poenas
 cum Tarquinio Tullia coniunx,
 quae per caesi membra parentis
 egit saevos impia currus
 laceroque seni violenta rogos
 nata negavit.

OCTAVIA

emperor's chamber enter, and may his bride, the child of Claudius, keep her rightful home, and bring forth sons, pledges of peace, wherein the untroubled world may rejoice and Rome preserve her everlasting glory. Her brother's bridal chamber mightiest Juno won and holds; why is Augustus's sister, made partner of his couch, driven from her father's house? Of what avail to her is pure devotion, a father deified, virginity, unblemished chastity? We too, after his death have quite forgot our leader, and betray his child at the bidding of sick fear. Right Roman virtue of old our fathers had; in such men was the true race and blood of Mars. They from this city arrogant kings expelled, and well did they avenge thy ghost, O virgin,¹ slain by thy father's hand lest thou shouldst suffer slavery's heavy load, and lest cruel lust, victorious, should gain its shameless prize. Thee² also a sad war followed, daughter of Lucretius, slain, poor girl, by thine own hand, by a brutal tyrant outraged. With Tarquin Tullia, his wife, paid penalty for crime unspeakable, who, over the body of her murdered father heartlessly drove her cruel car, and, mad daughter, refused the mangled old man a funeral-pyre.

¹ Virginia. See Index.

² Lucretia. See Index.

¹ *So Richter: Leo †aevo: A sevo: ψ evo: Peiper eheu.*

² *Leo deletes lines 297-301.*

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Haec quoque nati videre nefas 310
 saecula magnum, cum Tyrrhenum
 rate ferali princeps captam
 fraude parentem misit in aequor.
 properant placidos linquere portus
 iussi nautae, resonant remis
 pulsata freta.

fertur in altum provecta ratis,
 quae resoluta robore labens
 pressa dehiscit sorbetque mare.
 tollitur ingens clamor ad astra 320
 cum femineo mixtus planctu.
 mors ante oculos dira vagatur ;
 quaerit leti sibi quisque fugam ;
 alii lacerae puppis tabulis
 haerent nudi fluctusque secant,
 repetunt alii litora nantes ;
 multos mergunt fata profundo.
 scindit vestes Augusta suas
 laceratque comas rigat et maestis
 fletibus ora. 330

Postquam spes est nulla salutis,
 ardens ira, iam victa malis :
 "haec" exclamat "mihi pro tanto
 munere reddis praemia, nate ?
 hac sum, fateor, digna carina,
 quae te genui, quae tibi lucem
 atque imperium nomenque dedi
 Caesaris amens. exere vultus
 Acheronte tuos poenisque meis
 pascere, coniunx ; 340
 ego causa tuae, miserande, necis
 natoque tuo funeris auctor
 en, ut merui, ferar ad manes
 inhumata tuos, obruta saevis
 aequoris undis."

OCTAVIA

³¹⁰ This age as well has seen a son's dire crime, when in a deadly bark the prince¹ sent his mother out on the Tyrrhene sea, by a trick ensnared. At his bidding the sailors make haste to leave the peaceful port and, smit by the oars, the sea resounds. The vessel is borne far out upon the deep; and there, with loosened timbers, sinking, overwhelmed, it yawns wide and drinks in the sea. A mighty outcry rises to the stars, mingled with shrieks of women. Death stalks dire before the eyes of all; each for himself seeks refuge from destruction; some cling naked to planks of the broken ship and face the floods, while others, swimming, seek to gain the shore; fate plunges many into the depths below. Augusta² rends her garments and tears her hair and waters her cheeks with grieving tears.

³³¹ At last, with hope of safety gone, blazing with anger and now o'ercome with woe, she cries; "Such reward as this for my great boon, O son, dost thou return me? Worthy am I of this ship, I do confess, who brought thee forth, who gave thee light and empire and the name of Caesar, fool that I was. Thrust forth thy face from Acheron, and glut thee with my punishment, O husband; I caused thy death, poor soul, was the author of thy son's destruction, and lo, as I have merited, to thy ghost am I now borne unburied, whelmed in the cruel waters of the sea."

¹ Nero.

² i.e. Agrippina.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Feriant fluctus ora loquentis,
 ruit in pelagus rursusque salo
 pressa resurgit, pellit palmis
 cogente metu freta, set cedit
 fessa labori. mansit tacitis 350

in pectoribus spreta tristi
 iam morte fides. multi dominae
 ferre auxilium pelago fractis
 viribus audent, bracchia quamvis
 lenta trahentem voce hortantur
 manibusque levant. quid tibi saevi
 fugisse maris profuit undas?
 ferro es nati moritura tui,
 cuius facinus vix posteritas,
 tarde semper saecula credent. 360

furit ereptam pelagoque dolet
 vivere matrem
 impius, ingens geminatque nefas;
 ruit in miserae fata parentis
 patiturque moram sceleris nullam.
 missus peragit iussa satelles;
 reserat dominae pectora ferro.
 caedis moriens illa ministrum
 rogat infelix, utero dirum
 condat ut ensem: 370

“hic est, hic est fodiendus” ait
 “ferro, monstrum qui tale tulit.”
 post hanc vocem
 mixtam gemitu cum supremo
 animam tandem per fera tristem
 vulnera reddit.

SENECA

Quid me, potens Fortuna, fallaci mihi
 blandita vultu, sorte contentum mea

OCTAVIA

316 E'en while she speaks the waves wash o'er her lips, and down into the deep she plunges; anon she rises from the briny weight and with her hands, fear driving her, lashes the sea; but soon, outwearied, gives o'er the struggle. There still lived in secret hearts¹ fidelity which scorned the grim fear of death. Many to their mistress dare bring aid, when her strength is exhausted by the sea, and, as she drags her arms, though sluggishly, along, with their voices cheer her and lift her with their hands. But what availed it to have escaped the waters of the cruel sea? By the sword of thine own son thou art to die, to whose crime scarce will posterity, slowly will all future ages, give belief. He rages and grieves that his mother, snatched from the sea, still lives, the impious monster, and heaps huge guilt on guilt; bent on^{*} his wretched mother's death, he brooks no stay of crime. Sent to the task, his creature works his will, and with the sword lays open his mistress' breast. The unhappy woman, dying, begs her murderer to sheathe his fell sword within her womb: "'Tis this, 'tis this that must with the sword be pierced, which gave such monster birth!" After such utterance, with a dying groan commingled, at length through the cruel wound she yielded her sad ghost.

SENECA [*alone*]

Why, potent Fortune, with false, flattering looks, hast high exalted me when contented with my lot,

¹ i. e. of some of her servants.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

alte extulisti, gravius ut ruerem edita
 receptus arce totque prospicerem metus? 380
 melius latebam procul ab invidiae malis
 remotus inter Corsici rupes maris,
 ubi liber animus et sui iuris mihi
 semper vacabat studia recolenti mea.
 o quam iuvabat, quo nihil maius parens
 Natura genuit, operis immensi artifex,
 caelum intueri, solis et currus sacros
 mundique motus,¹ solis alternas vices
 orbemque Phoebes, astra quem cingunt vaga,
 lateque fulgens aetheris magni decus; 390
 qui si senescit, tantus in caecum chaos
 casurus iterum, tunc adest mundo dies²
 supremus ille, qui premat³ genus impium
 caeli ruina, rursus ut stirpem novam
 generet renascens melior, ut quondam tulit
 iuvenis, tenente regna Saturno poli.
 tunc illa virgo, numinis magni dea,
 Iustitia, caelo missa cum sancta Fide
 terris regebat mitis humanum genus.
 non bella norant, non tubae fremitus truces, 400
 non arma gentes, cingere assuerant suas
 muris nec urbes: pervium cunctis iter,
 communis usus omnium rerum fuit;
 et ipsa Tellus laeta fecundos sinus
 pandebat ultro, tam piis felix parens
 et tuta alumnis.

Alia sed suboles, minus
 experta mitis, tertium sollers genus
 novas ad artes extitit, sanctum tamen;
 mox inquietum, quod sequi cursu feras

¹ *Leo deletes solis . . . motus.*

² *So Richter with MSS.: Leo casurus iterum est—nunc ades mundo, dies.*

³ *So Richter with MSS.: Leo premas.*

OCTAVIA

that, raised to a lofty pinnacle, in heavier ruin I might fall, and might look out upon so many fears? Better was I hid, far out of the reach of envy's sting, midst the crags of Corsica, facing on the sea, where my spirit, free and its own lord, had ever time to contemplate my favourite themes. Oh, 'twas joy—a joy surpassing anything to which mother Nature, contriver of this fabric infinite, hath given birth, to gaze upon the heavens, the sun's sacred chariot, the motions of the universe and the sun's recurring rounds, and the orb of Phoebe, which the wandering stars encircle, and the far effulgent glory of the mighty sky. If this sky is growing old, doomed wholly once more to fall into blind nothingness, then for the universe is that last day at hand which shall crush sinful man beneath heaven's ruin, that so once more a reborn and better world may bring forth a new race such as she bore in youth, when Saturn¹ held the kingdoms of the sky. Then did that virgin, Justice,² goddess of mighty sway, from heaven sent down with holy Faith to earth, rule with mild sway the race of men. No wars the nations knew, no trumpet's threatening blasts, no arms, nor were they used to surround their cities with a wall: open to all was the way, in common was the use of every thing; and the glad Earth herself willingly laid bare her fruitful breast, a mother happy and safe amid such duteous nurslings.

⁴⁰⁶ But another race arose which proved less gentle; another yet, cunning in unknown arts, but holy still; then came a restless race, which dared

¹ In the Golden Age.

² i.e. Astraea.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

auderet acres, fluctibus tectos gravi
 extrahere pisces rete vel calamo levi,
 decipere volucres¹ 410
 tenere laqueo, premere subiectos iugo
 tauros feroces, vomere immunem prius
 sulcare terram, laesa quae fruges suas
 interius alte condidit sacro sinu.
 sed in parentis viscera intravit suae
 deterior aetas; eruit ferrum grave
 aurumque, saevas mox et armavit manus;
 partita fines regna constituit, novas 420
 extruxit urbes, tecta defendit sua,
 aliena telis aut petit praedae imminens.
 neglecta terras fugit et mores feros
 hominum et cruenta caede pollutas manus
 Astraea virgo, siderum magnum decus.
 cupido belli crevit atque auri fames
 totum per orbem, maximum exortum est malum
 luxuria, pestis blanda, cui vires dedit
 roburque longum tempus atque error gravis.
 collecta vitia per tot aetates diu 430
 in nos redundant; saeculo premimur gravi,
 quo scelera regnant, saevit impietas furens,
 turpi libido Venere dominatur potens,
 luxuria victrix orbis immensas opes
 iam pridem avaris manibus, ut perdat, rapit.
 Sed ecce, gressu fertur attonito Nero
 trucique vultu. quid ferat mente horreo.

NERO

Perage imperata; mitte, qui Plauti mihi
 Sullaeque caesi referat abscisum caput.

¹ *Leo conjectures a lacuna, and suggests <turbidos forti canes>.*

OCTAVIA

pursue the wild beasts in the chase, draw fish from their coverts 'neath the sea with weighted net or slender rod, catch birds, on a strong leash hold unruly dogs,¹ force headstrong bullocks to endure the yoke, furrow the earth which had never felt the plough, and which, now thus outraged, had hidden her fruits deeper in her sacred bosom. But into its mother's bowels did that degenerate age intrude; it dug out heavy iron and gold, and soon did it arm savage hands for war. Marking out boundaries, it established kingdoms, built cities, hitherto unknown, guarded its own dwellings or, bent on booty, with weapons attacked another's. Away from earth that scorned her, from the wild ways of men and hands defiled with bloody slaughter, fled the maid, Astraea, chief glory of the firmament. Lust for war increased and hunger for gold throughout the world; luxury arose, deadliest of ills, a luring pest, which acquired strength and force by long use and grievous error. These sins, through many ages gathering, are o'erflowing upon us; a heavy age weighs us down, wherein crime is regnant, impiety runs mad, all-potent lust lords it with shameless love, and triumphant luxury has long with greedy hands been clutching the world's unbounded stores—that she may squander them.

[NERO is seen approaching.]

⁴³⁶ But see, with startled step and savage mien Nero approaches. At thought of what he brings I tremble.

[Enter NERO, followed by a Prefect.]

NERO [to Prefect]

Go do my bidding; send one to slay me Plautus and Sulla and bring back their severed heads.

¹ Translating Leo's conjecture.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

PRAEFECTVS

Iussa haud morabor : castra confestim petam.

SENECA

Nihil in propinquos temere constitui decet. 440

NERO

Iustum esse facile est cui vacat pectus metu.

SENECA

Magnum timoris remedium clementia est.

NERO

Extinguere hostem maxima est virtus ducis.

SENECA

Servare cives maior est patriae patri.

NERO

Praecipere mitem convenit pueris senem.

SENECA

Regenda magis est fervida adolescentia.

NERO

Aetate in hac sat esse consilii reor.

SENECA

Vt facta superi comprobent semper tua.

NERO

Stulte verebor, ipse cum faciam, deos.

OCTAVIA

PREFECT

Thy bidding will I do: to the camp forthwith I'll
take me. [Exit.

SENECA

'Tis not becoming to proceed rashly 'gainst one's
friends.

NERO

'Tis easy to be just when the heart is free from
fear.

SENECA

A sovereign cure for fear is clemency.

NERO

To destroy foes is a leader's greatest virtue.

SENECA

For the father of his country to save citizens, is
greater still.

NERO

A mild old man should give schooling to boys.

SENECA

More needful 'tis that fiery youth be ruled.

NERO

I deem that at this age we are wise enough.

SENECA

May thy deeds be ever pleasing to the gods.

NERO

Foolish I'd be to fear the gods, when I myself
make them.¹

¹ Referring to his own act in deifying the late Claudius.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

SENECA

Hoc plus verere quod licet tantum tibi, 450

NERO

Fortuna nostra cuncta permittit mihi.

SENECA

Crede obsequenti parcius; levis est dea.

NERO

Inertis est nescire quid liceat sibi.

SENECA

Id facere laus est quod decet, non quod licet.

NERO

Calcat iacentem vulgus.

SENECA

Invisum opprimit.

NERO

Ferrum tuetur principem.

SENECA

Melius fides.

NERO

Decet timeri Caesarem.

SENECA

At plus diligi.¹

NERO

Metuant necesse est—

¹ *Leo deletes decet . . . diligi.*

OCTAVIA

SENECA

Fear thou the more, that so great power is thine.

NERO

My fortune doth allow all things to me.

SENECA

Indulgent fortune trust more cautiously; she is a fickle goddess.

NERO

'Tis a dullard's part not to know what he may do.

SENECA

'Tis praiseworthy to do, not what one may, but what one ought.

NERO

Him who lies down the crowd trample on.

SENECA

Him whom they hate, they crush.

NERO

The sword protects the prince.

SENECA

Still better, loyalty.

NERO

A Caesar should be feared.

SENECA

But more be loved.

NERO

But men must fear—

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

SENECA

Quidquid exprimitur grave est.

NERO

Iussisque nostris pareant.

SENECA

Iusta impera—

NERO

Statuam ipse.

SENECA

Quae consensus efficiat rata. 460

NERO

Respectus¹ ensis faciet.

SENECA

Hoc absit nefas.

NERO

An patiar ultra sanguinem nostrum peti,
inultus et contemptus ut subito opprimar?
exilia non fregere summotos procul
Plautum atque Sullam, pertinax quorum furor
armat ministros sceleris in caedem meam,
absentium cum maneat etiam ingens favor
in urbe nostra, qui fovet spes exulum.
tollantur hostes ense suspecti mihi,
invisa coniunx pereat et carum sibi 470
fratrem sequatur. quidquid excelsum est cadat.

SENECA

Pulcrum eminere est inter illustres viros,
consulere patriae, parcere afflictis, fera

¹ So Buecheler and Richter: *Leo, with the MSS.*, *Despectus*:
Wilamowitz: *despectum ut ensis feriat?*

OCTAVIA

SENECA

What is compelled is burdensome.

NERO

Let them obey our orders.

SENECA

Give righteous orders—

NERO

I shall myself decide.

SENECA

which all men may respect.

NERO

The sword will force respect.

SENECA

May heaven forbid!

NERO

Shall I then go on suffering them to seek my blood, that, unavenged and scorned, I may suddenly be crushed? Exile has not broken Plautus and Sulla, though far removed, whose persistent rage arms the agents of their guilt to work my death, since still, though absent, great is the favour they enjoy in this our city, which nurtures the exiles' hopes. Let the sword remove foemen whom I suspect; let my hateful wife perish and follow the brother whom she loves. Whatever is high exalted, let it fall.

SENECA

'Tis glorious to tower aloft amongst great men, to have care for father-land, to spare the downtrodden,

THE TRAGEDIÆ OF SENECA

caede abstinere tempus atque irae dare,
 orbi quietem, saeculo pacem suo.
 haec summa virtus, petitur hac caelum via.
 sic ille patriae primus Augustus parens
 complexus astra est colitur et templis deus.
 illum tamen Fortuna iactavit diu
 terra marique per graves belli vices, 480
 hostes parentis donec oppressit sui ;
 tibi numen incruenta summisit suum
 et dedit habenas imperi facili manu
 nutuque terras maria subiecit tuo.
 invidia tristis victa consensu pio
 cessit ; senatus, equitis accensus favor ;
 plebisque votis atque iudicio patrum
 tu pacis auctor, generis humani arbiter
 electus orbem iam sacra specie regis
 patriae parens ; quod nomen ut serves petit 490
 suosque cives Roma commendat tibi.

NERO

Munus deorum est, ipsa quod servit mihi
 Roma et senatus quodque ab invitis preces
 humilesque voces exprimit nostri metus.
 servare cives principi et patriae graves.
 claro tumentes genere—quae dementia est,
 cum liceat una voce suspectos sibi
 mori iubere ? Brutus in caedem ducis,
 a quo salutem tulerat, armavit manus ;
 invictus acie, gentium domitor, Iovi 500
 aequatus altos ipse per honorum gradus
 Caesar nefando civium scelere occidit.
 quantum cruoris Roma tum vidit sui,
 lacerata totiens ! ille qui meruit pia
 virtute caelum, divus Augustus, viros
 448

OCTAVIA

to abstain from cruel bloodshed, to be slow to wrath, give quiet to the world, peace to one's time. This is virtue's crown, by this way is heaven sought. So did that first Augustus, his country's father, gain the stars, and is worshipped in the temples as a god. Yet him did Fortune toss for long on land and sea in battle's deadly chances, until his father's foes he overwhelmed. But to thee hath she yielded her divinity, unstained of blood; hath with easy hand given thee the reins of government, and to thy nod subjected lands and seas. Sour hate, o'ercome, hath yielded in loyal harmony; the senate's favour and the knights' is warm toward thee; and by the people's prayers and the judgment of the Fathers, thou art the source of peace, the arbiter of human destinies, chosen to rule the world with godlike mien, the country's father. This name Rome prays thee to preserve, and to thy care commends her citizens.

NERO

'Tis the gift of heaven that Rome herself and the senate are subject unto me, and that from unwilling lips prayers and servile words are extorted by fear of me. To preserve citizens, to ruler and fatherland alike oppressive, puffed up with pride of race—what folly is't, when with a word one may give to death those he suspects? Brutus for the murder of his chief, to whom he owed his safety, armed his hands; and Caesar, invincible in battle shock, tamer of nations, walking, a very Jove, along the upward path of honours, died by the unspeakable crime of *citizens*. What streams of her own blood did Rome then behold, so often rent with strife! He who earned heaven by piety, the deified Augustus, how

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

quot interemit nobiles, iuvenes senes
 sparsos per orbem, cum suos mortis metu
 fugerent penates et trium ferrum ducum,
 tabula notante deditos tristi neci !
 exposita rostris capita caesorum patres 510
 videre maesti, flere nec licuit suos,
 non gemere dira tabe polluto foro,
 stillante sanie per putres vultus gravi.
 nec finis hic cruoris aut caedis stetit :
 pavere volucres et feras saevas diu
 tristes Philippi, hausit et Siculum mare
 classes virosque ¹ saepe cedentes ; suis
 concussus orbis viribus. magnus ducum
 superatus acie, puppibus Nilum petit
 fugae paratis, ipse periturus brevi ; 520
 hausit cruorem incesta Romani ducis
 Aegyptus iterum ; nunc leves umbras tegit.
 illic sepultum est impie gestum diu
 civile bellum. - condidit tandem suos
 iam fessus enses victor hebetatos feris
 vulneribus, et continuit imperium metus.
 armis fideque militis tutus fuit,
 pietate nati factus eximia deus,
 post fata consecratus et templis datus.
 nos quoque manebunt astra, si saevo prior 530
 ense occuparo quidquid infestum est mihi
 dignaque nostram subole fundaro domum.

¹ *The text here is hopelessly corrupt and has been variously emended. Schroeder's emendation is at least intelligible. Leo reads*

saepe cedentes suos
 concussus orbis viribus magnus ducum
 superatus, etc.

OCTAVIA

many nobles did he put to death, young men and old, scattered throughout the world, when they fled their own homes through fear of death and the sword of the three banded chiefs¹—all by the accusing list² delivered to grim destruction! The grieving fathers saw the heads of the slain set out upon the rostra, but dared not weep their dead nor groan, while the forum reeked with foul corruption, and sluggish gore dripped down the rotting faces. Nor was this the end of slaughter and of blood: long did grim Philippi feed birds and beasts of prey, and the Sicilian sea engulfed fleets and men often retreating; the world³ was shaken by its own contending forces. The great⁴ commander, by the leaders' array o'ercome, with his ships prepared for flight, hied him to the Nile, himself doomed soon to perish; incestuous⁵ Egypt a second⁶ time drank a Roman leader's blood, and now covers his flitting shade. There civil strife is buried, waged impiously and long. At last the victor⁷ now weary, sheathed his sword, blunted with savage blows, and maintained his sway by fear. Safe under the protection of his loyal guards he lived, and when he died, by the surpassing piety of his son⁸ was made a god, hallowed and enshrined. Me, too, shall the stars await, if with relentless sword I first destroy whate'er is hostile to me, and on a worthy offspring found my house.

¹ The Second Triumvirate, Lepidus, Antonius, and Octavius. ² The proscription lists.

³ *i.e.* the world of the Roman Empire.

⁴ Evidently referring to Marcus Antonius, as the context shows.

⁵ Because of the marriage of Cleopatra with her brother, Ptolemy.

⁶ The implied first was Cn. Pompeius.

⁷ Octavius.

⁸ Tiberius, the adopted son of Augustus.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

SENECA

Implebit aulam stirpe caelesti tuam
generata divo Claudiae gentis decus,
sortita fratris more Iunonis toros.

NERO

Incesta genetrix detrahit generi fidem,
animusque numquam coniugis iunctus mihi.

SENECA

Teneris in annis haud satis clarus ferest,¹
pudore victus cum tegit flammam, amor.

NERO

Hoc equidem et ipse credidi frustra diu, 540
manifesta quamvis pectore insociabili
vultuque signa proderent odium mei;
tandem quod ardens statuit ulcisci dolor.
dignamque thalamis coniugem inveni meis
genere atque forma, victa cui cedat Venus
Iovisque coniunx et ferox armis dea.

SENECA

Probitas fidesque coniugis, mores pudor
placeant marito; sola perpetuo manent
subiecta nulli mentis atque animi bona;
florem decoris singuli carpunt dies. 550

NERO

Omnes in unam contulit laudes deus
talemque nasci fata voluerunt mihi.

¹ clara est fides A, emended by Leo, and with reason, for the fides of line 536 is not in question, but the amor implicit in line 537.

OCTAVIA

SENECA

With stock celestial will she¹ fill thy halls, she,
the daughter of a god,² the Claudian race's glory,
who has, like Juno, gained her brother's bed.

NERO

A harlot mother³ brings her birth in doubt;—
and the soul of my wife was never linked with mine.

SENECA

In tender years rarely is love revealed, when, by
modesty o'ercome, it hides its fires.

NERO

This truly I, too, myself have vainly trusted long,
although clear signs from her unloving heart and
face betrayed her hate of me; which to avenge at
last my hot grief has resolved. And now I have
found a wife worthy of my bed in birth and beauty, to
whom Venus, outshone, would yield, and the wife of
Jove and the goddess⁴ bold in battle.

SENECA

But honour, wifely faith, virtue and modesty,
should please a husband; for 'tis these only, the
treasures of mind and heart, that, subject to none,
abide perpetual; but beauty's flower each passing
day despoils.

NERO

All charms upon one woman has God bestowed,
and such was she born,—so have the fates decreed,—
for me.

¹ Octavia.

² Claudius, by courtesy and custom called *divus* after
death.

³ Messalina.

⁴ Minerva.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

SENECA

Recedet a te (temere ne credas) amor.

NERO

Quem summovere fulminis dominus nequit,
caeli tyrannum, saeva qui penetrat freta
Ditisque regna, detrahit superos polo?

SENECA

Volucrem esse Amorem fingit immitem deum
mortalis error, armat et telis manus
arcuque sacras, instruit saeva face
genitumque credit Venere, Vulcano satum. 560
vis magna mentis blandus atque animi calor
Amor est; iuventa gignitur, luxu otio
nutritur inter laeta Fortunae bona;
quem si fovere atque alere desistas, cadit
brevique vires perdit extinctus suas.

NERO

Hanc esse vitae maximam causam reor,
per quam voluptas oritur; interitu caret,
cum procreetur semper humanum genus
Amore grato, qui truces mulcet feras.
hic mihi iugales praeferat taedas deus 570
iungatque nostris igne Poppaeam toris.

SENECA

Vix sustinere possit hos thalamos dolor
videre populi, sancta nec pietas sinat.

NERO

Prohibebor unus facere quod cunctis licet?

OCTAVIA

SENECA

Love will depart from thee, be not too credulous.

NERO

What? He whom the lightning's lord cannot put off? Heaven's tyrant, who enters the savage seas and the realm of Dis, and draws gods from the sky?

SENECA

'Tis our human ignorance fashions Love a winged god, implacable, and arms with shafts and bow his sacred hands, equips him with blazing torch, and counts him the son of Venus, Vulcan's seed. This "Love" is a mighty force of mind, a fond heat of the soul; 'tis born of youth, 'tis nursed by luxury and ease midst the glad gifts of Fortune; and if thou cease to feed and foster it, it falls away and quickly is its power dead and lost.

NERO

This do I deem the chiefest source of life, whence pleasure hath its birth; 'tis a deathless thing, since the human race is evermore renewed by pleasing Love, who softens e'en savage beasts. May this god bear before me the wedding torch, and with his fire join Poppaea to my bed.

SENECA

The people's grief could scarce endure to see such marriage, nor would holy reverence allow it.

NERO

Shall I alone be forbidden what all may do?

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

SENECA

Maiora populus semper a summo exigit.

NERO

Libet experiri, viribus fractus meis
an cedat animis temere conceptus favor.

SENECA

Obsequere potius civibus placidus tuis.

NERO

Male imperatur, cum regit vulgus duces.

SENECA

Nihil impetrare cum valet, iuste dolet. 580

NERO

Exprimere ius est, ferre quod nequeunt preces?

SENECA

Negare durum est.

NERO

Principem cogi nefas.

SENECA

Remittat ipse.

NERO

Fama sed victum feret.

SENECA

Levis atque vana.

NERO

Sit licet, multos notat.

OCTAVIA

SENECA

Greatest from highest ever the state exacts.

NERO

Fain would I make trial whether, broken by my
might, this rashly cherished regard would not vanish
from their hearts.

SENECA

Bend, rather, peacefully to thy people's will.

NERO

Ill fares the state when commons govern kings.

SENECA

He justly chafes who naught avails by prayer.

NERO

Is it right to extort what prayer cannot obtain

SENECA

To refuse is harsh.

NERO

To force a prince is outrage.

SENECA

He should himself give way.

NERO

But rumour will report him conquered.

SENECA

A trivial and empty thing is rumour.

NERO

E'en so, it disgraces many.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

SENECA

Excelsa metuit.

NERO

Non minus carpit tamen.

SENECA

Facile opprimetur. merita te divi patris
aetasque frangat coniugis, probitas pudor.

NERO

Desiste tandem, iam gravis nimium mihi,
instare ; liceat facere quod Seneca improbat.
iam pridem et ipse vota Poppaeae moror,¹ 590
cum portet utero pignus et partem mei.
quin destinamus proximum thalamis diem ?

AGRIPPINA

Tellure rupta Tartaro gressum extuli,
Stygiam cruenta praeferens dextra facem
thalamis scelestis. nubat his flammis meo
Poppaea nato iuncta, quas vindex manus
dolorque matris vertet ad tristes rogos.
marret inter umbras impiae caedis mihi
semper memoria, manibus nostris gravis
adhuc inultis. reddita est meritis meis 600
funesta merces puppis et pretium imperi
nox illa qua naufragia deflevi mea ;
comitum necem natique crudelis nefas
deflere votum fuerat—haud tempus datum est

¹ So *Buecheler*. *Leo* reads et ipse populi vota iam pridem moror. populi is impossible in view of the next line.

OCTAVIA

SENECA

It fears the high exalted.

NERO

But none the less maligns.

SENECA

'Twill easily be crushed. Let the merits of thy sainted father¹ break thy will,² and thy wife's youth, her faith, her chastity.

NERO

Have done at last; already too wearisome has thy insistence grown; permit me to do what Seneca disapproves. Long since am I myself Poppaea's prayers delaying, since in her womb she bears a pledge and part of me. Why not appoint to-morrow for the wedding day? *[Exeunt.]*

[Enter Ghost of AGRIPPINA bearing a flaming torch.]

AGRIPPINA

Through the rent earth from Tartarus have I come forth, bringing in bloody hand a Stygian torch to these curst marriage rites. With these flames let Poppaea wed my son, which a mother's avenging hand and grief shall turn to grim funeral pyres. Ever amidst the shades the memory of my impious murder abides with me, burdening my ghost still unavenged. The payment I received for all my services was that death-fraught ship, and the reward of empire, that night wherein I mourned my wreck. My comrades' murder and my son's heartless crime I would have wept—no time was given for

¹ *i. e.* his adoptive father, Claudius.

² In the matter of Poppaea.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

lacrimis, sed ingens scelere geminavit nefas.
 perempta ferro, foeda vulneribus sacros
 intra penates spiritum effudi gravem
 erepta pelago, sanguine extinxi meo
 nec odia nati. saevit in nomen ferus
 matris tyrannus, obrui meritum cupit, 610
 simulacra, titulos destruit mortis¹ metu
 totum per orbem quem dedit poenam in meam
 puero regendum noster infelix amor.

Extinctus umbras agitat infestus meas
 flammisque vultus noxios coniunx petit,
 instat, minatur, imputat fatum mihi
 tumulumque nati, poscit auctorem necis.
 iam parce ; dabitur, tempus haud longum peto.
 ultrix Erinys impio dignum parat 620
 letum tyranno, verbera et turpem fugam
 poenasque quis et Tantali vincat sitim,
 dirum laborem Sisyphi, Tityi alitem
 Ixionisque membra rapientem rotam.
 licet extruat marmoribus atque auro tegat
 superbus aulam, limen armatae ducis
 servent cohortes, mittat immensas opes
 exhaustus orbis, supplices dextram petant
 Parthi cruentam, regna divitias ferant ;
 veniet dies tempusque quo reddat suis
 animam nocentem sceleribus, iugulum hostibus 630
 desertus ac destructus et cunctis egens.

Heu, quo labor, quo vota ceciderunt mea ?

¹ *So A. Leo, following Buecheler, matris.*

¹ Britannicus.

² Nero.

³ It is the following passage which forms the chief argu-

OCTAVIA

tears, but with crime he doubled that awful crime. Though saved from the sea, yet by the sword undone, loathsome with wounds, midst the holy images I gave up my troubled ghost. Still my blood quenched not the hatred of my son. Rages the mad tyrant against his mother's name, longs to blot out her merits; my statues, my inscriptions he destroys by threat of death throughout the world—the world which, to my own punishment, my ill-starred love gave to a boy's government.

[*She seems to see her husband's ghost.*]

614 Wrathfully doth my dead husband harass my ghost, and with torches attacks my guilty face; pursues me, threatens, charges to me his death and his son's¹ burial mound, demands the author² of the murderous deed. Have done; he shall be given; 'tis no long time I seek. The avenging Fury plans for the impious tyrant a worthy doom³; blows and base flight and sufferings whereby he may surpass e'en Tantalus' thirst, the dread toil of Sisyphus, the bird of Tityus and the wheel which whirls Ixion's limbs around. Though in his pride he build him marble palaces and roof them in with gold, though armed guards stand at their chieftain's door, though the beggared world send him its boundless riches, though Parthians in supppliance seek his bloody hand, though kingdoms bring wealth to him; the day and the hour will come when for his crimes he shall pay his guilty soul, shall give his throat to his enemies, abandoned and undone and stripped of all.

632 Alas! to what end my labour and my prayers?

ment of those who deny the Senecan authorship of this play, on the ground that it gives in the form of prophecy a circumstantial account of the death of Nero, in 68 A. D., whereas Seneca died in 65.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

quo te furor provexit attonitum tuus
 et fata, nate, cedat ut tantis malis
 genetricis ira quae tuo scelere occidit?
 utinam antequam te parvulum in lucem edidi
 alicuique, saevae nostra lacerassent ferae
 viscera; sine ullo scelere, sine sensu innocens
 meus occidisses; iunctus atque haerens mihi
 semper quietam cerneres sedem inferum, 640
 proavos patremque, nominis magni viros,
 quos nunc pudor luctusque perpetuus manet
 ex te, nefande, meque quae talem tuli.
 quid tegere cesso Tartaro vultus meos,
 noverca coniunx mater infelix meis?

OCTAVIA

Parcite lacrimis urbis festo
 lactoque die, ne tantus amor
 nostrique favor principis acres
 suscitet iras vobisque ego sim
 causa malorum. non hoc primum 650
 pectora vulnus mea senserunt;
 graviora tuli; dabit hic nostris
 finem curis vel morte dies.
 non ego saevi cernere cogar
 coniugis ora,
 non invisos intrare mihi
 thalamos famulae;
 soror Augusti, non uxor ero.
 absint tantum tristes poenae
 letique metus. 660
 scelerum diri, miseranda, viri
 potes hoc demens sperare memor?
 hos ad thalamos servata diu

OCTAVIA

Hath thy frenzy carried thee so far in madness, and thy destiny, my son, that the wrath of a mother murdered by thy hand gives way before such woes? Would that, ere I brought thee, a tiny babe, to light, and suckled thee, savage beasts of prey had rent my vitals; then without crime, without sense and innocent, thou wouldst have died—my own; close clinging to my side, thou wouldst forever see the quiet seats of the underworld, thy grandsires and thy sire, heroes of glorious name, whom now shame and grief perpetual await because of thee, thou monster, and of me who bore such son. But why delay to hide my face in Tartarus, as step-dame, mother, wife, a curse unto my own?

[*The Ghost vanishes. Enter OCTAVIA.*]

OCTAVIA [*to the Chorus*]

Restrain your tears on this glad, festal day of Rome, lest your great love and care for me arouse the emperor's sharp wrath, and I be cause of suffering to you. This wound¹ is not the first my heart has felt; far heavier have I borne; but this day shall end my cares e'en by my death. No more shall I be forced to look on my brutal husband's face, nor to enter a slave's chamber which I hate; Augustus' sister shall I be, not wife. Only may I be spared dire punishments and fearful death.—And canst thou, poor, foolish girl, remembering thy cruel husband's crimes, yet hope for this? Long kept back for this marriage-festival, thou shalt fall

¹ *i.e.* her divorce and disgrace.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

victima tandem funesta cades.
 sed quid patrios saepe penates
 respicis udis confusa genis?
 propera tectis efferre gradus,
 linque cruentam principis aulam.

CHORVS

En illuxit suspecta diu,
 fama totiens iactata dies. 670
 cessit thalamis Claudia diri
 pulsa Neronis, quo iam victrix
 Poppaea tenet, cessat pietas
 dum nostra gravi compressa metu
 segnisque dolor.
 ubi Romani vis est populi,
 fregit claros quae saepe duces,
 dedit invictae leges patriae,
 fasces dignis civibus olim,
 iussit bellum pacemque, feras 680
 gentes domuit,
 captos reges carcere clausit?
 gravis en oculis undique nostris
 iam Poppaeae fulget imago,
 iuncta Neroni!
 affligat humo violenta manus
 similes nimium vultus dominae
 ipsamque toris detrahat altis,
 petat infestis mox et flammis
 telisque feris principis aulam.

NVTRIX POPPAEAE

Quo trepida gressum coniugis thalamis tui 690
 effers, alumna, quidve secretum petis

¹ i.e. Octavia.

OCTAVIA

at last, an ill-starred victim. But why so often to thy father's house dost look back with streaming eyes? Haste thee to leave this roof; abandon the blood-stained palace of the emperor. [*Exit.*]

CHORUS

Lo, now has dawned the day long dim foreseen, so oft by rumour bruted. Departed is Claudia¹ from cruel Nero's chamber, which e'en now Poppaea holds in triumph, while lags our love by grievous fear repressed, and grief is numb. Where is the Roman people's manhood now, which oft in olden times hath crushed illustrious chiefs, given laws to an unconquered land,² the fasces to worthy citizens, made war and peace at will, conquered wild races and imprisoned captive kings? Lo, grievous to our sight, on every hand now gleams Poppaea's image, with Nero's joined! Let violent hands throw them to the ground, too like their mistress' features; let them drag her down from her lofty couch, and then with devouring flames and savage spears attack the palace of the emperor. [*Exit* CHORUS.

[*Enter* POPPAEA'S NURSE and POPPAEA herself, who appears, distraught, coming out of her chamber.]

NURSE

Whither, dear child, dost pass all trembling from the chamber of thy lord, or what hidden place seekst

² *i.e.* withstood all outside enemies and righteously ruled within the father-land.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

turbata vultu? cur genae fletu madent?
 certe petitus precibus et votis dies
 nostris refulsit; Caesari iuncta es tuo
 taeda iugali, quem tuus cepit decor,
 contempta¹ Senecae tradidit vinctum tibi
 genetrix Amoris, maximum numen, Venus.
 o qualis altos quanta pressisti toros
 residens in aula! vidit attonitus tuam
 formam senatus, tura cum superis dares 700
 sacrasque grato spargeret aras mero,
 velata summum flammeo tenui caput;
 et ipse lateri iunctus atque haerens tuo
 sublimis inter civium laeta omina
 incessit habitu atque ore laetitiam gerens
 princeps superbo. talis emersam freto
 spumante Peleus coniugem accepit Thetin,
 quorum toros celebrasse caelestes ferunt,
 pelagique numen omne consensu pari.
 quae subita vultus causa mutavit tuos? 710
 quid pallor iste, quid ferant lacrimae doce.

POPPAEA

Confusa tristi proximae noctis metu
 visuque, nutrix, mente turbata feror,
 defecta sensu. laeta nam postquam dies
 sideribus atris cessit et nocti polus,
 inter Neronis iuncta complexus mei
 somno resolvor; nec diu placida frui
 quiete licuit. visa nam thalamos meos
 celebrare turba est maesta; resolutis comis 720
 matres Latinae flebiles planctus dabant;
 inter tubarum saepe terribilem sonum
 sparsam cruore coniugis genetrix mei
 vultu minaci saeva quatiebat facem.

¹ et culpa Senecae *A*, variously emended: by Leo as above.
 466

OCTAVIA

thou with troubled face? Why are thy cheeks wet with weeping? Surely the day sought by our prayers and vows has dawned; to thy Caesar art thou joined by the marriage torch, him whom thy beauty snared, whom Venus hath delivered in bonds to thee, Venus, of Seneca flouted, mother of Love, most mighty deity. Oh, how beautiful and stately wast thou on the high couch reclining in the hall! The senate looked on thy beauty in amaze, when incense to the gods thou offeredst and with pleasing wine didst sprinkle the sacred shrines, thy head covered with filmy marriage-veil, flame-coloured. And close beside thee, majestic midst the favouring plaudits of the citizens, walked the prince himself, showing, in look and bearing, his joy and pride. So did Peleus take Thetis for his bride, risen up from Ocean's foam, to whose marriage, they say, the heaven-dwellers thronged, and with equal joy each sea divinity. What cause so suddenly has changed thy face? Tell me what mean thy pallor and thy tears.

POPPEA

My sad heart, dear nurse, is confused and troubled by a fearful vision of yester-night, and my senses reel. For, after joyful day had to the dark stars yielded, and the sky to night, held close in my Nero's arms I lay relaxed in slumber. But not long was it granted to enjoy sweet rest; for my marriage chamber seemed thronged with many mourners; with streaming hair did Roman matrons come, making tearful lamentations; midst oft repeated and fearful trumpet blasts, my husband's mother,¹ with threatening mien and savage, brandished a blood-spattered torch.

¹ Agrippina.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

quam dum sequor coacta praesenti metu,
 diducta subito patuit ingenti mihi
 tellus hiatu; lata quo praeceps toros
 cerno iugales pariter et miror meos,
 in quis residu fessa. venientem intuo
 comitante turba coniugem quondam meum
 natumque; properat petere complexus meos 730
 Crispinus, intermissa libare oscula;
 irrupit intra tecta cum trepidus mea
 enseque iugulo condidit saevum Nero.
 tandem quietem magnus excussit timor;
 quatit ossa et artus horridus nostros tremor
 pulsatque pectus; continet vocem timor,
 quam nunc fides pietasque produxit tua.
 heu quid minantur inferum manes mihi
 aut quem cruorem coniugis vidi mei?

NVTRIX

Quaecumque mentis agitat intentus¹ vigor 740
 ea per quietem sacer et arcanus refert
 veloxque sensus. coniugem thalamos toros
 vidisse te miraris amplexu novi
 haerens mariti? sed movent laeto die
 pulsata palmis pectora et fusae comae?
 Octaviae discidia planxerunt sacros
 inter penates fratris et patrium larem.
 fax illa, quam secuta es, Augustae manu
 praelata clarum nomen invidia tibi
 partum ominatur. inferum sedes toros 750
 stabiles futuros spondet aeternae domus.
 iugulo quod ense condidit princeps tuus,
 bella haud movebit, pace sed ferrum teget.

¹ So Gronovius: *Leo*, with *A*, infestus.

¹ Crispinus.

OCTAVIA

While I was following her, driven by urgent fear, suddenly the earth yawned beneath me in a mighty chasm. Downward through this I plunged and there, as on earth, beheld my wedding-couch, wondering to behold it, whereon I sank in utter weariness. I saw approaching, with a throng around him, my former husband¹ and my son.² Crispinus³ hastened to take me in his arms, to kiss me as long ago; when hurriedly into my chamber Nero burst and buried his savage sword in the other's throat. At length a mighty fear roused me from slumber; my bones and limbs shook with a violent trembling; my heart beat wildly; fear checked my utterance, which now thy love and loyalty have restored to me. Alas! What do the spirits of the dead threaten me, or what means the blood of my husband that I saw?

NURSE

Whate'er the mind's waking vigour eagerly pursues, a mysterious, secret sense, swift working, brings back in sleep. Dost marvel that thou didst behold husband and marriage-bed, held fast in thy new lord's arms? But do hands beating breasts and streaming hair on a day of joy trouble thee? 'Twas Octavia's divorce they mourned midst her brother's sacred gods and her father's house. That torch which thou didst follow, borne in Augusta's⁴ hand, foretells the name that thou shall gain illumed by envy. Thy abode in the lower world⁵ promises the stablished marriage-bed of a home unending. Whereas thine emperor buried his sword in that other's throat, wars shall he not wage, but in peace shall

² Rufrius Crispinus. For his fate, see Index.

³ *i.e.* her husband. ⁴ *i.e.* Agrippina's.

⁵ Since in that world all things are changeless.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

recollige animum, recipe laetitiam, precor,
timore pulso redde te thalamis tuis.

POPPAEA

Delubra et aras petere constitui sacras,
caesis litare victimis numen deum,
ut expientur noctis et somni minae
terrorque in hostes redeat attonitus meos.
tu vota pro me suscipe et precibus piis 760
superos adora, maneat ut praesens status.

CHORVS

Si vera loquax fama Tonantis
furta et gratos narrat amores
(quem modo Ladae pressisse sinum
tectum plumis pennisque ferunt,
modo per fluctus raptam Europen
taurum tergo portasse trucem),
quae regit et nunc deseret astra,
petet amplexus, Poppaea, tuos,
quos et Ladae praeferre potest 770
et tibi, quondam cui miranti
fulvo, Danae, fluxit in auro.
formam Sparte iactet alumnae
licet et Phrygius praemia pastor
vincet vultus haec Tyndaridos
qui moverunt horrida bella
Phrygiaeque solo regna dedere.
Sed quis gressu ruit attonito
aut quid portat pectore anhelo?

NVNTIVS

Quicumque tectis excubat miles ducis, 780
defendat aulam cui furor populi imminet.

OCTAVIA

sheathe his sword. Take heart again, recall thy joy, I pray; banish thy fear and return thee to thy chamber.

POPPAEA

Rather am I resolved to seek the shrines and sacred altars, and with slain victims sacrifice to the holy gods, that the threats of night and sleep may be averted, and that my crazed terror may turn against my foes. Do thou make vows for me and with pious prayers implore the gods of heaven that my present lot may be abiding. [*Exeunt.*]

CHORUS [*of Roman women in sympathy with POPPAEA*]

If truly speaks babbling rumour of the Thunderer's sweet stolen loves, (who now, they say, in feathery plumage hid, held Leda in his embrace, now over the waves, in fierce bull-form, the stolen Europa bore,) e'en now will he desert the stars o'er which he rules and seek thy arms, Poppaea, which even to Leda's he might prefer, and to thine, O Danaë, before whose wondering eyes in olden time he poured down in yellow gold. Let Sparta vaunt the beauty of her daughter,¹ and let the Phrygian shepherd² vaunt his prize; she³ will outshine the face of Tyndaris,⁴ which set dread war on foot and levelled Phrygia's kingdom with the ground.

⁷⁷⁸ But who comes running with excited steps?
What tidings bears he in his heaving breast?

[*Enter MESSENGER.*]

MESSENGER

Whatever guard holds watch o'er our leader's house, let it defend the palace which the people's

¹ Helen. ² Paris. ³ Poppaea. ⁴ Helen.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

trepidi cohortes ecce praefecti trahunt
praesidia ad urbis, victa nec cedit metu
concepta rabies temere, sed vires capit.

CHORUS

Quis iste mentes agitat attonitus furor?

NVNTIVS

Octaviae favore percussa agmina
et efferata per nefas ingens ruunt.

CHORVS

Quid ausa facere quove consilio doce.

NVNTIVS

Reddere penates Claudiae divi parant
torosque fratris, debitam partem imperi.

790

CHORVS

Quos iam tenet Poppaea concordii fide?

NVNTIVS

Hic urit animos pertinax nimium favor
et in furorem temere praecipites agit.
quaecumque claro marmore effigies stetit
aut aere fulgens, ora Poppaeae gerens,
afflicta vulgi manibus et saevo iacet
eversa ferro; membra per partes trahunt
deducta laqueis, obruunt turpi diu
calcata caeno. verba conveniunt feris
immixta factis quae timor reticet meus.
sepire flammis principis sedem parant,

800

OCTAVIA

fury threatens. See, in trembling haste the captains are bringing cohorts to defend the town; nor does the mob's madness, rashly roused, give place, o'ercome with fear, but gathers strength.

CHORUS

What is that wild frenzy which stirs their hearts?

MESSENGER

Smitten with love for Octavia and beside themselves with rage, the throngs rush on, in mood for any crime.

CHORUS

What do they dare to do, or what is their plan, tell thou.

MESSENGER

They plan to give back to Claudia¹ her dead father's house, her brother's bed and her due share of empire.

CHORUS

Which even now Poppaea shares with her lord in mutual loyalty?

MESSENGER

'Tis this too stubborn love² that inflames their minds and into rash madness drives them headlong. Whatever statue was set up of noble marble or of gleaming bronze, which bore the features of Poppaea, lies low, cast down by base-born hands and by relentless bars o'erturned; the limbs, pulled down by ropes, they drag piecemeal, trample them o'er and o'er and cover them with foul mud. Commingled curses match their savage acts, which I am afraid to tell of. They make ready to hem the emperor's

¹ Octavia. ² *i.e.* for Octavia.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

populi nisi irae coniugem reddat novam,
 reddat penates Claudiae victus suos.
 ut noseat ipse civium motus, mea
 voce haud morabor iussa praefecti exequi.

CHORVS

Quid fera frustra bella movetis?
 invicta gerit tela Cupido;
 flammis vestros obruet ignes
 quibus extinxit fulmina saepe
 captumque Iovem caelo traxit. 810
 laeso tristes dabit poenas
 sanguine vestro. non est patiens
 fervidus irae facilisque regi;
 Ille ferocem iussit Achillem
 pulsare lyram, fregit Danaos,
 fregit Atridem, regna evertit
 Priami, claras diruit urbes;
 et nunc animus quid ferat horret
 vis immitis violenta dei.

NERO

O lenta nimium militis nostri manus 820
 et ira patiens post nefas tantum mea,
 quod non cruor civilis accensas faces
 extinguit in nos, caede nec populi madet
 funerea Roma quae viros tales tulit. 824¹
 at illa, cui me civium subicit furor, 827
 suspecta coniunx et soror semper mihi,
 tandem dolori spiritum reddat meo
 iramque nostram sanguine extinguat suo. 830
 admissa sed iam morte puniri parum est.
 graviora meruit impium plebis scelus;

¹ *The inverted order of the following lines is that of Richter.*

OCTAVIA

house with flames should he not yield to the people's wrath his new-made bride, not yield to Claudia the home that is her own. That he himself may know of the citizens' uprising, with my own lips will I hasten to perform the prefect's bidding. [*Exit.*]

CHORUS

Why do you stir up dire strife in vain? Invincible the shafts that Cupid bears; with his own flames will he o'erwhelm your fires, with which he oft has quenched thunderbolts and dragged Jove as his captive from the sky. To the offended god¹ dire penalties shall you pay e'en with your blood. Not slow to wrath is the glowing boy, nor easy to be ruled; 'twas he who bade the fierce Achilles smite the lyre, broke down the Greeks, broke down Atrides, the kingdoms of Priam overthrew, and famed cities utterly destroyed; and now my mind shudders at the thought of what the unchecked power of the relentless god will do.

[*Enter NERO.*]

NERO

Oh, too slow are my soldiers' hands, and too patient my wrath after such sacrilege as this, seeing that the blood of citizens has not quenched the fires they kindled 'gainst me, and that with the slaughter of her people mourning Rome reeks not, who bore such men as these. But she for whose sake the citizens rage at me, my sister-wife whom with distrust I ever look upon, shall give her life at last to sate my grief, and quench my anger with her blood. But now death is too light a punishment for her deeds. Heavier doom has the people's unhallowed

¹ Cupid.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

mox tecta flammis concidant urbis meis, 831
 ignes ruinae noxium populum premant
 turpisque egestas, saeva cum luctu fames.
 exsultat ingens saeculi nostri bonis
 corrupta turba nec capit clementiam
 ingrata nostram ferre nec pacem potest,
 sed inquieta rapitur hinc audacia,
 hinc temeritate fertur in praeceps sua.
 malis domanda est et gravi semper iugo
 premenda, ne quid simile temptare audeat 840
 contraque sanctos coniugis vultus meae
 attollere oculos; fracta per poenas metu
 parere discet principis nutu sui.

Sed adesse cerno rara quem pietas virum
 fidesque castris nota praeposuit meis.

PRAEFFECTVS

Populi furorem caede paucorum, diu
 qui restiterunt temere, compressum affero.

NERO

Et hoc sat est? sic miles audisti ducem?
 compescis? haec vindicta debetur mihi?

PRAEFFECTVS

Cecidere motus impii ferro duces. 850

NERO

Quid illa turba, petere quae flammis meos
 ausa est penates, principi legem dare,

OCTAVIA

guilt deserved. Quickly let Rome's roofs fall beneath my flames; let fires, let ruins crush the guilty populace, and wretched want, and grief and hunger dire. The huge mob grows riotous, distempered by the blessings of my age, nor hath it understanding of my mercy in its thanklessness nor can it suffer peace; but here 'tis swept along by restless insolence and there by its own recklessness is headlong borne. By suffering must it be held in check, be ever pressed beneath the heavy yoke, that it may never dare the like again, and against my wife's sacred countenance lift its eyes; crushed by the fear of punishment, it shall be taught to obey its emperor's nod.

⁸⁴⁴ But here I see the man whose rare loyalty and proven faith have made him captain of my royal guards.

[*Enter* PREFECT.]

PREFECT

The people's rage by slaughter of some few, who recklessly long resisted, is put down: such is my report.

NERO

And is this enough? Is't thus a soldier has obeyed his chief? "Put down," sayst thou? Is this the vengeance due to me?

PREFECT

The guilty ring-leaders of the mob have fallen by the sword.

NERO

But the mob itself, that dared to attack my household with their torches, dictate to the emperor, from

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

abstrahere nostris coniugem tantam toris,
violare quantum licuit incesta manu
et voce dira? debita poena vacat?

PRAEFECTVS

Poenam dolor constituet in cives tuos?

NERO

Constituet, aetas nulla quam famae eximat.

PRAEFECTVS

Quam¹ temperet non ira, non noster timor?

NERO

Iram expiabit prima quae meruit meam.

PRAEFECTVS

Quam poscat ede, nostra ne parcat manus. 860

NERO

Caedem sororis poscit et dirum caput.

PRAEFECTVS

Horrore vinctum trepidus astrinxit rigor.

NERO

Parere dubitas?

PRAEFECTVS

Cur meam damnas fidem?

NERO

Quod parcis hosti.

¹ *Reading with Schroeder. Leo tua . . . nos.*

OCTAVIA

my very bed to drag my noble wife, to offer her violence, so far as lay in their power, with hands unclean and voices insolent? Are they still without due punishment?

PREFECT

Shall angry grief determine penalty against thy citizens?

NERO

It shall determine, the tale of which no age shall banish from men's lips.

PREFECT

Which neither wrath nor fear of us can hold in check?

NERO

She first shall appease who has first deserved my wrath.

PREFECT

Whom it demands tell thou, that my hand may spare not.

NERO

The slaughter of my sister it demands, and her hateful head.

PREFECT

Fearful, benumbing horror holds me fast.

NERO

Does thy obedience falter?

PREFECT

Why dost condemn my faith?

NERO

Because thou spar'st my foe.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

PRAEFECTVS

Femina hoc nomen capit ?

NERO

Si scelera cepit.

PRAEFECTVS

Estne qui sontem arguat ?

NERO

Populi furor.

PRAEFECTVS

Quis regere dementes valet ?

NERO

Qui concitare potuit.

PRAEFECTVS

Haud quemquam reor.

NERO

Mulier, dedit natura cui pronum malo
animum, ad nocendum pectus instruxit dolis.

PRAEFECTVS

Sed vim negavit.

NERO

Vt ne inexpugnabilis

870

esset, sed aegras frangeret vires timor
vel poena ; quae iam sera damnatam premet
diu nocentem.

Tolle consilium ac preces
et imperata perage : devectam rate

OCTAVIA

PREFECT

Call'st thou a woman foe?

NERO

If crime she has committed.

PREFECT

Who charges her with guilt?

NERO

The people's rage.

PREFECT

But who can check their madness?

NERO

She who could rouse it.

PREFECT

Not any one, I think.

NERO

Woman, to whom nature has given a mind to mischief prone, and equipped her heart with wiles to work us ill.

PREFECT

But strength it has denied her.

NERO

That so she might not be impregnable, but that fear or punishment might break her feeble strength, a punishment which now, though late, shall crush the criminal, who has too long been guilty.

⁸⁷³ But have done with advice and prayers, and do my bidding: let her be borne by ship to some far

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

procul in remotum litus interimi iube,
tandem ut residat pectoris nostri timor.

CHORVS

O funestus multis populi
dirusque favor, qui cum flatu
vela secundo ratis implevit
vexitque procul, languidus idem 880
deserit alto saevoque mari.
flevit Gracchos miseranda parens,
perdidit ingens quos plebis amor
nimiusque favor genere illustres,
pietate fide lingua claros,
pectore fortes, legibus acres.
te quoque, Livi, simili leto
Fortuna dedit, quem neque fasces
texere suae nec tecta domus.
plura referre prohibet praesens 890
exempla dolor. modo cui patriam
reddere cives aulam et fratris
voluere toros, nunc ad poenam
letumque trahi flentem miseram
cernere possunt. bene paupertas
humili tecto contenta latet ;
quatiunt altas saepe procellae
aut evertit Fortuna domos.

OCTAVIA

Quo me trahitis quodve tyrannus
aut exilium regina iubet, 900
si mihi vitam fracta remittit
tot iam nostris et victa malis ?
sin caede mea cumulare parat
luctus nostros, invidet etiam

OCTAVIA

distant shore and there be slain, that at last the
terror at my heart may be at rest. [Exeunt.]

CHORUS

Oh, dire and deadly to many has the people's
favour proved, that has filled their vessels' sails with
prosperous breeze and borne them out afar, then,
languishing, has failed them on the deep and
dangerous sea. The wretched mother¹ of the
Gracchi wept her sons, whom, though nobly born,
for loyal faith and eloquence renowned, though brave
in heart, keen in defence of law, the great love and
excessive favour of the citizens destroyed. Thee
also, Livius,² to fate like theirs did fortune give,
whom neither his lictors' rods nor his own house
protected. But present grief forbids us to rehearse
more instances. Her, to whom but now the citizens
decreed the restoration of her father's house, her
brother's bed, now may they see dragged out in tears
and misery to punishment and death. Oh, blessed
poverty, content to hide beneath a lowly roof, while
lofty homes the storm-blasts oft-times shatter, or
fortune overthrows.

[Enter OCTAVIA in the custody of the palace guards, who
are dragging her roughly away.]

OCTAVIA

Oh, whither do ye drag me? What exile does the
tyrant or his queen ordain, if, softened and o'ercome by
all my miseries, she grants me life? But if by death
she is ready to crown my sufferings, why, cruel, does

¹ Cornelia.

² Livius Drusus. See Index.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

cur in patria mihi saeva mori ?
 sed iam spes est nulla salutis—
 fratris cerno miseranda ratem.
 hac en cuius vecta carina
 quondam genetrix, nunc et thalamis
 expulsa soror miseranda vehar. 910
 nullum Pietas nunc numen habet
 nec sunt superi ; regnat mundo
 tristis Erinys.
 quis mea digne deflere potest
 mala ? quae lacrimis nostris questus
 reddat aedon ? cuius pennas
 utinam miserae mihi fata darent !
 fugerem luctus sublata meos
 penna volucris procul et coetus
 hominum tristes caedemque feram 920
 sola in vacuo nemore et tenui
 ramo pendens querulo possem
 gutture maestum fundere murmur.

CHORVS

Regitur fati mortale genus,
 nec sibi quisquam spondere potest
 firmum et stabilem vitae cursum ¹
 per quem casus volvit varios
 semper nobis metuenda dies.
 animum firment exempla tuum,
 iam multa domus quae vestra tulit. 930
 quid saevior est Fortuna tibi ?

Tu mihi primum
 tot natorum memoranda parens,
 nata Agrippae, nurus Augusti,

¹ Reading with Richter's proposed emendation. Leo with the MSS. reads firmum et stabile * * per quae. The lacuna has been variously filled and the passage variously emended.

OCTAVIA

she e'en grudge me death at home? But now is no hope of safety—ah, woe is me, I see my brother's ship. And lo, on that vessel on which his mother once was borne, now, driven from his chamber, his wretched sister, too, shall sail away. Now Piety no longer has divinity, nor are there any gods; grim Fury reigns throughout the universe. Who worthily can lament my evil plight? What nightingale can match my tears with her complaints? Whose wings would that the fates might grant to wretched me! Then on swift pinions borne, would I leave my grievous troubles far behind, the dismal haunts of men, and cruel slaughter. There, all alone, within some solitary wood, perched on a slender bough, might I pour forth from plaintive throat my song of woe.

CHORUS

Our mortal race is ruled by fate, nor may any promise to himself that the path of life will be sure and steadfast, along which each coming day with its continual fears brings ever-shifting chances. Comfort now thy heart with the many sufferings which thine own house has borne. In what has fortune been more harsh to thee?

⁹³² And thee first must I name, the mother of so many sons, Agrippa's child,¹ Augustus'² daughter-

¹ Agrippina, (1) daughter of M. Vipsanius Agrippa and of Julia, d. of Augustus; married Germanicus, son of Tiberius Augustus, and bore to him nine sons.

² *i.e.* Tiberius.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

Caesaris uxor, cuius nomen
 clarum toto fulsit in orbe,
 utero totiens enixa gravi
 pignora pacis, mox exilium
 verbera, saevas passa catenas,
 funera, luctus, tandem letum
 cruciata diu. felix thalamis
 Livia Drusi natisque ferum
 ruit in facinus poenamque suam.
 Iulia matris fata secuta est;
 post longa tamen tempora ferro
 caesa est, quamvis crimine nullo.
 quid non potuit quondam genetrix
 tua quae rexit principis aulam
 cara marito partuque potens?
 eadem famulo subiecta suo
 cecidit diri militis ense.
 quid cui licuit regnum in caelum
 sperare, parens tanta Neronis?
 non funesta violata manu
 remigis ante,
 mox et ferro lacerata diu
 saevi iacuit victima nati?

OCTAVIA

Me quoque tristes mittit ad umbras
 ferus et manes ecce tyrannus.
 quid iam frustra miseranda moror?
 rapite ad letum quis ius in nos
 Fortuna dedit. testor superos—
 quid agis, demens? parce precari

¹ *i.e.* Germanicus.

² She was banished by Tiberius, who was jealous of the people's favour toward her, to the island of Pandataria, where she died three years afterward.

OCTAVIA

in-law, a Caesar's¹ wife, whose name shone bright throughout the world, whose teeming womb brought forth so many hostages of peace; yet thou wast doomed to suffer exile, blows and galling chains, loss of thy friends, and bitter grief, and at last a death of lingering agony.² And Livia,³ blest in her Drusus' chamber, in her sons, fell into brutal crime—and punishment. Julia met her mother's fate; though after long delay, yet she was slain by the sword, though no man called her guilty. What power once was thy mother's,⁴ who ruled the palace of the emperor,⁵ dear to her husband, and in her son⁶ secure? Yet she was made subject to her slave,⁷ and fell beneath a brutal soldier's sword. And what of her who might have hoped for the very throne of heaven, the emperor's great mother? Was she not first by a murderous boatman's hand abused, then, mangled by the sword, lay she not long the victim of her cruel son?

OCTAVIA

Me also to the gloomy shades and ghosts, the cruel tyrant, see, is sending. Why do I now make vain and pitiable delay? Hurry me on to death, ye to whose power fortune hath given me. Witness, ye heavenly gods—what wouldst thou, fool? Pray not

¹ See Index.

⁴ Messalina.

⁵ Claudius.

⁶ Britannicus.

⁷ The freedman, Narcissus.

THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA

quibus invisā es numina divum.

Tartara testor

Erebique deas scelerum ultrices

et te, genitor¹ dignum tali

morte et poena. non invisā est

mors ista mihi.

armate ratem, date vela fretis

970

ventisque petat puppis rector

Pandatariae litora terrae.

CHORVS

Lenes aerae zephyrique leves,

tectam quondam nube aetheria

qui vexistis raptam saevae

virginis aris Iphigeniam,

hanc quoque tristi procul a poena

portate, precor, templa ad Triviae.

urbe est nostra mitior Aulis

et Taurorum barbara tellus :

980

hospitis illic caede litatur

numen superum ;

civis gaudet Roma cruore.

¹ *Leo suggests* perde tyrannum *between* genitor *and* dignum.

OCTAVIA

to deities who scorn thee. Witness, O Tartarus, ye goddesses of Erebus who punish crime, and thou, O father : destroy the tyrant,¹ worthy such death and punishment. [*To her guards.*] I dread not the death you threaten. Put your ship in readiness, set sail upon the deep, and let your pilot speed before the winds to Pandataria's shore.

[*Exit OCTAVIA with her guards.*]

CHORUS

Ye gentle breezes and ye zephyrs mild, that once caught Iphigenia wrapped in an airy cloud, and bore her from the altar of the cruel maid,² this maiden, too, far from her dire punishment bear ye, I pray, to the shrine of Trivia. More merciful than Rome is Aulis and the Taurians' barbarous land : there by the blood of strangers are the gods appeased ; but Rome's delight is in her children's blood.

¹ Translating Leo's suggestion.

² Diana.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSES OF THE TRAGEDIES IN THIS VOLUME AND THE CORRESPONDING GREEK DRAMAS

The *Phoenissae*, if, indeed, these fragments are to be considered as belonging to one play, has no direct correspondent in Greek drama; although, in the general situations and in some details, it is similar to parts of three plays: *The Seven against Thebes* of Aeschylus, the *Oedipus at Colonus* of Sophocles, and the *Phoenician Damsels* of Euripides. The *Thyestes* is without a parallel in extant Greek drama; and the *Octavia*, of course, stands alone.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSES

THE GREEK DRAMAS

THE *AGAMEMNON* OF AESCHYLUS

Prologue.—A watchman, stationed upon the palace roof at Argos, laments the tedium of his long and solitary task; and prays for the time to come when, through the darkness of the night, he shall see the distant flashing of the beacon fire, and by this sign know that Troy has fallen and that Agamemnon is returning home. And suddenly he sees the gleam for which he has been waiting so long. He springs up with shouts of joy and hastens to tell the queen. At the same time he makes dark reference to that which has been going on within the palace, and which must now be hushed up.

Parode, or chorus entry.—A chorus of twelve Argive elders sings of the Trojan war, describing the omens with which the Greeks started on their mission of vengeance. They dwell especially upon the hard fate which forced Agamemnon to sacrifice his daughter. And in this they unconsciously voice one of the motives which led to the king's own death.

First episode.—Clytemnestra appears with a stately procession of torch-bearers, having set the whole city in gala attire, with sacrificial incense burning on all the altars. The chorus asks the meaning of this. Has she had news from Troy? The queen replies that this very night she has had news, and describes at length how the signal

COMPARATIVE ANALYSES

SENECA'S TRAGEDIES

THE *AGAMEMNON* OF SENECA

Prologue.—The ghost of Thyestes coming from the lower regions recites the *motif* of the play: how he had been most foully dealt with by Agamemnon's father, Atreus, and how he had been promised revenge by the oracle of Apollo through his son Aegisthus, begotten of an incestuous union with his daughter. The ghost announces that the time for his revenge is come with the return of Agamemnon from the Trojan war, and urges Aegisthus to perform his fated part.

Parode, or chorus entry.—The chorus of Argive women complains of the uncertain condition of exalted fortune, and recommends the golden mean in preference to this.

First episode.—Clytemnestra, conscious of guilt, and fearing that her returning husband will severely punish her on account of her adulterous life with Aegisthus, resolves to add crime to crime and murder Agamemnon as soon as he comes back to his home. She is further impelled to this action by his conduct in the matter of her daughter,

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fires had gleamed, and thus the news had leaped from height to height, all the long way from Troy to Argos,

“And this sure proof and token now I tell thee,
Seeing that my lord hath sent it me from Troy.”

She expresses the hope that the victors in their joy will do nothing to offend the gods and so prevent their safe return :

“May good prevail beyond all doubtful chance !
For I have got the blessing of great joy.”

With these words she covers up the real desires of her own false heart, while at the same time voicing the principle on which doom was to overtake the Greeks.

The chorus receives Clytemnestra's news with joy and prepares to sing praises to the gods, as the queen with her train leaves the stage.

First choral interlude.—The chorus sings in praise of Zeus, who has signally disproved the sceptic's claim that

“The gods deign not to care for mortal men
By whom the grace of things inviolable
Is trampled under foot.”

The shameful guilt of Paris is described, the woe of the wronged Menelaüs, and the response of all Greece to his cry for vengeance. But, after all, the chorus is in doubt as to whether the good news can be true—when a herald enters with fresh news.

Second episode.—The herald describes to the chorus the complete downfall of Troy, which came as a punishment for the sin of Paris and of the nation which upheld him in it. At the same time the sufferings of the Greeks during the progress of the war are not forgotten. Clytemnestra, entering, prompted by her own guilty conscience, bids the herald tell Agamemnon to hasten home, and take to him her own protestation of absolute faithfulness to him :

“who has not broken
One seal of his in all this length of time.”

The herald, in response to further questions of the chorus, describes the great storm which wrecked the Greek fleet upon their homeward voyage.

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Iphigenia, and by his own unfaithfulness to her during his long absence. Throughout this scene the nurse vainly tries to dissuade her.

Clytemnestra is either influenced to recede from her purpose by the nurse, or else pretends to be resolved to draw back in order to test Aegisthus, who now enters. In the end, the two conspirators withdraw to plan their intended crime.

First choral interlude.—The chorus sings in praise of Apollo for the victory over Troy. To this are added the praises of Juno, Minerva, and Jove. In the end the chorus hails the approach of the herald Eurybates.

Second episode.—Eurybates announces to Clytemnestra the return and approach of Agamemnon, and describes the terrible storm which overtook the Greeks upon their homeward voyage. At the command of the queen victims are prepared for sacrifice to the gods, and a banquet for the victorious Agamemnon. At last the captive Trojan women, headed by Cassandra, are seen approaching.

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Second choral interlude.—The chorus sings of Helen as the bane of the Trojans :

“ Dire cause of strife with bloodshed in her train.”

And now

“ The penalty of foul dishonour done
To friendship’s board and Zeus ”

has been paid by Troy, which is likened to a man who fosters a lion’s cub, which is harmless while still young, but when full grown “ it shows the nature of its sires,” and brings destruction to the house that sheltered it.

Third episode.—Agamemnon is seen approaching in his chariot, followed by his train of soldiers and captives. The chorus welcomes him, but with a veiled hint that all is not well in Argos. Agamemnon fittingly thanks the gods for his success and for his safe return, and promises in due time to investigate affairs at home.

Clytemnestra, now entering, in a long speech of fulsome welcome, describes the grief which she has endured for her lord’s long absence in the midst of perils, and protests her own absolute faithfulness to him. She explains the absence of Orestes by saying that she has entrusted him to Strophius, king of Phocis, to be cared for in the midst of the troublous times. She concludes with the ambiguous prayer :

“ Ah, Zeus, work out for me
All that I pray for ; let it be thy care
To look to that thou purposest to work.”

Agamemnon, after briefly referring to Cassandra and bespeaking kindly treatment for her, goes into the palace, accompanied by Clytemnestra.

Third choral interlude.—The chorus, though it sees with its own eyes that all is well with Agamemnon, that he is returned in safety to his own home, is filled with sad forebodings of some hovering evil which it cannot dispel.

Exode.—Clytemnestra returns and bids Cassandra, who still remains standing in her chariot, to join the other slaves in ministering at the altar. But Cassandra stands motionless, paying no heed to the words of the queen, who leaves the scene saying :

“ I will not bear the shame of uttering more.”

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Second choral interlude.—A chorus of captive Trojan women sings the fate and fall of Troy; while Cassandra, seized with fits of prophetic fury, prophesies the doom that hangs over Agamemnon.

Third episode.—Agamemnon comes upon the scene, and, meeting Cassandra, is warned by her of the fate that hangs over him; but she is not believed.

Third choral interlude.—Apropos of the fall of Troy, the chorus of Argive women sing the praises of Hercules, whose arrows had been required by fate for the destruction of Troy.

Exode.—Cassandra, either standing where she can see within the palace, or else by clairvoyant power, reports the murder of Agamemnon, which is being done within.

Electra urges Orestes to flee before his mother and Aegisthus shall murder him also. Very opportunely, Strophius comes in his chariot, just returning as victor from

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Cassandra now descends from her chariot and bursts into wild and woeful lamentations. By her peculiar clairvoyant power she foresees and declares to the chorus the death of Agamemnon at the hands of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, as well as the manner of it; she also foretells the vengeance which Orestes is destined to work upon the murderers. Her own fate is as clearly seen and announced, as she passes through the door into the palace.

Soon the chorus hears the death-cry of Agamemnon, that he is "struck down with deadly stroke." They are faint-heartedly and with a multiplicity of counsel discussing what it is best to do, when Clytemnestra, with bloodstained garments and followed by a guard of soldiers, comes out from the palace. The corpses of Agamemnon and Cassandra are seen through the door within the palace. The queen confesses to, describes, and exults in the murder of her husband. The chorus makes elaborate lamentation for Agamemnon, and prophesies that vengeance will light on Clytemnestra. But she scorns their threatening prophecies. In the end Aegisthus enters, avowing that he has plotted this murder and has at last avenged his father, Thyestes, upon the father of Agamemnon, Atreus, who had so foully wronged Thyestes. The chorus curses him and reminds him that Orestes still lives and will surely avenge his father.

THE MAIDENS OF TRACHIN OF SOPHOCLES

Prologue.—In the courtyard of her palace in Trachin, Deianira recounts to her attendants and the chorus of Trachinian maidens how her husband had won her from the river god, Acheloüs, and how, during all these years, she has lived in fear and longing for her husband, who has been kept constantly wandering over the earth by those who hold him in their power; and even now he has been for many months absent, she knows not where.

An old servant proposes that she send her son, Hyllus, abroad to seek out his father. This the youth, who enters at this juncture, readily promises to do, especially on

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the Olympic games. Electra entrusts her brother to his care, and betakes her own self to the altar for protection.

Electra, after defying and denouncing her mother and Aegisthus, is dragged away to prison and torture, and Cassandra is led out to her death.

THE *HERCULES OETAEUS* OF SENECA

Prologue.—Hercules, about to sacrifice to Cenean Jove after having conquered Furytus, king of Oechalia, recounts at length his mighty toils on earth, and prays that now at last he may be given his proper place in heaven. He dispatches his herald, Lichas, home to Trachin, to tell the news of his triumph, and to conduct the train of captives thither.

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hearing from his mother that the oracle declares this is the year in which his father shall end his life,

“Or, having this his task accomplished,
Shall, through the coming years of all his life,
Rejoice and prosper.”

Parode, or chorus entry.—The chorus prays to Helios, the bright sun-god, for tidings of Hercules, for Deianira longs for him, and “ever nurses unforgetting dread as to her husband’s paths.” Hercules is tossed upon the stormy sea of life, now up, now down, but ever kept from death by some god’s hands. Deianira should, therefore, be comforted :

“For who hath known in Zeus forgetfulness
Of those he children calls ?”

First episode.—Deianira confides to the chorus her special cause for grief: she feels a strong presentiment that Hercules is dead; for, when he last left home, he left a tablet, as it were a will, disposing of his chattels and his lands,

“and fixed a time,
That when for one whole year and three months more
He from his land was absent, then ’twas his
Or in that self-same hour to die, or else,
Escaping that one crisis, thenceforth live with life unvexed.”

At this moment, however, a messenger enters and announces the near approach of Hercules, accompanied by his spoils of victory.

First choral interlude.—The chorus voices its exultant joy over this glad and unexpected news.

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Parode, or chorus entry.—The place of the chorus entry, which should be filled by the chorus proper, composed of Aetolian maidens, is taken by the band of captive Oechalian maidens. They bewail their lot and long for death; they dwell upon the utter desolation of their fatherland, and upon the hard-heartedness of Hercules, who has laid it waste.

Iole, their princess, joins in their lamentations, recalls the horrors of her native city's overthrow, and looks forward with dread to her captivity.

First episode.—During the interval just preceding this episode the captives have been led to Trachin; Deianira has seen the beauty of Iole, and learned of Hercules' infatuation for her. She has by this news been thrown into a mad rage of jealousy, and takes counsel with her nurse as to how she may wreak vengeance upon her faithless husband, while the nurse vainly advises moderation.

The nurse at last suggests recourse to magic, professing herself to be proficient in these arts. This suggests to Deianira the use of that blood of Nessus which the dying centaur had commended to her as an infallible love-charm. She takes occasion to relate at length the Nessus incident. She at once acts upon her decision to use the charm; and speedily, with the nurse's aid, a gorgeous robe is anointed with the blood, and this is sent by Lichas' hand to Hercules.

First choral interlude.—The chorus of Aetolian women, who have followed Deianira from her girlhood's home to this refuge in Trachin, now tender to her their sympathy in her present sufferings. They recall all their past intercourse with her, and assure her of their undying fidelity.

This suggests the rarity of such fidelity, especially in the courts of kings, and they discourse at large upon the sordidness and selfishness of courtiers in general. The moral of their discourse is that men should not aspire to great wealth and power, but should choose a middle course in life, which alone can bring happiness.

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Second episode.—Lichas, the personal herald of Hercules, now enters, followed by Iole and a company of captive women. He explains to Deianira how Hercules had been driven on by petty persecutions to slay Iphitus, the son of Eurytus, treacherously; how he had for this been doomed by Zeus to serve Omphale, queen of Lydia, for a year; and how in revenge he has now slain Eurytus, and even now is sending home these Oechalian captives as spoil; Hercules himself is delaying yet a little while in Euboea, until he has sacrificed to Cenean Jove.

Deianira looks in pity upon the captives, praying that their lot may never come to her or hers; and is especially drawn in sympathy to one beautiful girl, who, however, will answer no word as to her name and state.

As all are passing into the palace, the messenger detains Deianira and tells her the real truth which Lichas has withheld: that this seemingly unknown girl is Iole, daughter of Eurytus; that it was not in revenge, but for love of Iole, that Hercules destroyed her father's house, and that he is now sending her to his own home, not as his slave, but as his mistress, and rival of his wife.

Lichas, returning from the palace, on being challenged by the messenger and urged by Deianira to speak the whole truth, tells all concerning Hercules' love for Iole.

Deianira receives this revelation with seeming equanimity and acquiescence.

Second choral interlude.—The chorus briefly reverts to the battle of Acheloüs and Hercules for the hand of Deianira.

Third episode.—Deianira tells to the chorus the story of how Nessus, the centaur, had once insulted her, and for this had been slain by Hercules with one of his poisoned

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Second episode.—Deianira comes hurrying distractedly out of the palace, and relates her discovery as to the horrible and deadly power of the charm which she has sent to her husband.

While she is still speaking, Hyllus rushes in and cries out to his mother to flee from the wrath of Hercules, whose dreadful sufferings, after putting on the robe which his wife had sent to him, the youth describes at length. He narrates also the death of Lichas. The suffering hero is even now on his way by sea from Euboea, in a death-like swoon, and will soon arrive at Trachin.

Deianira, smitten with quick repentance, begs Jupiter to destroy her with his wrathful thunderbolts. She resolves on instant self-destruction, though Hyllus and the nurse vainly try to dissuade her, and to belittle her responsibility for the disaster; and in the end she rushes from the scene, Hyllus following.

Second choral interlude.—The chorus, contemplating the changing fates of their prince's house, is reminded of the saying of Orpheus, "that naught for endless life is made." This leads to an extended description of Orpheus' sweet music and its power over all things, both animate and inanimate, and suggests the story of his unsuccessful attempt to regain Eurydice.

Returning to the original theme, the chorus speculates upon the time when all things shall fall into death, and chaos resume her primeval sway.

It is startled out of these thoughts by loud groans, which prove to be the outcries of Hercules, borne home to Trachin.

Third episode.—Hercules in his ravings warns Jove to look well to his heavens, since now their defender is perishing. The giants will be sure to rise again and make

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arrows; how, also, the centaur in dying had given her a portion of his blood, saying this would be a charm able to restore to her her husband's wandering love. She now resolves to use this charm. She anoints a gorgeous robe with the blood which she has preserved through all these years, and bids Lichas carry this to her lord as a special gift from her. He is to wear it as he offers his sacrifices to Cenean Jove. Lichas departs upon this mission.

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another attempt upon the skies. He bitterly laments that he, who has overcome so many monsters, must die at last, slain by a woman's hand, and that woman not Juno, nor even an Amazon :

“ Ah, woe is me,
How often have I 'scaped a glorious death !
What honour comes from such an end as this ? ”

His burning pains coming on again, he cries out in agony, and describes the abject misery and weakness that have come upon him. Are these the shoulders, the hands, the feet, that were once so strong to bear, so terrible to strike, so swift to go? He strives to apprehend and tear away the pest that is devouring him, but it is too deep-hidden in his frame. He curses the day that has seen him weep, and beseeches Jove to smite him dead with a thunderbolt.

Alcmena enters, and while she herself is full of grief, she strives to soothe and comfort her suffering son. He falls into a delirium, and thinks that he is in the heavens, looking down upon Trachin. But soon he awakes, and, realizing his pains once more, calls for the author of his misery, that he may slay her with his own hands.

Hyllus, who has just entered from the palace, now informs his father that Deianira is already dead, and by her own hand; that it was not her fault, moreover, but by the guile of Nessus, that Hercules is being done to death. The hero recognizes in this the fulfilment of an oracle once delivered to him :

“ By the hand of one whom thou hast slain, some day,
Victorious Hercules, shalt thou lie low.”

And he comforts himself with the reflection that such an end as this is meet, for

“ Thus shall no conqueror of Hercules
Survive to tell the tale.”

He now bids Philoctetes prepare a mighty pyre on neighbouring Mount Oeta, and there take and burn his body while still alive. Hyllus he bids to take the captive princess, Iole, to wife. He calls upon his mother, Alcmena, to comfort her grief by pride in her great son's deeds on earth, and the noble fame which he has gained thereby.

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Third choral interlude.—The chorus prays for the early and safe return of Hercules from where he lingers :

“ Thence may he come, yea, come with strong desire,
Tempered by suasive spell
Of that rich unguent, as the monster spake.”

Fourth episode.—Deianira discovers by experiment, now that it is too late, the destructive and terrible power of the charm which she has sent, and is filled with dire forebodings as to the result.

Her lamentations are interrupted by Hyllus, who comes hurrying in ; he charges his mother with the murder of his father, and curses her. He then describes the terrible sufferings that have come upon the hero through the magic robe, and how Hercules, in the madness of pain, has slain Lichas, as the immediate cause of his sufferings. He has brought his father with him from Euboea to Trachin. Deianira withdraws into the palace, without a word, in an agony of grief.

Fourth choral interlude.—The chorus recalls the old oracle that after twelve years the son of Zeus should gain rest from toil, and sees in his impending death the fulfilment of this oracle. They picture the grief of Deianira over her act, and foresee the great changes that are coming upon their prince's house.

Fifth episode.—The nurse rushes in from the palace, and tells how Deianira has slain herself with the sword, bewailing the while the sufferings which she has unwittingly brought on Hercules ; and how Hyllus repents him of his harshness towards his mother, realizing that she was not to blame.

Fifth choral interlude.—The chorus pours out its grief for the double tragedy. And now it sees Hyllus and attendants bearing in the dying Hercules.

Exode.—Hercules, awaking from troubled sleep, laments the calamity that has befallen him ; he chides the lands which he has helped, that now they do not hasten to his aid ; and prays Hyllus to kill him with the sword, and so put him out of his misery.

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Third choral interlude.—The chorus bids all nature mourn the death of Hercules. Verily the earth is bereft of her defender, and there is no one left to whom she may turn if again harassed by monsters. They speculate upon the place of the departed Hercules. Shall he sit in judgment among the pious kings of Crete in Hades, or shall he be given a place in heaven? At least on earth he shall live in deathless gratitude and fame.

Exode.—Philoctetes enters and, in response to the questions of the nurse, describes the final scene on Oeta's top. There a mighty pyre had been built, on which Hercules joyfully took his place. There he reclined, gazing at the heavens, and praying his father, Jupiter, to take him thither, in

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He denounces Deianira because she has brought suffering and destruction upon him which no foe, man or beast, has ever been able to bring. He curses his own weakness, and laments that he must weep and groan like a woman.

He marvels that his mighty frame, which for years has withstood so many monsters, his encounters with which he describes, can now be so weak and wasted. Reverting to his wife, he bids her to be brought to him that he may visit punishment upon her.

Hyllus informs his father that Deianira has died by her own hand, for grief at what she has unwittingly brought upon her dear lord. It was, indeed, through Nessus' guile that the deed was done.

Hercules, on hearing this, recognizes the fulfilment of the oracle :

“ Long since it was revealèd of my sire
That I should die by hand of none that live,
But one who, dead, had dwelt in Hades dark.”

He exacts an oath of obedience from Hyllus, and then bids him take him to Mount Oeta, and there place him upon a pyre for burning. Hyllus reluctantly consents in all but the actual firing of the pyre. The next request is concerning Iole, that Hyllus should take her as his wife. This mandate he indignantly refuses to obey, but finally yields assent. And in the end Hercules is borne away to his burning, while the chorus mournfully chants its concluding comment :

“ What cometh no man may know ;
What is, is piteous for us,
Base and shameful for them
And for him who endureth this woe,
Above all that live hard to bear.”

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compensation for his service on the earth. His prayer seemed to be answered, and he cried aloud :

“ ‘ But lo, my father calls me from the sky,
And opens wide the gates. O sire, I come !’
And as he spake his face was glorified.”

He presented his famous bow and arrows to Philoctetes, bidding him for this prize apply the torch and light the pyre, which his friend most reluctantly did. The hero courted the flames, and eagerly pressed into the very heart of the burning mass.

In the midst of this narrative Alcmena enters, bearing in her bosom an urn containing the ashes of Hercules. The burden of her lament is that so small a compass and so pitiful an estate have come to the mighty body of her son, which one small urn can hold. But when she thinks upon his deeds, her thoughts fly to the opposite pole :

“ What sepulchre, O son, what tomb for thee
Is great enough? Naught save the world itself.”

Then she takes up in quickened measures her funeral song of mourning, in the midst of which the deified Hercules, taking shape in the air above, speaks to his mother, bidding her no longer mourn, for he has at last gained his place in heaven.

The chorus strikes a fitting final note, that the truly brave are not destined to the world below :

“ But when life’s days are all consumed,
And comes the final hour, for them
A pathway to the gods is spread
By glory.”

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[References are to the lines of the Latin text. If the passage is longer than one line, only the first line is cited. Line citations to passages of especial importance to the subject under discussion are starred. The names of the characters appearing in these tragedies are printed in large capitals, with the name of the tragedy in which the character occurs following in parentheses.]

- ABSYRTUS, son of Aeëtes and brother of Medea. Medea, fleeing with Jason from Colchis, slew him and scattered his mangled remains behind her, in order to retard her father's pursuit, *Med.* 121, 125, *131, 452, 473, 911; his dismembered ghost appears to Medea, *ibid.* 963
- ABYLA, see CALPE
- ACASTUS, son of Pellas, king of Thessaly. Demands Jason and Medea from Creon, king of Corinth, to punish him for the murder of Pellas through Medea's machinations, *Med.* 257, 415, 521, 526
- ACHELÔUS, the river-god. Fought with Hercules for the possession of Deianira, changing himself into various forms, *H. Oct.* *299; defeated by Hercules, *ibid.* *495
- ACHERON, one of the rivers of Hades, *Thy.* 17; described by Theseus, *H. Fur.* 715
- ACHILLES, son of Pelus and Thetis, a hero in the Trojan War. Was connected by birth with heaven (Jupiter), the sea (Thetis), and the lower world (Aeacus), *Tro.* 344; educated by Chiron, the centaur, *ibid.* 832; hidden by his mother in the court of Lycomedes, king of Scyros, in a girl's disguise, in order to keep him from the war, *ibid.* 213; while there, became the father of Pyrrhus by Deidamia, the king's daughter, *ibid.* 342; his activities early in Trojan War, *ibid.* 182; wounds and cures Telephus, *ibid.* *215; overthrows Lyrnessus and Chrysa, taking captive Briseis and Chryseis, *ibid.* 220; his anger on account of the loss of Briseis, *ibid.* 194, 318; example of the taming power of love, *Oct.* 814; slays Memnon and trembles at his own victory, *Tro.* *239; slays Penthesilea, the Amazon, *ibid.* 243; works havoc among Trojans in revenge for Patroclus' death, *Agam.* 619; slays Hector and drags his body around walls, *Tro.* 189; is slain by Paris, *ibid.* 347; his ghost appears to Greeks on eve of their homeward voyage, demanding sacrifice of Polyxena upon his tomb, *ibid.* *170
- ACTAEON, grandson of Cadmus, who saw Diana bathing near Cithaeron. For this was changed by the goddess into a stag which was pursued and slain by his own dogs, *Oed.* *751; *Phoen.* 14
- ACTE, the mistress of Nero who displaced Poppaea, *Oct.* 195
- ADMËTUS, see ALCESTIS
- ADRASTUS, king of Argos. Received the fugitive Polynices, gave him his daughter in marriage, and headed the Seven against Thebes, in order to seat Polynices upon throne, *Phoen.* 374

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- AEACUS**, son of Jupiter and Europa, father of Peleus; for his just rule on earth was made a judge in Hades, *H. Oct.* 1558; *H. Fur.* 734. See under **JUDGES IN HADES**
- AEËTES**, king of Colchis, son of Phoebus and Persa, father of Medea, *Med.* 210; grandeur, extent, and situation of kingdom, *ibid.* 209; its wealth, *ibid.* 483; had a wonderful robe as proof that Phoebus was his father; this Medea anoints with magic poison and sends to Creûsa, *ibid.* 570; was despoiled of realm through theft of golden fleece, *ibid.* 913
- ÆGEUS**, see **THESEUS**
- ÆGISTHUS** (*Agamemnon*), son of incestuous union of Thyestes and his daughter. His birth the result of Apollo's advice to Thyestes, *Agam.* 48, 294; recognises that the fatal day is come for which he was born, *ibid.* 226; lived in guilty union with Clytemnestra, wife of Agamemnon, *ibid. passim*
- ÆGOCEROS**, poetical expression for *Capricornus*, constellation of the Goat, *Thy.* 864
- ÆGYPTUS**, see **DANAÏDES**
- ÆSCULAPIUS**, son of Apollo and the nymph Coronis; was versed in medicine, was deified, and worshipped at Epidaurus, *Hip.* 1022
- ÆTNA**, volcano in Sicily, *Phoen.* 314; its fires, *Hip.* 102; *H. Oct.* 285; seat of Vulcan's forge, *H. Fur.* 106; lay upon the buried Titan's breast, *Med.* 410
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- AGÄVE**, daughter of Cadmus and Harmonia, mother of Pentheus, king of Thebes. She and her sisters, in Bacchic frenzy, slew Pentheus on Cithaeron, and bore his head to Thebes, *Oed.* 1006; *Phoen.* 15, 363; her shade appears from Hades, *Oed.* 616. See **PENTHEUS**
- AGRIPPINA I**, daughter of M. Vipsanius Agrippa and Julia, daughter of Augustus, mother of Caligula. Died in exile at Pandataria, *Oct.* *932
- AGRIPPINA II** (*Octavia*), daughter of the preceding, wife of Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus, mother of Nero. Married Claudius, whom she poisoned, *Oct.* 26, 45, 165, 340; was stepmother of Octavia, and cause of all her woes, *ibid.* 22; plotted murder of Silanus, betrothed lover of Octavia, and forced her to marry Nero, *ibid.* 150; sought in all this her own power, *ibid.* 155, 612; was murdered by her son, Nero, *ibid.* 46, 95, 165; her murder attributed to Poppaea's influence, *ibid.* 126; described in full detail, *ibid.* *310, *600; former high estate and pitiable death contrasted, *ibid.* 952; her ghost appears to curse Nero, *ibid.* *593
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- AJAX**, son of Telamon, crazed with rage because the armour of Achilles was awarded to Ulysses, *Agam.* 210
- ALCESTIS**, wife of Admetus, king of Pherae, to save whose life she resigned her own, *Med.* 662
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- DRAGON**, (1) guardian of the apples of the Hesperides, slain by Hercules, and afterwards set in the heavens as constellation Draco, between the two Bears, *Thy.* 870; *Med.* 694; (2) of Colchis, guardian of the golden fleece, put to sleep by Medea's magic, *Med.* 703; (3) dragon sacred to Mars killed by Cadmus near the site of his destined city of Thebes. From the teeth of this dragon, sown by Cadmus, armed men sprang up, *Oed.* **725; *H. Fur.* 260; some of these teeth were sown by Jason in Colchis with a similar result, *Med.* 469; the brothers who sprang up against Cadmus are described as living in Hades, *Oed.* 586
- DRUSUS**, Livius, the fate of, *Oet.* 887, 942
- DRYADS**, race of wood-nymphs, *H. Oet.* 1053; *Hip.* 784
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- ECHO**, nymph who pined away to a mere voice for unrequited love of Narcissus. She dwells in mountain caves, and repeats the last words of all that is said in her hearing, *Tro.* 109
- ELECTRA** (*Agamemnon*), daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, sister of Orestes; gives her brother to Strophilus, king of Phocis, to save him from Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, *Agam.* 910; defies her mother and Aegisthus, *ibid.* 953; is taken away to imprisonment, *ibid.* 1000; Octavia compares her woes with Electra's, to the advantage of the latter, *Oet.* 60
- ELEUSIN** (Eleusis), ancient city of Attica, famous for its mysteries of Ceres, *H. Oet.* 599; *Tro.* 843; *H. Fur.* 300; *Hip.* 838; the mysteries described, *H. Fur.* *842. See **CERES**, **TRIPTOLEMUS**
- ELYSIUM**, abode of the blest, *Tro.* 159, 944; *H. Oet.* 956, 1916; *H. Fur.* 744
- ENCELADUS**, one of the Titans who attempted to dethrone Jove, overthrown and buried under Sicily, *H. Fur.* 79; *H. Oet.* 1140, 1145, 1159, 1735
- ERIDANUS**, mythical and poetical name of the Po, *H. Oet.* 186. See **PHAETHONTIADES**
- ERINYES**, the Furies, *H. Fur.* 982; *Med.* 952; *Oed.* 590; *Agam.* 83; *Thy.* 251; *H. Oet.* 609, 671; *Oet.* 23, 161, 263, 619, 913. See **FURIES**
- ERYX**, son of Butes and Venus, famous boxer, overcome by Hercules, *H. Fur.* 481; mountain in Sicily, said to have been named from the preceding, *Oed.* 600
- ETEOCLES** (*Phoenissae*), one of the two sons of Oedipus and Jocasta. After Oedipus abandoned the throne of Thebes (*Phoen.* 104), Eteocles and Polyneices agreed to reign alternately. Eteocles, the elder, ascended the throne, but when his year was up refused to give way to his brother, *Phoen.* 55, 280, 389; *H. Fur.* 389. See **POLYNEICES**
- EUMENIDES** ("the gracious ones"), a euphemistic name for the Furies, *H. Fur.* 87; *H. Oet.* 1002
- EURŌPA**, daughter of Agenor, king of Tyre, beloved of Jupiter, who, as a bull, carried her away to Crete, *Oet.* 206, 766; *H. Oet.* 550; this episode immortalised by the constellation of Taurus, *H. Fur.* 9; sought in vain by her brother Cadmus, *Oed.* 715; the continent of Europe named after her, *Agam.* 205, 274; *Tro.* 896

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- LAIUS**, king of Thebes, husband of Jocasta, father of Oedipus, whom, fearing an oracle, he had exposed in infancy; his murder by an unknown man must be avenged before the plague afflicting Thebes can be relieved, *Oed.* *217; place and supposed manner of his death, *ibid.* *276, 776; his shade, raised by Tiresias, declares that Oedipus is his murderer, *ibid.* *619; his shade seems to appear to the blind Oedipus in exile, *Phoen.* 39
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- LAPITHAE**, tribe of Thessaly, associated in story with the Centaurs, and both with a struggle against Hercules in which they were worsted; in Hades still fear their great enemy when he appears, *H. Fur.* 779
- LATONA**, beloved of Jupiter, to whom she bore Apollo and Diana, *Agam.* 324; the floating island, Delos, the only spot allowed her by jealous Juno for her travail, *H. Fur.* 15
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- LEMNOS**, island in the Aegean, where Vulcan fell and established his forges, *H. Oet.* 1362; all the Lemnian women, except Hypsipyle, murdered their male relatives, *Agam.* 566
- LEO**, zodiacal constellation of the Lion, representing the Nemean lion slain by Hercules, *H. Fur.* 69, 945; *Thy.* 855; said to have fallen from the moon, where, according to the Pythagoreans, all monsters had their origin, *H. Fur.* 83
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- LUCINA**, goddess who presides over child-birth, *i.e.* Diana or Luna, *Agam.* 385; *Med.* 2; or Juno, *ibid.* 61
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- OPHION, one of the companions of Cadmus, sprung from the serpent's teeth; in adjectival form, it means simply Theban, *H. Fur.* 268; referring to Pentheus, *Oed.* 485.
- OPHIŪCHUS, the northern constellation of the "Serpent Holder," *Med.* 698
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- ORION, said to have been miraculously generated by Jupiter, Neptune, and Mercury out of an ox's hide; set as a constellation in the heavens, where his glittering sword menaces the heavenly ones, *H. Fur.* 12
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- PHOEBUS, one of Apollo's names; most frequently conceived of as the sun-god, driving his fiery chariot across the sky, seeing all

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- things, darkening his face or withdrawing from the sky at sight of monstrous sin, lord of the changing seasons, etc., *H. Fur.* 595, 607, 844, 940; *Phoen.* 87; *Med.* 728, 874; *Hip.* 889; *Oed.* 250; *Agam.* 42, 816; *Thy.* 776, 789, 838; *H. Oet.* 2, 680, 792, 1387, 1439, 1442; his sister is Luna, or Phoebe, *H. Fur.* 905; *Med.* 86; *Hip.* 311; *Oed.* 44; the name frequently used of the sun, its light, its heat, etc., *H. Fur.* 25, 940; *Tro.* 1140; *Med.* 298, 768; *Oed.* 122, 540, 545; *Agam.* 463, 577; *Thy.* 602; *H. Oet.* 41, 337, 666, 688, 727, 1022, 1581, 1624, 1699; intimately concerned in the affairs of men; is grandfather of Medea, *Med.* 512; father of Pasiphaë, *Hip.* 126, 154, 654, 889; lover and inspirer of Cassandra, *Tro.* 978; *Agam.* 255, 722; god of prophecy, giving oracles to mortals, *Med.* 86; *Oed.* 20, 34, 214, 222, 225, 231, 235, 269, 288, 291, 296, 719, 1046; *Agam.* 255, 294, 295; god of the lyre, *H. Fur.* 906; *Oed.* 498; *Agam.* 327; of the bow, *H. Fur.* 454; *Hip.* 192; *Agam.* 327, 549; his tree is the laurel, *Oed.* 228, 453; *Agam.* 588; Cilla is dear to him, *Tro.* 227; beautiful god of flowing locks, *Hip.* 800; worshipped as Smintheus, *Agam.* 176; hymn in praise of, *ibid.* 310; slew Python, *H. Fur.* 454; exposed the shame of Venus, whence her wrath is upon his descendants, *Hip.* 126; kept flocks of Admetus, king of Phærae, for a year, *ibid.* 296
- PHORBAS** (*Oedipus*), old man, head shepherd of the royal flocks, tells the secret of Oedipus' birth, *Oed.* 867
- PHRIXUS**, son of Athamas and Nephele, brother of Helle; persecuted by his stepmother, Ino, fled through the air with Helle upon a golden-fleeced ram obtained from Mercury, *Tro.* 1034; Helle fell into the sea (Hellespont), *H. Oet.* 776; Aegean Sea is called Phrixian Sea, *Agam.* 565; *H. Oet.* 776; Phrixus fared on alone to Colchis, where he sacrificed the ram and presented to Aëetes its golden fleece, which was the object of the Argonauts' quest, *Med.* 361, 471
- PIRITHOÛS**, son of Ixion, *Hip.* 1235; friend of Theseus; with Theseus attempted to steal Proserpina from Hades, *ibid.* 94, 244, 831
- PISA**, city of Elis where the Olympic games were held, *H. Fur.* 840; *Thy.* 123; *Agam.* 938
- PISCES**, zodiacal constellation of the Fish, *Thy.* 866
- PLEIÁDES**, called also Atlantides, the seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione, three of whom, Electra, Maia, and Taygete, were beloved of Jove, *H. Fur.* 10; a constellation which pales before the moon, *Med.* 96
- PLISTHENES**, son of Thyestes, slain by Atreus, *Thy.* 726
- PLUTO**, brother of Jupiter and Neptune, lord of the underworld, *H. Fur.* 560, 658; *Oed.* 256, 869; *Med.* 11; *Hip.* 625, 1240; *H. Oet.* 559, 935, 938, 1142, 1369, 1954; "grim Jove," *H. Fur.* 608; "dark Jove," *H. Oet.* 1705; obtained his kingdom by drawing lots with his two brothers, *H. Fur.* 833; his wife is Proserpina, *ibid.* 658; Theseus and Pirithoûs try to steal his wife, *Hip.* 95, are punished, *ibid.* 625; Hercules prevails upon him to give up Cerberus, *H. Fur.* 805; *H. Oet.* 559; gives up Theseus to Hercules, *H. Fur.* 805; *Hip.* 1152; uncle of Hercules, *H. Oet.* 328; and of Pallas, *Hip.* 1152; unmoved by tears, *H. Fur.* 578; conquered by Orpheus' music, *ibid.* 582; his court and appearance, *ibid.* *721; wounded by Hercules, *H. Fur.* 560
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- Adrastus marched against Thebes with an army headed by seven chiefs, *Phoen.* 58, 320; Oedipus foretells this fraternal strife and the death of both, *ibid.* 273, 334, 355; Polyneices remains at court of Adrastus three years, *ibid.* 370, *502; hardships of his exile, *ibid.* *586; appears before walls of Thebes, *ibid.* 387; Jocasta appeals to her sons, *ibid.* 434. See ETEOCLES
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