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# Atalanta in Calydon.

*A Tragedy*

By

Algernon Charles Swinburne

*Edited with Introduction and Notes by*

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## PREFACE

IN preparing this edition I have had in mind the unclassical as well as the classical reader. For the latter a part of the Introduction and most of the Notes will be unnecessary. It is for the former that they are intended. I have explained briefly in the Notes most of the proper names that occur in the text, not because I believe an understanding of them to be essential to the enjoyment of the play, though it is often an important accessory, but because there is a not uncommon type of mind which, when confronted with a large number of proper names of which it knows nothing, is too ready to assume that the whole play is consequently unintelligible. I wish furthermore to discourage the view that poetry is an easy recreation to be lightly skimmed over with a minimum of trouble. Reading poetry is an arduous task, but one which well repays the trouble given to it, and analysis, so far from being profanation, is indispensable to securing a proper response.

I should like to express my warmest thanks to Mr. Harold Nicolson for avowing me to use his scheme of the play as given in his monograph, *Swinburne*-, to the Curator of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, for permission to examine the Swinburne manuscripts therein displayed; and to my colleagues Mr. A. N. W. Saunders and Mr. E. C. Moule for their assistance with some points of Greek mythology.

**J.E.H.B.**

THE MILL HOUSE,  
BRADFIELD, *July* 1929.

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ATALANTA IN\* CALYDON



# INTRODUCTION

## 1. OUTLINE OF SWINBURNE'S LIFE

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE was the son of Admiral Charles and Lady Jane Swinburne. He was born in London on 5th April 1837. His childhood is of considerable importance, since it was during the first twenty-five years of his life that his sensitive mind received those impressions which always remained the most forceful in his poetry. Much of it was spent at Bonchurch, in the Isle of Wight, where he enjoyed the serene existence of an English country house and the unceasing adventure of living beside the sea, hearing its noises, watching its changes and climbing the rocks upon which it beat. Images of sea, wind, and rain are among the most common in his poems. During this time he learnt Italian and French from Lady Jane, who was accomplished in these tongues, and read extensively in the Bible. (The influence of Hebrew poetry on his style is clearly discernible, and France in particular was a most powerful stimulus throughout his life.

At the age of twelve Swinburne was sent to Eton, in the organised life of which institution he took but little part. Eton, however, was large enough in spirit to provide him with something that he wanted. He haunted the libraries, read voraciously and widely among Latin and Greek authors and Elizabethan playwrights, and won a prize for French. But he did not take kindly to the discipline of the place and left in mild disgrace in 1853. After two-and-a-half years of private tuition and a short visit to Germany, he proceeded to Balliol College, Oxford. Here he developed violent republican and

free-thinking sentiments, and was even more averse from the discipline of a University than he had been from that of Eton. His career at Oxford, in his own words, 'culminated in total and scandalous failure,' and in 1860 he went down without taking his degree. (One feature of these Oxford years calls for special notice, namely his acquaintance with the pre-Raphaelite painters Edward Burne-Jones, D. G. Rossetti, and William Morris, who had come to Oxford to decorate in fresco what is now the Library and was then the Debating Hall of the Union Society. Their influence upon him was immediate and, in some ways, lasting. Morris fired him with an enthusiasm for old French romances, and much of his early work is frankly pre-Raphaelite. After leaving Oxford he saw a good deal of them in London, where their influence upon his erratic and often violent temperament was not always healthy; and it was at the house of Burne-Jones that he met the first and last love of his existence. He proposed to this young lady, we may imagine, in a sudden and unconventional manner, with the result that she laughed in his face. He dashed northwards to Northumberland and wrote the first of his great poems, *The Triumph of Time*, dealing with his repent unhappy experience.

In 1865 he published *Atalanta in Calydon*, which had an instant success. This play and *Poems and Ballads: First Series* (1866) brought back into English poetry something that had long been strange to it. 'The themes which this sonorous verse bore upon its tide were, in one word, those that had been gradually excommunicated from poetry since the humanistic age, and were supposed no longer to engage the life and thoughts of men.'<sup>1</sup> Like all new and vital movements in Art, *Poems and Ballads* drew horrified vituperations on the head of its creator

*Songs before Sunrise* (1871), *Erechtheus* (1876), and *Poems and Ballads: Second Series* (1878) followed, and although there are isolated poems outside these which are of value and importance

<sup>1</sup> Osbert Burdett. *The Beardsley Period*, p. 50.

(e.g. *Tristram*) it may be said that in 1878 Swinburne's poetic output came to an end. The last thirty years produced quantities of verse in which there was no more than a vulgar echo of the glory of his earlier poetry. He lived until his death in 1909, at Putney, under the tutelage of Mr. Walter\* Watts-Dunton, a lawyer, who cured Swinburne of too great a fondness for brandy and encouraged him in respectable habits. That he saved him from drink and worse, that he proved a sincere and trustworthy friend, these considerations must temper our resentment at Watts-Dunton's desiccating influence upon Swinburne's poetry.

This bare outline of Swinburne's life is intended to do no more than emphasize the essential importance of his early experience and poetry. It is sometimes asserted that the love of Swinburne is characteristic of youth, and that as we grow to manhood the music and the motion of his lines cease to move us as formerly. If this be so, and it is a condemnation not of his poetry but of ourselves, we must make the most of it while we may.

## 2. SWINBURNE'S USE OF WORDS

It is clear that the effect of a word upon a listener or reader, the response that he makes to it, depends not only upon its connotation, or dictionary meaning, but also upon its associations and upon its sound. Some words indeed, which are known as onomatopoeic, convey their meaning entirely by their sound, e.g. bang, crash, buzz, whinny. This is also true of phrases or whole sentences, from the simple and rather obvious

Strong gongs groaning as the guns boom far

to more subtle verses such as the following :

Outside it must be winter among men,  
For at the gold bars of the gates again  
I heard all night and all the hours of it  
The wind's wet wings and fingers drip with rain.

This last example, which is taken from Swinburne's *Laus Veneris*, may introduce us to a peculiar and almost unique quality in Swinburne's poetry, his very individual use of words. An examination of the manuscript of *Atalanta* in the Fitzwilliam Museum brings a number of interesting facts to light. Let us take first the opening couplet of the play :

Maiden and mistress of the months and stars  
Now folded in the flowerless fields of heaven.

The word 'flowerless' was the fourth which Swinburne tried. He began with 'happy,' rejected that in favour of 'rayless,' then tried 'sleepless,' and finally wrote the line as it stands. Again, line 431, which in its finished form runs :

On the strait reefs of twice-washed Salamis,

was only reached after numerous experiments. 'Straits reefs' began as 'loud reaches,' after which 'loud rocks' and 'twain shore' were tried. 'Twice-washed' followed upon 'wave-worn' and 'violent.' What are the conclusions which are to be drawn from these two examples, chosen from a great many others? It is usually inadvisable to try to reconstruct the mental processes of a poet during the composition of a poem, but Swinburne has provided us with such unusually good material that a conjecture will not be out of place. In the first example quoted it will be noticed that three out of the four words have the final syllable in common (flowerless, rayless, sleepless) but that none of them have any meaning in common. It is clear, then, that Swinburne was not seeking any particular meaning, but that he was seeking a particular sound. 'Flowerless,' which alliterates with 'folded' and 'fields,' and adds two more 'l's to the line, gave him what he was looking for. In the second example the same methods can be observed. For the first half his final decision was the vowel sounds AY and EE. He began with OW and EE, followed by OW and O. This second step, which looks like a retrogression, can doubtless be accounted for by the fact that 'loud reaches'

contained too many syllables and thus spoiled the rhythm. He began by correcting the rhythm. The next reading ('twain shore') gave him one of his two vowel sounds AY, and the next ('strait reefs') gave him back the EE sound that he had tried in 'reaches.' In the second half of the line ('twice-washed') the final vowel sounds are EYE and O, one of which he had already obtained in 'violent' and an approach to the other in 'worn'.

That the beauty of Swinburne's poetry lies in its sound has often been asserted, but I have nowhere seen an examination such as this of his manuscripts, which seems to put beyond question the fact that his use of sound as the foundation of his verse was a deliberate and conscious action. The word 'sound,' however, does not perhaps fully indicate the quality which we are discussing. Something rather hard to define must be added to it. We may begin, perhaps, by saying that Swinburne did not use words simply as a composer uses musical notes. A single word is a much more powerful thing than a single note. The word 'Greece,' for example, produces by itself a far-reaching response, while middle C struck on the piano produces a very limited one. What gives Swinburne a unique place among English poets is that he was more exclusively occupied with the words themselves, rather than the objects for which they stood, than any other poet. I say <sup>4</sup> more exclusively,' because there are stray examples elsewhere, as for instance in Milton's 'blind mouths' and in Keats's 'ajone and palely loitering.' Words originally devised as convenient symbols or substitutes for concrete objects, have, in the long history of language, acquired a life of their own often quite separate from that which they symbolise. It is with words used thus that Swinburne was mainly concerned.<sup>1</sup>

The immense power of words to suggest ideas, even when

<sup>1</sup> The following passages may be studied with advantage in this connection: 73-80, 267-268, 723, 812-826, 1069-1072, 1138-1139, 1273, 1402-1404, 1789-1790, 1850-1851, 2156.

their connotation is not understood and when they do not present any obvious onomatopoeia, may be illustrated by the experience of Mr. E. Greening-Lamborn,<sup>1</sup> who read the line

Tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore

to a child who knew no Latin and was told by the child that it sounded like

By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept,  
showing a response almost uncanny in its accuracy. . . .

That Swinburne was primarily interested in words and not in objects, may be further proved by the extraordinarily small number of 'stimuli' to which he responded. Mr. Harold Nicolson<sup>2</sup> stated the theory that all of them were absorbed before he left Oxford, and that the whole of his poetical output of later years was simply ringing the changes upon certain wide and diffused experiences ; the sea, the sun and the wind (childhood), certain revolutionary feelings (the Italian patriot Mazzini was his god when he was at Balliol), and certain literary passions. Of these last the strongest were probably Sophocles, Euripides, Victor Hugo and W. S. Landor, all of whom he had read before he left Eton.

With the correctness of this theory we are not specially concerned, but there can be no question that most of Swinburne's poetry, consists of re-evocations of a very small range of images, that the same words and rhymes occur over and over again. central points, as it were, from which to orientate his experience, and that the most essential emotions - to be found in his poems were those which he received during the first 'twenty-five years of his life. For this reason Swinburne is riot to be read in entirety. Much of him is unbearably monotonous. But certain poems, and *Atalanta* is one of them, must occupy a permanent place among the great achievements of English poets. )

<sup>1</sup> *Rudiments of Criticism*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Swinburne*, p. 9 et seq.

## 3. THE FORM OF A GREEK TRAGEDY

(The form adopted by Swinburne for *Atalanta* is that of the Athenian drama of the century B.C. For those unfamiliar with Greek some account of the origins and conventions of this form is necessary for a proper understanding of the play. There is little doubt that drama began as a religious ritual gradually elaborated, in honour of Dionysus or Bacchus, the god of the vine-harvest. It was a communal gathering, with harvest-revels and ancestor-worship as the central impulse to give form to the rejoicings.<sup>1</sup> In the course of time the religious element was obscured, and, correspondingly, interest in the story presented in the ritual increased, but religion had given the form to the play and the form persisted long after the religion had disappeared. Nevertheless even in the fifth century attendance at the plays was looked upon as an act of piety and was similar in some respects to church-going at the present day. The ancestor-worship element resulted in the subjects of the drama being restricted to national legends, already well-known to the whole audience, and interest was centred in variation of treatment!

Common to all Greek drama was the Chorus. This was probably in the first instance a chorus of satyrs or followers of Dionysus, and consisted of twelve members, a number raised by Sophocles to fifteen. The choruses of the great tragedians (Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides) were variously composed, sometimes of elders (*Antigone*) or maidens (*Orestes*) or warriors (*Rhesus*), while in the comedies of Aristophanes we find choruses of frogs and birds. The choruses divided the plays into acts and usually showed the universal significance of the particular events taking place on the stage a use clearly illustrated in *Atalanta*. To Euripides, who was a great innovator, they were sometimes an embarrassment, as for example in the *Oreste*, where a party of respectable Argive

<sup>1</sup>E. F. Jourdain. *The Drama in Europe*, p. 2.

ladies have to be privy to a murderous plot, the success of which depends upon its secrecy. In *Atalanta*, as in the plays of Aeschylus, the choruses are part of the play, which forms an harmonious whole. Only perhaps in the Third Stasimon (I. 1038-1204) do they strike a note which has no proper relation to the rest of the play.

Another peculiar convention of Greek drama was the use of the Messenger. The Greeks disliked any form of violent action, and in order to spare the feelings of the audience and to preserve a certain air of dignity and serenity, murder, though an invariable occurrence in the tragedies, was never done upon the stage, though here again the *Rhesus* (charioteer scene) is an example of the innovations of Euripides in this respect. An alternative device was adopted by which all the action was described by a Herald or Messenger, upon whose shoulders rested the considerable burden of conveying to the audience, by power of descriptive acting, the most important moments of the play.

The Greek drama had other unusual characteristics which need not detain us. Enough has been said to explain to the reader the two points which, if he is unacquainted with the customs of Greece, may puzzle him in *Atalanta*. A word, however, must be added on the structure of a Greek theatre. The auditorium was semi-circular, the audience sitting in the open air, on seats of marble, looking down upon the *Orchestra*, in which the chorus sang their songs and performed their evolutions. In the middle of this was an altar inscribed to Dionysus, decorated with laurel, and indicating the religious origins of the play. The stage itself is a matter of conjecture, for, although the remains of several auditoria still exist in Greece, all traces of stage-buildings, wooden structures in all probability, have completely disappeared.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary to go to Greece in order to gain an idea of a Greek theatre. There is the model of Epidaurus at Bradfield, and remains of Roman theatres, on similar lines, at Orange and Aries in the South of France, and at Pompeii. The stage buildings at Orange and Aries may or may not be an indication of the form of the Greek ones.

## 4. THE PLAY

, *Atalanta in Calydon*, published, as has already been said, in 1865, and dedicated to Walter Savage Landor, is as perfect a model of a Greek tragedy as can be found in English literature. The discipline imposed by so symmetrical and so reticent a form seems, almost paradoxically, to have moved Swinburne to the greatest heights of his genius. Nowhere else is to be found such an intoxicating torrent of exquisite sound combined with such perfect equilibrium and proportion. The play must be read as a whole, preferably at a single sitting; and it must be borne in mind that every line and word is an essential part of the design.

I am indebted to Mr. Harold Nicolson for permission to use his scheme of the Play<sup>1</sup> as the foundation of the following analysis. I have added to it some not too rigid stage directions in order that the reader may the more easily be able to picture in his mind the events of the play, and I have further taken the liberty of imagining a setting for the stage. Those who are able to construct their own, or who can dispense altogether with the assistance of visual imagery, need not trouble with it; to others it may be a help.

The stage is set as a terrace, the height of which above the ground might be suggested in a number of different ways by a simple painted back-curtain. On the left and right of the stage rise to somewhere far above the proscenium arch the walls of the palace, in which there are openings leading to the inner quarters. The stage is thus seen to be part of a narrow court-yard looking out over the plains of Calydon. The entrances from distant places, in the absence of *parodoi*, can be contrived by an opening in the terrace balustrade, and steps, invisible of course, leading up from behind, so that people entering by them are seen by the audience gradually mounting in the manner of ships coming up over the horizon.

<sup>1</sup> *Swinburne*, pp. 75 and 76.

When, at the beginning of the Play, the Chief Huntsman comes up these steps, the stage is very dim, and there is only a glimmer upon the back-curtain, which grows brighter during the prologue. By the time that the Chorus enter, the right half of the stage is flooded with brilliant light, coming from the back left-hand corner.. Here then is the scheme of the Play :

1. PROLOGUE (ll. 1-64). Spoken by the Chief Huntsman.
2. PAHODOS (ll. 65-120). 'When the hounds of spring. . .'  
<sup>^</sup> The Chorus, still presupposing the absence of side entrances, enter from the back, and take up positions right and left down stage.
3. EPISODE I. (ll. 121-313). Althaea tells the story of the boar, and the story of Meleager's birth ; she speaks of the coming of Atalanta, and of her son's passion, as the final revenge of Artemis, and inveighs against the implacability of the gods. Althaea enters from the archway on the left of the stage, and at the end of the episode leaves by the archway opposite.
4. STASIMON I (ll. 314-361). Chorus. 'Before the beginning of years.'
5. EPISODE II. (ll. 362-718). Meleager and <sup>^</sup>his mother: dialogue on the conflict between love and duty. Meleager and Althaea enter stage right, Meleager's first speech being addressed towards the back-stage left.
6. STASIMON II. (ll. 719-866). Chorus. 'We have seen thee, O Love.' Hymn to Aphrodite.
7. EPISODE III. (ll. 867-1037). Atalanta, Ceneus, Toxeus, and Plexippus enter, all from behind. Departure for the hunt by the same exit.
8. STASIMON III. (ll. 1038-1204). Chorus. 'Who hath given man speech ?' Revolt against the gods.
9. EPISODE IV. (ll. 1205-1373). Herald enters 'from

- behind, Althaea from left. The former announces the death of the boar. Exit Althaea left, to offer sacrifice of thanksgiving.
10. STASIMON IV. (ll. 1374-1468). Chorus. 'O that I now . . . ' Hymn to Artemis.
  11. EPISODE V. (ll. 1469-1808). First Messenger announces the death of Toxeus and Plexippus, who are brought in on branches. Althaea enters at J. 1476, and retires at the end of the Episode into the palace to burn the brand.
  12. STASIMON V. (ll. 1809-1855) Chorus. ' Not as with sundering of the earth.' The suddenness of fate.
  13. EPISODE VI. (ll. 1856-1947). Re-entry of Althaea, having thrust the brand into the flame.
  14. STASIMON VI. (ll. 1948-1983). Sémichoms. ' She has filled with sighing the city'.
  15. EPISODE VII. (ll. 1984-2026). Second Messenger announces the approach of the dying Meleager. At the end of this a procession enters, consisting of Meleager borne-up by guards, Qsneus, Atalanta, hunters and attendants.
  16. KOMMOS. (Lament) (ll. 2027-2181). A melic passage between Meleager, Atalanta, (Eneus, and the Chorus. During all this and ever since she last spoke in l. 1947, Althaea is crouched in the background. The frenzy has left her ; she is dumb with the horror of her deed.
  17. EXODOS (ll. 2182-2311). Farewell and death of Meleager, at the end of which he is borne out and the stage is left empty, save for the now recumbent figure of Althaea plunged in grief and despair.
  18. EPILOGUE (ll. 2312-2317). Chorus. 'Who shall contend with his lords.'

In extending Mr. Nicolson's scheme I have not endeavoured to adhere to a strict Hellenic model, the back-entrance and the use of a lighted back-curtain alone making this obvious. But, in spite of its form, the Play is in many respects un-Hellenic, the language in particijjar having little rhythmical or other resemblance to Greek. )

Little more need be said of the Play. The reader should now be sufficiently equipped for a first reading resulting in understanding and enjoyment. Subsequent readings will widen the one and enrich the other. But it must be emphasized that no number of readings will be of the smallest avail unless the sound of the verse be allowed its full effect, and this can only be gained by reading it aloud.

In conclusion, I have throughout considered *Atakt/nta* as a play and not as a poem in dramatic form, since the former is clearly the proper interpretation. But, in spite of the vitality of its episodes, it is doubtful whether it can ever be performed **save on the stage of our minds**. The main difficulty in the way of a producer would be, first of all, the choruses, which would have to be spoken, since Swinburne set to music is unthinkable, and secondly, the vagueness of the emotions excited by the long speeches, which would probably try the patience of all but the most intelligent audiences.

## THE AKGUMENT

ALTHAEA, daughter of Thestius and Eurythemis, queen of Calydon, being with child of Meleager her first-born son, dreame'd that she brought forth a brand burning; and upon his birth came the three Fates and prophesied of him three things, namely these; that he should have great strength of his hands, and good fortune in this life, and that he should live no longer when the brand then in the fire were consumed: wherefore his mother plucked it forth and kept it by her. And the child being a man grown sailed with Jason after the fleece of gold, and won himself great praise of all men living; and when the tribes of the north and west made war upon Ætolia, he fought against their army and scattered it. But Artemis, having at the first stirred up these tribes to war against Oeneus king of Calydon, because he had offered sacrifice to all the gods saving her alone, but her he had forgotten to honour, was yet more wroth because of the destruction of this army, and sent upon the land of Calydon a wild boar which slew many and wasted all their increase, but him? could none slay, and many went against him and perished. Then were all the chief men of Greece gathered together, and among them Atalanta, daughter of Iasius the Arcadiari, a virgin; for whose sake Artemis let slay the boar, seeing she favoured the maiden greatly; and Meleager having despatched it gave the spoil thereof to Atalanta, as one beyond measure enamoured of her; but the brethren of Althaea his mother, Toxeus and Plexippus, with such others as misliked that she only should bear off the praise whereas many had borne the labour, laid

wait for her to take away her spoil; but Meleager fought against them and slew them: whom when Althaea their sister beheld and knew to be slain of her son, she waxed for wrath and sorrow like as one mad, and taking the brand whereby the measure of her son's life was meted to him, she cast it upon a fire; and with the wasting thereof his life likewise wasted away, that being brought back to his father's house he died in a brief space ; and his mother also endured not long after for very sorrow; and this was his end, and the end of that hunting.

## THE PERSONS

CHIEF HUNTSMAN

CHORUS

**ALTHÆA**

MELEAGER

(ENEUS

ATALANTA

TOXEUS

PLEXIPPUS

HERALD

MESSENGER

SECOND MESSENGER



## ATALANTA IN CALYDON

*Chief Huntsman.* Maiden and mistress of the months  
and stars

Now folded in the flowerless fields of heaven,  
Goddess whom all gods love with threefold heart,  
Being treble in thy divided deity,  
A light for dead men and dark hours, a foot  
Swift on the hills as morning, and a hand  
To all things fierce and fleet that roar and range  
Mortal, with gentler shafts than snow or sleep ;  
Hear now and help and lift no violent hand .  
But favourable and fair as thine eye's beam 10  
Hidden and shown in heaven ; for I all night  
Amid the king's hounds and the hunting men  
Have wrought and worshipped toward thee ; nor shall  
man  
See goodlier hounds or deadlier edge of spears ;  
But for the end, that lies unreached at yet  
Between the hands and on the knees of gods.  
O fair-faced sun, killing the stars and dews]  
And dreams and desolation of the night! /  
Rise up, shine, stretch thine hand out, with thy bow  
Touch the most dimmest height of trembling heaven, 20  
And burn and break the dark about thy ways,  
Shot through and through with arrows ; let thine hair

..Lighten as flame above that flameless shell  
 Which was the moon, and thine eyes fill the world  
 And thy lips kindle with swift beams ; let earth  
 [Laugh, and the long sea fiery from thy feet  
 Through all the roar and ripple of streaming springs  
 And foam in reddening flakes and flying flowers  
 Shaken from hands and blown from lips of nymphs  
 Whose hair or breast divides the wandering wave 30  
 With salt close tresses cleaving lock to lock,  
 All gold, or shuddering and unfurrowed snow ;  
 And all the winds about thee with their wings,  
 And fountain-heads of all the watered world ;  
 Each horn of Achelous, and the green  
 Euenus, wedded with the straitening sea.  
 For in fair time thou comest; come also thou,  
 Twin-born with him, and virgin, Artemis,  
 And give our spears their spoil, the wild boar's hide,  
 Sent in thine anger against us for 40  
 And bloodless altars without wine or fire.  
 Him now consume thou ; for thy sacrifice  
 With sanguine-shining steam divides the dawn,  
 And one, the maiden rose of all thy maids,  
 Arcadian Atalanta, snowy-souled,  
 Fair as the snow and footed as the wind,  
 From Ladon and well-wooded Maenalus  
 Over the firm hills and the fleeting sea  
 Hast thou drawn hither, and many an armed king,  
 Heroes, the crown of men, like gods in fight. 50  
 Moreover out of all the Ætolian land,  
 From the full-flowered Lelantian pasturage  
 To what of fruitful field the son of Zeus  
 ' Won from the roaring river and labouring sea

Whon the wild god shrank in his horn and fled  
 And foamed and lessened through his wrathful fords,  
 Leaving clear lands that steamed with sudden sun,  
 These virgins with the lightening of the day  
 Bring thee fresh wreaths and their own sweeter hair,  
 Luxurious locks and flower-like mixed with flowers, 60  
 Clean offering, and chaste hymns ; but me the time  
 Divides from these things ; whom do thou not less  
 Help and give honour, and to mine hounds good speed,  
 And edge to spears, and luck to each man's hand.

*Chorus.* When the hounds of spring are on winter's  
 traces,

The mother of months in meadow or plain  
 Fills the shadows and windy places

With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain ;  
 And tge Brown HflglTt nightingale amorous  
 Is half assuaged for Itylus, 70  
 For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,  
 The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,  
 Maiden most perfect, lady of light,  
 With a noise of winds and many rivers,  
 With a cl xmour of waters, and with might;  
 Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,  
 Over the splendour and speed of thy feet;  
 For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,  
 Round the feet of the day and the feet of the  
 night. 8C

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,  
 Fold our hands round her knees, and cling ?

O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,  
 Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring !  
 , For the stars and the winds are unto her  
 As raiment, as songs of the harp-player ;  
 For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,  
 And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing,

For winter's upins and ruins are over,  
 And all the season of snows and sins ; 90  
 The days dividing lover and lover,  
 The light that loses, the night that wins ;  
 And time remembered is ~~grief forgotten~~,  
 And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,  
 And in green underwood and cover  
 Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,  
 Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,  
 rhesmt fresh flame of the young year flushes  
 From leaf to flower and flower to fruit ; 100  
 And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,  
 And the oat is heard above the lyre,  
 And the hoofed heel of a satyr crushes  
 The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,  
 Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,  
 Follows with dancing and fills with delight  
 The Maenad and the Bassarid ;  
 And' soft as lips that laugh and hide  
 The laughing leaves of the trees divide, 110  
~~And~~ screen from seeing and leave in sight '  
 The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair  
 Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes ;  
 The wild vine slipping down leaves bare  
 (Herjbright breast shortening into sighs :  
 The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,  
 But the berried ivy catches and cleaves  
 To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare  
 The wolf tha/E IbHowspOie fawn that flidft. 120

*Althcea.* What do ye singing ? what is this ye sin<sup>1</sup>^?

*Chorus.* Flowers bring we, and pure lips that pleas<sup>^</sup> the\*<sup>^</sup>  
 gods,

And raiment meet for service : lest the day  
 Turn sharp with all its honey in our lips.

*Althcea.* Night, a black hound, follows the white fawn  
 day,

Swifter than dreams the white flown feet of sleep ;  
 Will ye pray back the night with any prayers ?  
 And though the spring put back a little while  
 Winter, and snows that plague all men for sin,  
 And the iron time of cursing, yet I know 130  
 Spring shall be ruined with the rain, and storm  
 Eat up like fire the ashen autumn days.

I marvel wb at men do with prayers awake  
 Hho dream and die with dreaming ; any god,  
 Yea, the least god of all things called divine,  
 Is more than sleep and waking ; yet we say,  
 Perchance by praying a man shall match his god.  
 For if sleep have no mercy, and man's dreams  
 Bite to the blood and burn into the bone,  
 What shall this man do waking ? By the gods, 140  
 He shall not pray to dream sweet things to-night,

Having dreamt once more bitter things than death.

*Chorus.* Queen, but what is it that hath burnt thine heart?

For thy speech flickers like a blown-out flame.

*Althcea.* Jiook, ye say well, and know not what ye say ;  
For all my sleep is turned into a fire,

And all my dreams to stuff that kindles it.

*Chorus.* Yet one doth well being patient of the gods

*Althcea.* Yea, lest they smite us with some four-foot  
plague.

*Chorus.* But when time spreads find out some herb  
for it. 150

*Althcea.* And with their healing herbs infect our  
blood.

*Chorus.* What ails thee to be jealous of their ways ?

*Althcea.* What if they give us poisonous drinks for  
wine?

*Chorus.* They have their will; much talking mends  
it not.

*Althcea.* And gall for milk, and cursing for a prayer ?

*Chorus.* Have they not given life, and 'the end of life ?

*Althcea.* Lo, where they heal, they help not; thus  
they do,

They mock us with a little piteousness,

And we say prayers, and weep ; but at the last,

Sparing awhile, they smite and spare no whit. 160

*Chorus.* Small praise man gets dispraising the high  
gods:

What have they done that thou dishonourest them ?

*Althcea.* First, Artemis for all this harried land  
I praise not, and for wasting of the boar

That mars with tooth and tusk and fiery feet .

Greea pasturage and the grace of standing corn  
 And meadow and marsh with springs and unblown leaves,  
 Flocks and swift herds and all that bite sweet grass,  
 I praise her not; what things are these to praise ?

*Chorus.* But when the king did sacrifice, and gave 170  
 Each god fair dues of wleaj! and blood and wine,  
 Her not with bloodshed nor burnt-offering  
 Keivered he, nor with salt or cloven cake ;  
 /Wherefore being wroth she plagued the land ; but now  
 iTakes off from us fate and her heavy things.  
 WEich deed ot these twain were not good to praise ?  
 For a just deed looks always either way  
 With blameless eyes, and mercy is no fault.

*Althcea.* Yea, but a curse she hath sent above all these  
 To hurt us where she healed us ; and hath lit 180  
 Fire where the old fire went out, and where the wind  
 Slackened, hath blown on us with deadlier air.

*Chorus.* What storm is this that tightens all our sail ?

*Althcea.* Love, a thwart sea-wind full of rain and foam.

*Chorus.* Whence blown, and born under what stormier  
 star?

*Althcea.* Southward across Euenus from the sea.

*Chorus.* Thy speech turns toward Arcadia like blown  
 wind.

*Althcea.* Sharp as the north sets when the snows are  
 out'

*Chorus.* Nay, for this maiden hath no touch of love.

*Althcea.* I would she had sought in some cold gulf of sea  
 Love, or in dens where strange beasts lurk, or fire, 191  
 Or snows on the extreme hills, or iron land  
 Where no spring is ; I would she had sought therein  
 And found^or ever love had found her here.

*Charm.* (She is holier than all holy days or things,  
 The sprinkled water or fume of perfect fire;  
 Chaste, dedicated to pure prayers, and filled  
 With higher thoughts than heaven ; a maiden clean,  
 Pure iron, fashioned for a sword ; "and man  
 She loves not; what should one such do with love ? 200

*Althcea.* Look you, I speak not as one light of wit,  
 But as a queen speaks, being heart-vexed ; for oft  
 I hear my brothers wrangling in mid hall,  
 And am not moved ; and my son chiding them,  
 And these things nowise move me, but I know  
 Foolish and wise men must be to the end,  
 And feed myself with patience ; but this most,  
 This moves me, that fomvise men as for fools  
 Love is one-thing, an evil thing, and turns  
Choice words and wisdom into fire and air. 210  
 AnS in the end shall no joy come, but grief,  
 Sharp words and soul's division and fresh tears  
 Flower-wise upon the old root of tears brought forth,  
 Fruit-wise upon the old flower of tears sprung up,  
 Pitiful sighs, and much regrafted pain.  
 These things are in my presage, and myself  
 Am part of them and know not • but in dreams  
 The gods are heavy on me, and all the fates  
 Shed fire across my eyelids mixed with night,  
 And burn me blind, and disilluminate 220  
 My sense of seeing, and my perspicuous soul  
 Parken with vision ; seeing I see not, hear  
 And hearing am not holpen, but mine eyes  
 Stain many tender broideries in the bed  
 Drawn up about my face that I may weep  
 And the king wake not; and my brows and lips

Tren.ble and sob in sleeping, like swift flames  
 That tremble, or water when it sobs with heat  
 Kindled from under ; and my tears fill my breast  
 And speck the fair dyed pillows round the king 230  
 With barren showers and salter than the sea,  
 Such dreams divide me dreaming ; for long since,  
 I dreamed that out of this my womb had sprung  
 Fire and firebrand ; this was ere my son,  
 Meleager a goodly flower in fields of fight,  
 Felt the light touch him coming forth, and wailed  
 Childlike ; but yet he was not ; arid in time  
 I bare him, and my heart was great ; for yet  
 So royally was never strong man born,  
 Nor queen so nobly bore as noble a thing 240  
 As this my son was : such a birth God sent  
 And such a grace to bear it. Then came in  
 Three we a i n g women and span each a thread,  
 Sayjng^This for strengthjind That for luck,lihd onN  
 Saymg^Till the brandjupon the hearth burn (Town,/
 So long shall this man see good days  
 And I with gathered raiment from the bed  
 Sprang, and drew forth the brand, and cast on it  
 Water, and trod the flame bare-foot, and crushed  
 With naked hand spark beaten out of spark 250  
 And blew against and quenched it ; for I said,  
 These are the most high Fates that dwell with us,  
 And we find favour a little in their sight,  
 A little, and more we miss of, and much time  
 Foils us ; howbeit they have pitied me, O son,  
 And thee most piteous, thee a tenderer thing  
 Than any flower of fleshly seed alive.  
 Wherefore I kissed and hid him with my hands,

And covered under arms and hair, and wept,  
 And feared to touch him with my tears, and laughed ; 260  
 So light a thing was this man, grown so great  
 Men cast their heads back, seeing against the sun  
 Blaze the armed man carven on his shield, and hear  
 The laughter of little bells along the brace  
 Ring, as birds singing or flutes blown, and watch,  
 High up, the cloven shadow of either plume  
 Divide the bright light of the brass, and make  
 His helmet as a windy and wintering moon  
 Seen through blown cloud and plume-like drift, when ships  
 Drive, and men strive with all the sea, and oars 270  
 Break, and the beaks dip under, drinking death ;  
 Yet was he then but a span long, and moaned  
 With inarticulate mouth inseparate words,  
 And with blind lips and fingers wrung my breast  
 Hard, and thrust out with foolish hands and feet,  
 Murmuring ; but those grey women with bound hair  
 Who fright the gods^frighted not him ; he laughed  
 Seeing them, and pushed out hands to feel and haul  
 Distaff and thread, intangible ; but they  
 Passed, and I hid the brand, and in my heart 280  
 Laughed likewise, having all my will of heaven.  
 But now I know not if to left or right  
 The gods have drawn us hither ; foragain  
 I dreamt, and saw the black braaJLbiarst on fire  
 3jfa Branch bursts in flower, and saw the flame  
 Fade flower-wise, and Death came and with dry lips  
 Blew the charred ash into my breast; and Love  
 Trampled the ember and crushed it with swift feet.  
 This I have also at heart; that not for me,  
 Not for me only or son of mine, 0 girls, 290

The gods have wrought life, and desire of life,  
 Heart's love and heart's division ; but for all  
 There shines one sun and one wind blows till night.  
 And when night comes the wind sinks and the sun,  
 And there is no light after, and no storm,  
 But sleep and much forgetfulness of things.  
 In such wise I gat knowledge of the gods  
 Years hence, and heard high sayings of one most wise,  
 Eurythemis my mother, who beheld  
 With eyes alive and spake with lips of these 300  
 As one on earth disflashed and disallied  
 From breath or blood corruptible ; such gifts  
 Time gave her, and an equal soul to these  
 And equal face to all things ; thus she said.  
 But whatsoever intolerable or glad  
 The swift hours weave and unweave, I go hence  
 Full of mine own soul, perfect of myself,  
 Toward mine and me sufficient; and what chance  
 The gods cast lots for and shake out on us,  
 That shall we take, and that much bear withal. 310  
 And now, before these gather to *the* hunt,  
 I will go arm my son and bring him forth,  
 Lest love or some man's anger work him harm.;

*Chorus.* Before the beginning of years  
 There came to the making of man  
 Time, with a gift of tears ;  
 Grief, with a glass that ran  
 Pleasure, with pain for leaven ;  
 Summer, with flowers that fell;  
 Remembrance fallen from heaven,  
 And madness risen from hell;

320

Strength without hands to smite ;  
 Love that endures for a breath ;  
 [•Night, the shadow of light,  
 \^ And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand  
 Fire, and the falling of tears,  
 And a measure of sliding sand  
 From under the feet of the years ;  
 And froth and drift of the sea ; 330  
 And dust of the labouring earth ;  
 And bodies of things to be  
 In the houses of death and of birth ;  
 And wrought with weeping and laughter,  
 And fashioned with loathing and love  
 With life before and after  
 I And death beneath and above,  
 JFor a day and a night and a morrow,  
 ' That his strength might endure for a span  
 With travail and heavy sorrow, 340  
 The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south  
 They gathered as unto strife ;  
 They breathed upon his mouth, ,  
 They filled his body with life ;  
 Eyesight and speech they wrought  
 For the veils of the soul therein,  
 A time for labour and thought,  
 A time to serve and to sin ;  
 They gave him light in his ways, 360  
 And love, and a space for delight,  
 And beauty and length of days,

And night, and sleep in the night.  
 His speech is a burning fire ;  
 With his lips he travaileth '  
 In his heart is a blind desire,  
 In his eyes foreknowledge of death ;  
 He weaves, and is clothed with derision ;  
 „ Sows, and he shall not reap ;  
 " His life is^a watch or a vision 360  
 Between a sleep and a sleep.

*Mekager.* O sweet new heaven and air without a  
 star,  
 Fair day, be fair and welcome, as to men  
 With deeds to do and praise to pluck from thee.  
 Come forth a child, born with clear sound and light,  
 With laughter and swift limbs and prosperous looks ;  
 That this great hunt with heroes for the hounds  
 May leave thee memorable and us well sped.

*Althcea.* Son, first I praise thy prayer, then bid thee  
 speed ;  
 speed; B u t t h e g o d s h e a r m e n ' s h a n d s b e f o r e t h e i r l i p s , 370  
 And heed beyond all crying and sacrifice  
 Light of things done and noise of labouring men.  
 But thou, being armed and perfect for the deed,  
 Abide ; for like rain-flakes in a wind they grow,  
 The men thy fellows, and the choice of the world,  
 Bound to root out the tusked plague, and leave  
 Thanks and safe days and peace in Calydon.

*Melwger.* For the whole city and all the low-lying  
 land  
 Frames, and the soft air sounds with them that come ;  
 The gods give all these fruit of all their works. 380

*Althcea.* Set thine eye thither and fix thy spirit and say  
Whom there thou knowest; for sharp mixed shadow  
and wind

Blown up between the morning and the mist,  
With steam of steeds and flash of bridle or wheel,  
And fire, and parcels of the broken dawn,  
And dust divided by hard light, and spears  
That shine and shift as the edge of wild beasts' eyes,  
Smite upon mine ; so fiery their blind edge  
Burns, and bright points break up and baffle day.

*Meleager.* The first, for many I know not, being far  
off, 390

JPeleus the Larissacan, couched with whom  
Sleeps the white sea-bred wife and silver-shod,  
Fair as fled foam, a goddess ; and their son  
Most swift and splendid of men's children born,  
Most like a god, full of the future fame.

*Althcea.* Who are these shining like one sundered star ?

*Meleager.* Thy sister's sons, a double flower of men.

*Althcea.* O sweetest kin to me in all the world,  
O twin-born blood of Leda, gracious heads  
Like kindled lights in untempestuous heaven, 400  
Fair flower-like stars on the iron foam of fight,  
With what glad heart and kindness of soul,  
Even to the staining of both eyes with tears  
And kindling of warm eyelids with desire,  
A great way off I greet you, and rejoice  
Seeing you so fair, and moulded like as gods.  
Far off ye come, and least in years of these,  
But lordliest, but worth love to look upon.

*Meleager.* Even such (for sailing hither I saw far hence,  
And where Eurotas hollows his moist rock 410

Nigfc Sparta with a strenuous-hearted stream)  
 Even such I saw their sisters ; one swan-white,  
 The little Helen, and less fair than she  
 Fair Clytaemnestra, grave as pasturing fawns ~  
 Who feed and fear some arrow; but at whiles,  
 As one smitten with love or wrung with joy,  
 She laughs and lightens with her eyes, and then  
 Weeps ; whereat Helen, having laughed, weeps too,  
 And the other chides her, and she being chid speaks nought,  
 But cheeks and lips and eyelids kisses her, 420  
 Laughing ; so fare they, as in their bloomless bud  
 And full of unblown life, the blood of gods.

*Althcea.* /Sweet days befall them and good loves and lords  
 And tender and temperate honours of tKe heart,  
Peace, and a perfect life and blameless bed.

But who shows nexFan eagle wrought in gold,  
 That flames and beats broad wings against the sun  
 And with void mouth gapes after emptier prey ?

' *Meleager.* Know by that sign the reign of Telamon  
 Between the fierce mouths of the encountering brine 430  
 On the strait reefs of twice-washed Salamis.

*Althcea.* For like one great of hand he bears himself,  
 Vine-chapleted, with savours of the sea,  
 Glittering as wine and moving as a wave.  
 But who girt round there roughly follows him ?

*Meleager.* Ancaeus, great of hand, an iron bulk,  
 Two-edged for fight as the axe against his arm,  
 Who drives against the surge of stormy spears  
 Full-sailed ; him Cepheus follows, his twin-born,  
 Chief name next his of all Arcadian men. 440

: *Althaea.* Praise be with men abroad ; chaste lives with  
 us,

Home-keeping days and household reverences.

*Meleager.* Next by the left unsandalled foot know thou  
The sail and oar of this Ætolian land,  
Thy brethren, Toxeus and the violent-souled  
Plexippus, over-swift with hand and tongue ;  
For hands are fruitful, but the ignorant mouth  
Blows and corrupts their work with barren breath.

*Althcea.* Speech too bears fruit, being worthy ; and air  
blows down  
Things poisonous, and high-seated violences, 450  
And with charmed words and songs have men put out  
Wild evil, and the fire of tyrannies.

*Meleager.* Yea, all things have they, save the gods and  
love.

*Althcea.* Love thou the law and cleave to things ordained.

*Meleager.* Law lives upon their lips whom these applaud.

*Althcea.* How sayest thou these ? what god applauds  
new things ?

*Meleager.* Zeus, who hath fear and custom under foot.

*Althcea.* But loves not laws thrown down and lives awry.

*Meleager.* Yet is not less himself than his own law.

*Althcea.* Nor shifts and shuffles old things up and down.

*Meleager.* But what he will remoulds and discreates.

*Althcea.* Much, but not this, that each thing live its  
life. 462

*Meleager.* Nor only live, but lighten and lift up higher.

*Althcea.* gride breaks itself and too much gained is gone.

<sup>1</sup> *Meleager.* Things gained are gone, but great things done  
endure.

*Althcea.* Child, if a man serve law through all his life  
And with his whole heart worship, him all gods  
Praise ; but who loves it only with his lips,

Ana not in heart and deed desiring it  
 Hides a perverse will with obsequious words, 470  
 Him heaven infatuates and his twin-born fate  
 Tracks, and gains on him, scenting sins far off,  
 And the swift hounds of violent death devour.  
 Be man at one with equal-minded gods,  
 So shall he prosper ; not through laws torn up,  
 Violated rule and a new face of things.  
 A woman armed makes war upon herself. )  
 unwomanlike, and treads down use and wont  
 And the sweet common honour that she hath,  
 Love, and the cry of children, and the hand 480  
 Trothplight and mutual mouth of marriages.  
 This doth she, being unloved ; whom if one love,  
 Not fire nor iron and the wide-mouthed wars  
 Are deadlier than her lips or braided hair.  
 For of the one conies poison, and a curse  
 Falls from the other and burns the lives of men.  
 But thou, son, be not filled with evil dreamy,  
 Nor with desire of the.se thing^-^jojc^wjith^time  
 BKndJoveJurnsj)ut ;\_Jbut ijLoaejeed it full;  
 Till some discolouring stain dyes all his life, 490  
 He shall keep nothing praiseworthy, nor die  
 The sweet w^se death of old men honourable,  
 Who have lived out all the length of all their years  
 Blameless, and seen well-pleased the face of gods,  
 And without shame and without fear have wrought  
 Things memorable, and while their days held out  
 In sight of all men and the sun's great light  
 Have gat them glory and given of their own praise  
 To the earth that bare them and the day that bred,  
 Home friends and far-off hospitalities, j 500

And filled with gracious and memorial fame  
 Lands loved of summer or washed by violent seas,  
 Towns populous and many unfooted ways,  
 And alien lips and native with their own.  
 But when white age and venerable death  
 Mow down the strength and life within their limbs,  
 Drain out the blood and darken their clear eyes,  
 Immortal honour is on them, having past  
 Through splendid life and death desirable  
 To the clear seat and remote throne of souls, /5iO  
 Lands *JndiscQverubl^iR* 4he unheard-of west,  
 Round which the strong stream of a sacred sea  
 Rolls without wind for ever, and the snow  
 There shows not her white wings and windy feet,  
 Nor thunder nor swift rain saith anything,  
 Nor the sun burns, but all things rest and thrive ;  
 And these, filled full of days, divine and dead,  
 Sages and singers fiery from the god,  
 And such as loved their land and all things good  
 And, best beloved of best men, liberty, 620  
 Free lives and lips, free hands of men free-born,  
 And whatsoever on earth was honourable  
 And whosoever of all the ephemeral seed,  
 Live there a life no liker to the gods  
 But nearer than their life of terrene days.  
 Love thou such life and look for such a death.  
 'But from the light and fiery dreams of Jove  
 Spring heavy sorrows and a sleepless life,  
 Visions not dreams, whose lids no charm shall close  
 Nor song assuage them waking ; and swift death 530  
 Brushes with sterile feet the unripening ear,  
 Treads out the timeless vintage whom do thou

Eschewing embrace the luck of this thy life,  
 Not without honour ; and it shall bear to thee  
 Such fruit as men reap from spent hours and wear,  
 Few men, but happy ; of whom be thou, O son,  
 Happiest, if thou submit thy soul to fate,  
 And set thine eyes and heart on hopes liigh-born  
 And divine deeds and abstinence divine.^  
 So shalt thou be toward all men all thy days                   540  
 As light and might communicable, and burn  
 From heaven among the stars above the hours,  
 And break not as a man breaks nor burn down :  
 For to whom other of all heroic names  
 Have the gods given his life in hand as thine ?  
 And gloriously hast thou lived, and made thy life  
 To me that bare thee and to all men born  
 Thankworthy, a praise for ever ; and hast won fame  
 When wild wars broke all round thy father's house,  
 And the mad people of windy mountain ways                   550  
 Laid spears against us like a sea, and all  
 ^Etolia thundered with Thessalian hoofs ;  
 Yet these, as wind baffles the foam, and beats  
 Straight back the relaxed ripple, didst thou break  
 And loosen all their lances, till undone  
 And man from man they fell ; for ye twain stood  
 God against god, Ares and Artemis,  
 And thou the mightier ; wneretore she unleashed  
 A sharp-toothed curse thou too shalt overcome ;  
 For in the greener blossom of thy life                               560  
 Ere the full blade caught flower, and when time gave  
 Respite, thou didst not slacken soul nor sleep,  
 But with great hand and heart seek praise of men  
 Out of sharp straits and many a grievous thing,

Seeing the strange foam of undivided seas  
 On channels never sailed in, and by shores  
 Where the old winds cease not blowing, and all the night  
 Thunders, and day is no delight to men.

*Chorus.* Meleager, a noble wisdom and fair words  
 The gods have given this woman ; hear thou these. 570

*Meleager.* O mother, I am not fain to strive in speech  
 Nor set my mouth against thee, who art wise  
 Even as they say and full of sacred words.  
 But one thing I know surely, and cleave to this ;  
 That though I be not subtle of wit as thou  
 Nor womanlike to weave sweet words, and <sup>as</sup> melt  
 Mutable minds of wise men as with fire,  
 I to-day, doing justly and reverencing the gods,  
 Shall not want wit to see what things be right.  
 For whom they love and whom reject, being gods, 580  
 There is no man but seeth, and in good time  
 Submits himself, refraining all his heart.  
 And I too as thou sayest have seen great things ;  
 Seen elsewhere, but chiefly when the sail  
 First caught between stretched ropes the roaring west,  
 And all our oars smote eastward, and the wind  
 First flung round faces of seafaring men  
 White splendid snow-flakes of the sundering foam,  
 And the first furrow in virginal green sea  
 Followed the plunging ploughshare of hewn pine, 590  
 And closed, as when deep sleep subdues man's breath  
 Lips close and heart subsides ; and closing, shone  
 Sunlike with many a Nereid's hair, and moved  
 Round many a trembling mouth of doubtful gods,  
 Risen out of sunless and sonorous gulfs  
 Through waning water and into shallow light,

That watched us ; and when flying the dove was snared  
 As with men's hands, but we shot after and sped  
 Clear through the irremeable Symplegades;  
 And chiefliest when hoar beach and herbless clifi       600  
 Stood out ahead from Colchis, and we heard  
 Clefts hoarse with wind, and saw through narrowing reefs  
 The lightning of the intolerable wave  
 Flash, and the white wet flame of breakers burn  
 Far under a kindling south-wind, as a lamp  
 Burns and bends all its blowing flame one way ;  
 Wild heights untraveiled of the wind, and vales  
 Cloven seaward by their violent streams, and white  
 With bitter flowers and bright salt scurf of brine ;  
 Heard sweep their sharp swift gales, and bowing birdwise  
 Shriek with birds' voices, and with furious feet       611  
 Tread loose the long skirts of a storm ; and saw  
 The whole white Euxine clash together and fall  
 Full-mouthed, and thunderous from a thousand throats :  
 Yet we drew thither and won the fleece and won  
 Medea, deadlier than the sea ; but there  
 Seeing many a wonder and fearful things to men  
 I saw not one thing like this one seen here,  
 Most fair and fearful, feminine, a god,  
 Faultless ; whom I that love not, feeling unlike,       620  
 Fēar, and give honour, and choose from all the gods.  
 (*Eneus.* Lady, the daughter of The<sup>^</sup>tius. and thou, son.  
 Not ignorant of your strife nor light of .wit,  
 Scared with vain dreams and fluttering like spent fire,  
 I come to judge between you, but a king  
 Full of past days and wise from years endured.  
 Nor thee I praise, who art fain to undo things done :  
 No' thee, who art swift to esteem them overmuch.

For what the hours have given is given, and tW's  
 Changeless ; howbeit these change, and in good time 630  
 Devise new things and good, not one thing still.  
 Us have they sent now at our need for help  
 Among men armed a woman, foreign born,  
 Virgin, not like the natural flower of things  
 That grows and bears and brings forth fruit and dies ;  
 Unlovable, no light for a husband's house,  
 Espoused ; a glory among unwedded girls,  
 And chosen of gods who reverence maidenhood.  
 These too we honour in honouring her ; but thou,  
 Abstain thy feet from following, and thine eyes 640  
 From amorous touch; nor set toward hers thine heart,  
 Son, lest hate bear no deadlier fruit than love.

*Althcea.* O king, thou art wise, but wisdom halts ; and  
 just,

put the gods love not justice more than fate.,  
 knd smite the righteous and the violent mouth,  
 find mix with insolent blood the reverent man's,  
 And bruise the holier as the lying lips.  
 "Enough ; for wise words fail me, and my heart  
 Takes fire and trembles flamewise, O my son,  
 O child, for thine head's sake ; mine eyes wax thick, 650  
 Turning toward thee, so goodly a weaponed man,  
 So glorious ; and for love of thine own eyes  
 They are darkened, and tears burn them, fierce as fire,  
 And my lips pause and my soul sinks with love.  
 But by thine hand, by thy sweet life and eyes,  
 By thy great heart and these clasped knees, O son,  
 I pray thee that thou slay me not with thee.  
 For there was never a mother woman-born  
 Loved her sons better; and never a queen of men

] lore perfect in her heart toward whom she loved. 660  
 ! 'or what lies light on many and they forget,  
 Small things and transitory as a wind o' the sea,  
 ' forget never ; I have seen thee all thine years  
 A man in arms, strong and a joy to men,  
 Seeing thine head glitter and thine hand burn its way  
 Through a heavy and iron furrow of Sundering spears ;  
 But always also a flower of three suns old,  
 The small one thing that lying drew down my life  
 To lie with thee and feed thee ; a child and weak,  
 Mine, a delight to no man, sweet to me. 670  
 Who then sought to thee ? who gat help ? who knew  
 If thou wert goodly ? nay, no man at all.  
 Or what sea saw thee, or sounded with thine oar,  
 Shild ? or what strange land shone with war through thee ?  
 But fair for me thou wert, O little life,  
 Fruitless, the fruit of mine own flesh, and blind,  
 More than much gold, ungrown, a foolish flower.  
 For silver nor bright snow nor feather of foam  
 Was whiter, and no gold yellower than thine hair,  
 O child, my child ; and now thou art lordlier grown, 68  
 Not lovelier, nor a new thing in mine eyes,  
 I charge thee tyy thy soul and this my breast,  
 Fear thoujjie-gods-and me and thine own heart  
 Lest all these turn -agamst thee ; for who knows  
 What wind upon what wave of altering time  
 Shall "Speak a storm and blow calamity ?  
 And there is nothing stabile in the world  
 But the gods break it; yet not less, fair son,  
 If but one tjjiaġ oe stronger, if one endure,  
 Surely the bitter and the rooted love 690  
 That burns between us, going from me to thee,

Shall more endure than all things. What dost thou,  
 Following strange loves ? why wilt thou kill mine heart ?  
 Lo, I talk wild and windy words, and fall  
 From my clear wits, and seem of mine own self  
 Dethroned, dispraised, disseated ; and my mind,  
 That was my crown, breaks, and mine heart is gone,  
 And I am naked of my soul, and stand  
 Ashamed, as a mean woman ; take thou thought ;  
 Live if thou wilt, and if thou wilt not, look, 700  
 The gods have given thee life to lose or keep,  
 Thou shalt not die as men die, but thine end  
 Fallen upon thee shall break me unaware.

*Meleager.* Queen, my whole heart is molten with thy  
 tears,

And my limbs yearn with pity of thee, and love  
 Compels with grief mine eyes and labouring breath ;  
 For what thou art I know thee, and this thy breast  
 And thy fair eyes I worship, and am bound  
 Toward thee in spirit and love thee in all my soul.  
 For there is nothing terribler to men 710  
 Than the sweet face of mothers, and the might.  
 But what shall be let be ; for us the day  
 Once only lives a little, and is not found.  
 Time and the fruitful hour are more than we,  
 And these lay hold upon us ; but thou, God,  
 Zeus, the sole steersman of the helm of things,  
 Father, be swift to see us, and as thou wilt  
 Hejp : or if adverse, as thou wilt, refrain.

{*Chorus.* We have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair ; thou  
 art goodly, O Love ;

Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a dove. 720  
 Thy feet are as winds that divide the stream of the sea ;

Earth is thy covering to hide thee, the garment of thee.  
 Thou art swift and subtle and blind as a flame of fire ;  
 Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of desire ;  
 And twain go forth beside thee, a man with a maid ;  
 Her eyes are the eyes of a bride whom delight makes afraid ;  
 As the breath in the buds that stir is her bridal breath ;  
 But Fate is the name of her ; and his name is Death!?

V

For an evil blossom was born  
 Of sea-foam and the frothing of blood, 730  
 Blood-red and bitter of fruit,  
 And the seed of it laughter and tears,  
 And the leaves of it madness and scorn ;  
 A bitter flower from the bud,  
 Sprung of the sea without root,  
 Sprung without graft from the years.

The weft of the world was untorn  
 That is woven of the day on the night,  
 The hair of the hours was not white  
 Nor the raiment of time overworn, 740  
 When a wonder, a world's delight,  
 A perilous goddess was born ;  
 And the waves of the sea as she came  
 Clove and the foam at her feet,  
 Fawning, rejoiced to bring forth  
 A fleshly blossom, a flame  
 Filling the heavens with heat  
 To the cold white ends of the north.

And in air the clamorous birds,  
 And men upon earth that hear 760  
 Sweet articulate words

Sweetly divided apart,  
 And in shallow and channel and mere  
 The rapid and footless herds,  
 Rejoiced, being foolish of heart.

For all they said upon earth,  
 She is fair, she is white like a dove,  
 And the life of the world in her breath  
 Breathes, and is born at her birth ;  
 For they knew thee for mother of love, 760  
 And knew thee not mother of death.

What hadst thou to do being born,  
 Mother, when winds were at ease,  
 As a flower of the springtime of corn,  
 A flower of the foam of the seas ?  
 For bitter thou wast from thy birth,  
 Aphrodite, a mother of strife;  
 For before thee some rest was on earth,  
 A little respite from tears,  
 A little pleasure of life ; / 770

For life was not then as thou art,  
 But as one that waxeth in years  
 Sweet-spoken, a fruitful wife;  
 Earth had no thorn, and desire  
 No sting, neither death any dart;  
 What hadst thou to do amongst these,  
 Thou, clothed with a burning fire,  
 Thou, girt with sorrow of heart,  
 Thou, sprung of the seed of the seas  
 As an ear from a seed of corn, 780  
 As a brand plucked forth of a pyre,  
 As a ray shed forth of the morn,

For division of soul and disease,  
 For a dart and a sting and a thorn ?  
 What ailed thee then to be born ?

Was there not evil enough,  
 Mother, and anguish on earth  
 Born with a man at his birth,  
 Wastes underfoot, and above  
 Storm out of heaven, and dearth 790

Shaken down from the shining thereof,  
 · Wrecks from afar overseas  
 · And peril of shallow and firth,  
 And tears that spring and increase  
 In the barren places of mirth,  
 That thou, having wings as a dove,  
 Being girt with desire for a girth,  
 That thou must come after these,  
 That thou must lay on him love ?

Thou shouldst not so have been born : 800  
 But death should have risen with thee,  
 Mother, and visible fear,  
 Grief, and the wringing of hands,  
 And noise of many that mourn ;  
 The smitten bosom, the knee  
 Bowed, and in each man's ear  
 A cry as of perishing lands,  
 A moan as of people in prison,  
 A tumult of infinite griefs ;  
 And thunder of storm on the sands, 810  
 And wailing of wives on the shore ;  
 And under thee newly arisen  
 Loud shoals and shipwrecking reefs,

Fierce air and violent light;  
 Sail rent and Sundering oar,  
 Darkness, and noises of night;  
 Clashing of streams in the sea,  
 Wave against wave as a sword,  
 Clamour of currents, and foam;  
 Rains making ruin on earth,                    820  
 Winds that wax ravenous and roam  
 As wolves in a wolfish horde ;  
 Fruits growing faint in the tree,  
 And blind things dead in their birth ;  
 Famine, and blighting of corn,  
 When thy time was come to be born.

All these we know of; but thee  
 Who shall discern or declare?  
 In the uttermost ends of the sea  
 The light of thine eyelids and hair,                    830  
 The light of thy bosom as fire  
 Between the wheel of the sun  
 And the flying flames of the air ?  
 Wilt thou turn thee not yet nor have pity,  
 But abide with despair and desire  
 And the crying of armies undone,  
 Lamentation of one with another  
 And breaking of city by city ;  
 The dividing of friend against friend,  
 The severing of brother and brother; 840  
 Wilt thou utterly bring to an end ?  
 Have mercy, mother!

For against all men from of old  
 Thou hast set thine hand as a curse,

And cast out gods from their places.  
 These things are spoken of thee.  
 Strong kings and goodly with gold  
 Thou hast found out arrows to pierce,  
 And made their kingdoms and races  
 As dust and surf of the sea. 860  
 All these, overburdened with woes  
 And with length of their days waxen weak,  
 Thou slewest; and sentest moreover  
 Upon Tyro an evil thing,  
 Rent hair and a fetter and blows  
 Making bloody the flower of the cheek,  
 Though she lay by a god as a lover,  
 Though fair, and the seed of a king.

For of old, being full of thy fire,  
 She endured not longer to wear 860  
 On her bosom a saffron vest,  
 On her shoulder an ashwood quiver ;  
 Being mixed and made one through desire  
 With Enipeus, and all her hair  
 Made moist with his mouth, and her breast  
 Filled full of the foam of the river. I

*Atalanta.* Sun, and clear light among green hills, and  
 day

Late risen and long sought after, and you just gods  
 Whose hands divide anguish and recompense,  
 But first the sun's white sister, a maid in heaven, 870  
 On earth of an maias worshipped—hail, and hear,  
*And* witness with me if not without sign sent,  
 Not without rule and reverence, I a maid

Hallowed, and huntress holy as whom I serve,  
 Here in your sight and eyeshot of these men  
 Stand, girt as they toward hunting, and my shafts  
 Drawn ; wherefore all ye stand up on my side,  
 If I be pure and all ye righteous gods,  
 Lest one revile me, a woman, yet no wife,  
 That bear a spear for spindle, and this bow strung 880  
 For a web woven ; and with pure lips salute  
 Heaven, and the face of all the gods, and dawn  
 Filling with maiden flames and maiden flowers  
 The starless fold o' the stars, and making sweet  
 The warm wan heights of the air, moon-trodden ways  
 And breathless gates and extreme hills of heaven.  
 Whom, having offered water and bloodless gifts,  
 Flowers, and a golden circlet of pure hair,  
 Next Artemis I bid be favourable<sup>1//</sup>  
 And make this day all golden, hers and ours, 800  
 Gracious and good and white to the unblamed end.  
 But thou, O well-beloved, of all my days  
 Bid it be fruitful, and a crown for all,  
 To bring forth leaves and bind round all my hair  
 With perfect chaplets woven for thine of thee.  
 For not without the word of thy chaste mouth,  
 For not without law given and clean command,  
 Across the white straits of the running sea  
 From Elis even to the Acheloian horn,  
 I with clear winds came hither and gentle gods, 900  
 Far off my father's house, and left uncheered  
 tasius, and uncheered the Arcadian hills  
 AmTall their green-haired waters, and all woods  
 Disconsolate, to hear no horn of mine  
 Blown, and behold no flash of swift white feet.f

*Meleager.* For thy name's sake and awe toward thy chaste head,

O holiest Atalanta, no man dares  
 Praise thee, though fairer than whom all men praise,  
 And godlike for thy grace of hallowed hair  
 And holy habit of thine eyes, and feet 910  
 That make the blown foam neither swift nor white  
 !Though the wind winnow and whirl it; yet we praise  
 Gods, found because of thee adorable  
 And for thy sake praiseworthy from all men :  
 Thee therefore we praise also, thee as these,  
 Pure, and a light lit at the hands of gods.

*Toxeus.* How long will ye whet spears with eloquence,  
 Fight, and kill beasts dry-handed with sweet words ?  
 Cease, or talk still and slay thy boars at home.

*Plexippus.* Why, if she ride among us for a man, 920  
 Sit thou for her and spin ; a man grown girl  
 Is worth a woman weaponed ; sit thou here.

*Meleager.* Peace, and be wise ; no gods love idle speech.

*Plexippus.* Nor any man a man's mouth woman-tongued.

*Meleager.* For my lips bite not sharper than mine hands.

*Plexippus.* Nay, both bite soft, but no whit softly mine.

*Meleager.* Keep thine hands clean ; they have time enough to stain.

*Plexippus.* For thine shall rest and wax not red today.

*Meleager.* Have all thy will of words; talk out thine heart.

*Althcea.* Refrain your lips, O brethren, and my son,

Lest words turn snakes and bite you uttering them. 931

*Toxeus.* Except she give her blood before the gods,  
What profit shall a maid be among men ?

*Plexippus.* Let her come crowned and stretch her  
-- throat for a knife,

Bleat out her spirit and die, and so shall men  
Through her too prosper and through prosperous gods,  
But nowise through her living ; shall she live  
A flower-bud of the flower-bed, or sweet fruit  
For kisses and the honey-making mouth,  
And play the shield for strong men and the spear ?  
Then shall the heifer and her mate lock horns, 941  
And the bride overbear the groom, and men  
Gods ; for no less division sunders these ;  
Since all things made are seasonable in time,  
But if one alter unseasonable are all.  
But thou, O Zeus, hear me that I may slay  
This beast before thee and no man halve with me  
Nor woman, lest these mock thee, though a god,  
Who hast made men strong, and thou being wise be held  
Foolish ; for wise is that thing which endures. 950

*Atalanta.* Men, and the chosen of all this people, and  
thou,

King, I beseech you a little bear with me.  
For if my life be shameful that I live,  
Let the gods witness and their wrath ; but these  
Cast no such word against me. Thou, O mine,  
O holy, O happy goddess, if I sin  
Changing the words of women and the works  
For spears and strange men's faces, hast not thou  
One shaft of all thy sudden seven that pierced  
Seven through the bosom or shining throat or side, 960

All couched about one mother's loosening knees,  
 All holy born, engrafted of Tantalus ?  
 But if toward any of you I am overbold  
 That take thus much upon me, let him think  
 How I, for all my forest holiness,  
 Fame, and this armed and iron maidenhood,  
 Pay thus much also ; I shall have no man's love  
 For ever, and no face of children born  
 Or feeding lips upon me or fastening eyes  
 For ever, nor being dead shall kings my sons 970  
 Mourn me and bury, and tears on daughters' cheeks  
 Burn ; but a cold and sacred life, but strange,  
 But far from dances and the back-blowing torch,  
 Far off from flowers or any bed of man,  
 Shall my life be for ever : me the snows  
 That face the first o' the morning, and cold hills  
 Full of the land-wind and sea-travelling storms  
 And many a wandering wing of noisy nights  
 That know the thunder and hear the thickening wolves—  
 Me the utmost pine and footless frost of woods 980  
 That talk with many winds and gods, the hours  
 Re-risen, and white divisions of the dawn,  
 Springs thousand-tongued with the intermitting reed  
 And streams that murmur of the mother snow—  
 Me these allure, and know, me ; but no man  
 Knows, and my goddess only. Lo now, see  
 If one of all you these things vex at all.  
 Would God that any of you had all the praise  
 And I no manner of memory when I die,  
 So might I show before her perfect eyes 990  
 Pure, whom I follow, a maiden to my death.  
 But for the rest let all have all they will;

For is it a grief to you that I have part,  
 Being woman merely, in your male might and deeds  
 Done by main strength ? i yet in my body is throned  
 As great a heart, and in my spirit, O men,  
 I have not less of godlike; Evil it were  
 That one a coward should mix with you, one hand  
 Fearful, one eye abase itself ; and these  
 Well might ye hate and well revile, not me. 1000  
 For not the difference of the several flesh  
 Being vile or noble or beautiful or base  
 Makes praiseworthy, but purer spirit and heart  
 Higher than these meaner mouths and limbs, that  
 feed,  
 Rise, rest, and are and are not; and for me,  
 What should I say ? but by the gods of the world  
 And this my maiden body, by all oaths  
 That bind the tongue of men and the evil will,  
 I am not mighty-minded, nor desire  
 Crowns, nor the spoil of slain things nor the fame ; 1010  
 Feed ye on these, eat and wax fat; cry out, -  
 Laugh, having eaten, and leap without a lyre,  
 Sing, mix the wind with clamour, smite and shake  
 Sonorous timbrels and tumultuous hair,  
 And fill the dance up with tempestuous feet,  
 For I will none ; but having prayed my prayers  
 And made thank-offering for prosperities,  
 I shall go hence and no man see me more.  
 What thing is this for you to shout me down,  
 What, for a man to grudge me this my life 1020  
 As it were envious of all yours, and I  
 A thief of reputations ? nay, for now,  
 If there Be any highest in heaven, a god

Above all thrones and thunders of the gods  
 Throned, and the wheel of the world roll under him,  
 Judge he between me and all of you, and see  
 If I transgress at all: but ye, refrain  
 Transgressing hands and reinless mouths, and keep  
 Silence, lest *by* much foam of violent words  
 And proper poison of your lips ye die. 1030

*CEneus.* O flower of Tegea, maiden, fleetest foot  
 And holiest head of women, have good cheer  
 Of thy good words : but ye, depart with her  
 In peace and reverence, each with blameless eye  
 Following his fate ; exalt your hands and hearts,  
 Strike, cease not, arrow on arrow and wound on wound,  
 And go with gods and with the gods return.

*Chorus.* Who hath given man speech ? or who hath set  
 therein  
 , A thorn for peril and a snare for sin ?  
 For in the word his life is and his breath, 1040  
 And in the word his death,  
 That madness and the infatuate heart may breed  
 From the word's womb the deed  
 And life bring one thing forth ere all pass by,  
 Even one thing which is ours yet cannot die—  
 Death. Hast thou seen him ever anywhere,  
 Time's twin-born brother, imperishable as he  
 Is perishable and plaintive, clothed with care  
 And mutable as sand,  
 But death is strong and full of blood and fair 1050  
 And perdurable and like a lord of land ?  
 Nay, time thou seest not, death thou wilt not see  
 Till life's right hand be loosened from thine hand  
 And thy life-days from thee.

For the gods very subtly fashion  
     Madness with sadness upon earth :  
 Not knowing in any wise compassion,  
     Nor holding pity of any worth ;  
 And many things they have given and taken,  
     And wrought and ruined many things ;                   1060  
 The firm land have they loosed and shaken,  
     And sealed the sea with all her springs ;  
 They have wearied time with heavy burdens  
     And vexed the lips of life with breath :  
 Set men to labour and given them guerdons,  
     Death, and great darkness after death :  
 Put moans into the bridal measure  
     And on the bridal wools a stain ;  
 And circled pain about with pleasure,  
     And girdled pleasure about with pain ;                   1070  
 And strewed one marriage-bed with tears and fire  
 For extreme loathing and supreme desire);

What shall be done with all these tears of ours ?  
     Shall they make watersprings in the fair heaven  
 To bathe the brows of morning ? or like flowers  
 Be shed and shine before the starriest hours,  
     Or made the raiment of the weeping Seven ?  
 Or rather, O our masters, shall they be  
 Food for the famine of the grievous sea,  
     A great well-head of lamentation                   1080  
 Satiating the sad gods ? or fall and flow  
 Among the years and seasons to and fro,  
     And wash their feet with tribulation  
 And fill them full with grieving ere they go ?  
     Alas, our lords, and yet alas again,

Seeing all your iron heaven is gilt as gold  
 But all we smite thereat in vain ;  
 Smite the gates barred with groanings manifold,  
 But all the floors are paven with our pain.  
 Yea, and with weariness of lips and eyes, 1090  
 With breaking of the bosom, and with sighs,  
 We labour, and are clad and fed with grief  
 And filled with days we would not fain behold  
 And nights we would not hear of ; we wax old,  
 All we wax old and wither like a leaf.  
 We are outcast, strayed between bright sun and moon ;  
 Our light and darkness are as leaves of flowers, C  
 Black flowers and white, that perish ; and the noon^  
 As midnight, and the night as daylight hours.  
 A little fruit a little while is ours, *rj*  
 And the worm finds it soon, <sup>7</sup>

But up in heaven the high gods one by one  
 Lay hands upon the draught that quickeneth,  
 Fulfilled with all tears shed and all things done,  
 And stir with soft imperishable breath  
 ' The bubbling bitterness of life and death,  
 And hold it to our lips and laugh ; but they  
 Preserve their lips from tasting night or day,  
 Lest they too change and sleep, the fates that spun,  
 The lips that made us and the hands that slay ; 1110  
 Lest all these change, and heaven bow down to  
 none,  
 Change and be subject to the secular sway  
 And terrene revolution of the sun.  
 Therefore they thrust it from them, putting time  
 away.

I would the wine of time, made sharp and sweet  
 With multitudinous days and nights and tears  
 And many mixing savours of strange years,  
 Were no more trodden of them under feet,  
 Cast out and spilt about their holy places :  
 That life were given them as a fruit to eat                    1120  
 And death to drink as water ; that the light  
 Might ebb, drawn backward from their eyes, and night  
 Hide for one hour the imperishable faces.  
 That they might rise up sad in heaven, and know  
 Sorrow and sleep, one paler than young snow,  
 One cold as blight of dew and ruinous rain ;  
 Rise up and rest and suffer a little, and be  
 Awhile as all things born with us and we,  
 And grieve as men, and like slain men be slain.

For now we know not of them ; but one saith                    1130  
 The gods are gracious, praising God ; and one,  
 When hast thou seen ? 'or hast thou felt his breath  
 Touch, nor consume thine eyelids as the sun,  
 Nor fill thee to the lips with fiery death ?  
 None hath beheld him, none  
 Seen above other gods and shapes of things,  
 Swift without feet and flying without wings,  
 Intolerable, not clad with death or life,  
 Insatiable, not known of night or day,  
 The lord of love and loathing and of strife                    1140  
 Who gives ajstftr and takes a sun^away ;  
 Who shapes the'soul, and makes her a barren wjfe  
 To the earthly body and grievous growth of clay ;  
 Who turns the large limbs to a little flame  
 And binds the great sea with a little sand ;

Who makes desire, and slays desire with shame ;  
 Who shakes the heaven as ashes in his hand ;  
 Who, seeing the light and shadow for the same,  
 Bids day waste night as fire devours a brand,  
 Smites without sword, and scourges without rod ; 1160  
 The supreme evil, God.

Yea, with thine hate, O God, thou hast covered us,  
 One saith, and hidden our eyes away from sight,  
 And made us transitory and hazardous,  
 Light things and slight;  
 Yet have men praised thee, saying, He hath made man  
 thus,  
 And he doeth right.

Thou hast kissed us, and hast smitten ; thou hast laid  
 'Upon us with thy left hand life, and said,  
 Live : and again thou hast said, Yield up your breath,  
 And with thy right hand laid upon us death. 1161  
 Thou hast sent us sleep, and stricken sleep with dreams,  
 Saying, Joy is not, but love of joy shall be ;  
 Thou hast made sweet springs for all the pleasant  
 streams,

In the end thou hast made them bitter with the sea.  
 Thou hast fed one rose with dust of many me<sup>H</sup>I<sup>A</sup>  
 Thou hast marred one face with fire of many tears;  
 Thou hast taken love, and given us sorrow again ;  
 With pain thou hast filled us full to the eyes and ears.  
 Therefore because thou art strong, our father, and we  
 Feeble; and thou art against us, and thine hand 1171  
 Constrains us in the shallows of the sea  
 And breaks us at the limits of the land ;  
 Because thou hast bent thy lightnings as a bow,  
 And loosed the hours like arrows ; and let fall

Sins and wild words and many a winged woe  
 And wars among us, and one end of all;  
 Because thou hast made the thunder, and thy feet  
 Are as a rushing water when the skies  
 Break, but thy face as an exceeding heat 1180  
 And flames of fire the eyelids of thine eyes ;  
 Because thou art over all who are over us ;  
 Because thy name is life and our name death ;  
 Because thou art cruel and men are piteous,  
 And our hands labour and thine hand scattereth ;  
 Lo, with hearts rent and knees made tremulous,  
 Lo, with ephemeral lips and casual breath,  
 At least we witness of thee ere we die  
 That these things are not otherwise, but thus ;  
 That each man in his heart sigheth, and saith, 1190  
 That all men even as I,  
 All we are against thee, against theo, O God most high.

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But ye, keep ye on earth  
 Your lips from over-speech,  
 Loud words and longing are so little worth ;  
 And the end is hard to reach.  
 For silence after grievous things is good,  
 And reverence, and the fear that makes men whole,  
 And shame, and righteous governance of bLod,  
 And lordship of the soul. 1200  
 But from sharp words and wits men pluck no fruit,  
 And gathering thorns they shake the tree at root;  
 For words divide and rend ;  
 But silence is most noble till the end.  
*Althaea.* I heard within the house a cry of news  
 And came forth eastward hither, where the dawn

Cheers first these warder gods that face the sun  
 And next our eyes unrisen ; for unaware  
 Came clashes of swift hoofs and trampling feet,  
 And through the windy pillared corridor 1210  
 Light sharper than the frequent flames of day  
 That daily fill it from the fiery dawn ;  
 Gleams, and a thunder of people that cried out,  
 And dust and hurrying horsemen ; lo their chief,  
 That rode with (Eneus rein by rein, returned.  
 What cheer, O herald of my lord the king ?

*Herald.* Lady, good cheer and great; the boar is  
 slain,—

*Chorus.* Praised be all gods that look toward Calydon.

*Althcca.* Good news and brief; but by whose happier  
 hand ?

*Herald.* A maiden's and a prophet's and thy son's.

*Althcca.* Well fare the spear that severed him and  
 life. 1221

*Herald.* Thine own, and not an alien, hast thou blest.

*Althwa.* Twice be thou too for my sake blest and his.

*Herald.* At the king's word I rode afoam for thine.

*Althcea.* Thou sayest he tarrieth till they bring the  
 spoil ?

*Herald.* Hard by the quarry, where they breathe, O  
 queen.

*Althcva.* Speak thou their chance ; but some bring  
 flowers and crown

These gods and all the lintel, and shed wine,  
 Fetch sacrifice and slay ; for heaven is good

*Herald.* Some furlongs northward where the brakes  
 begin 1230

West of that narrowing range of warrior hills

Whose brooks have bled with battle when thy son  
 Smote Acarnania, there all they made halt,  
 And with keen eye took note of spear and hound,  
 Royally ranked ; Laertes island-born,  
 The young Gerenian Nestor, Panopeus,  
 And Cepheus and Ancaeus, mightiest thewed,  
 Arcadians ; next, and evil-eyed of these,  
 Arcadian Atalanta, with twain hounds  
 Lengthening the leash, and under nose and brow 1240  
 Glittering with lipless tooth and fire-swift eye ;  
 But from her white braced shoulder the plumed shafts  
 Rang, and the bow shone from her side ; next her  
 Meleager, like a sun in spring that strikes  
 Branch into leaf and bloom into the world,  
 A glory among men meaner ; Iphicles,  
 And following him that slew the biform bull  
 Pirithous, and divine Eurytion,  
 And, bride-bound to the gods, JSacides.  
 Then Telamon his brother, and Argive-born 1250  
 The seer and sayer of visions and of truth,  
 Amphiaraus ; and a four-fold strength,  
 Thine, even thy mother's and thy sister's sons,  
 And recent from the roar of foreign foam  
 Jason, and Dryas twin-begot with war,  
 A blossom of bright battle, sword and man  
 ^Shining ; and Idas, and thejreenest eye  
 fOf Lynceus, and Admetus twice-espoused,  
 AmTfiippasus and Hyleus, great in heart.  
 These having halted bade blow horns, and rode 1260  
 Through woods and waste lands cleft by stormy streams,  
 Past yew-trees and the heavy hair of pines,  
 And where the dew is thickest under oaks,

This way and that; but questing up and down  
 They saw no trail nor scented ; and one said,  
 Plexippus, Help, or help not, Artemis,  
 And we will flay thy boarskin with male hands ;  
 But saying, he ceased and said not that he would,  
 Seeing where the green ooze of a sun-struck marsh  
 Shook with a thousand reeds untunable, 1270  
 And in their moist and multitudinous flower  
 Slept no soft sleep, with violent visions fed,  
 The blind bulk of the immeasurable beast.  
 And seeing, he shuddered with sharp lust of praise  
 Through all his limbs, and launched a double dart.  
 And missed ; for much desire divided him,  
 Too hot of spirit and feebler than his will,  
 That his hand failed, though fervent; and the shaft,  
 Sundering the rushes, in a tamarisk stem  
 Shook, and stuck fast; then all abode save one, 1280  
 The Arcadian Atalanta ; from her side  
 Sprang her hounds, labouring at the leash, and slipped, •  
 And plashed ear-deep with plunging feet; but she  
 Saying, Speed it as I send it for thy sake,  
 Goddess, drew bow and loosed ; the sudden string  
 Rang, and sprang inward, and the waterish air  
 Hissed, and the moist plumes of the songless reeds  
 Moved as a <sup>v</sup>rave which the wind moves no more.  
 But the boar heaved half out of ooze and slime  
 His tense flank trembling round the barbed wound, 1290  
 Hateful; and fiery with invasive eyes  
 And bristling with intolerable hair  
 Plunged, and the hounds clung, and green flowers and  
 white  
 Reddened and broke all round them where they came.

And charging with sheer tusk he drove, and smote  
Hyleus ; and sharp death caught his sudden soul,  
And violent sleep shed night upon his eyes.  
Then Peleus, with strong strain of hand and heart,  
Shot; but the sidelong arrow slid, and slew  
His comrade born and loving countryman, 1300  
Under the left arm smitten, as he no less  
Poised a like arrow ; and bright blood brake afoam,  
And falling, and weighed back by clamorous arms,  
Sharp rang the dead limbs of Eurytion.  
Then one shot happier, the Cadmean seer,  
Amphiaraus ; for his sacred shaft  
Pierced the red circlet of one ravening eye  
Beneath the brute brows of the sanguine boar,  
Now bloodier from one slain ; but he so galled  
Sprang straight, and rearing cried no lesser cry 1310  
Than thunder and the roar of wintering streams  
That mix their own foam with the yellower sea ;  
And as a tower that falls by fire in fight  
With ruin of walls and all its archery,  
And breaks the iron flower of war beneath,  
Crushing charred limbs and molten arms of men ;  
So through crushed branches and the reddening brake  
Clamoured and crashed the fervour of his feet,  
And trampled, springing sideways from the disk,  
Too tardy a moving mould of heavy strength, 1320  
Ancseus ; and as flakes of weak-winged snow  
Break, all the hard thews of his heaving limbs  
Broke, and rent flesh fell every way, and blood  
Flew, and fierce fragments of no more a man.  
Then all the heroes drew sharp breath, and gazed,  
And smote not; but Meleager, but thy son,

.light in the wild way of the coming curse  
dock-rooted, fair with fierce and fastened lips,  
Jlear eyes, and springing muscle and shortening limb—  
With chin aslant indrawn to a tightening throat, 1330  
Grave, and with gathered sinews, like a god,—  
Aimed on the left side his well-handled spear  
Grasped where the ash was knottiest hewn, and smote,  
And with no missile wound, the monstrous boar  
Right in the hairiest hollow of his hide  
Under the last rib, sheer through bulk and bone,  
Deep in ; and deeply smitten, and to death,  
The heavy horror with his hanging shafts  
Leapt, and fell furiously, and from raging lips  
Foamed out the latest wrath of all his life. 1340  
And all they praised the gods with mightier heart,  
Zeus and all gods, but chiefliest Artemis,  
Seeing ; but Meleager bade whet knives and flay,  
Strip and stretch out the splendour of the spoil;  
And hot and horrid from the work all these  
Sat, and drew breath and drank and made great cheer  
And washed the hard sweat off their calmer brows.  
For much sweet grass grew higher than grew the  
reed,  
And good for slumber, and every holier herb,  
Narcissus and the low-lying melilote, 1350  
And all of goodliest blade and bloom that springs  
Where, hid by heavier hyacinth, violet buds  
Blossom and burn ; and fire of yellower flowers  
And light of crescent lilies, and such leaves  
As fear the Faun's and know the Dryad's foot;  
Olive and ivy and poplar dedicate,  
And many a well-spring overwatched of these.

There now they rest; but me the king bade bear  
 Good tidings to rejoice this town and thee.  
 Wherefore be glad, and all ye give much thanks,      136C  
 For fallen is all the trouble of Calydon.

*Althcea.* Laud ye the gods ; for this they have given is  
 good,

And what shall be they hide until their time.  
 Much good and somewhat grievous hast thou said,  
 And either well; but let all sad things be,  
 Till all have made before the prosperous gods  
 Burnt-offering, and poured out the floral wine.  
 Look fair, O gods, and favourable ; for we  
 Praise you with no false heart or flattering mouth,  
 Being merciful, but with pure souls and prayer.      1370

*Herald.* Thou hast prayed well; for whoso fears not  
 these,

But once being prosperous waxes huge of heart,  
 Him shall some new thing unaware destroy.

*Chorus.* O that I now, I too were  
 By deep wells and water-floods,  
 Streams of ancient hills, and where  
 All the wan green places bear  
 Blossoms cleaving to the sod,  
 Fruitless fruit, and grasses fair,  
 Or such darkest ivy-buds      1380  
 As divide thy yellow hair,  
 Bacchus, and their leaves that jptpd  
 Round thy fawnskin brush taeJSj&re  
 Snow-softshoulders of agod] ^ '  
 There the year is sweet, and there  
 Earth is full of secret springs,  
 And the fervent rose-cheeked hours,

Those that marry dawn and noon,  
 There are sunless, there look pale  
 In dim leaves and hidden air, 1390  
 Pale as grass or latter flowers  
 Or the wild vine's wan wet rings  
 Full of dew beneath the moon,  
 'And all day the nightingale  
 Sleeps, and all night sings ;  
 There in cold remote recesses  
 That nor alien eyes assail,  
 Feet, nor imminence of wings,  
 Nor a wind nor any tune,  
 Thou,~O queen and holiest, 1400  
 Plower the whitest ot althings,  
 With reluctant lengthening tresses  
 And with sudden splendid breast  
 Save of maidens un beholden,  
 There art wont to enter, there  
 Thy divine swift limbs and golden  
 Maiden growth of unbound hair,  
 Bathed in waters white,  
 Shine, and many a maid's by thee  
 In moist woodland or the hilly 1410  
 Flowerless brakes where wells abound  
 Ou+ of all men's sight;  
 Or in lower pools that see  
 All their marges clothed all round  
 With the innumerable lily,  
 'Whence the golden-girdled bee  
 'Flits through flowering rush to fret  
 \White or duskier violet,  
 Fair as those that in far years

With their buds left luminous 1420  
 And their little leaves made wet,  
 From the warmer dew of tears,  
 Mother's tears in extreme need,  
 Hid the limbs of Iamus,  
 Of thy brother's seed ;  
 For his heart was piteous  
 Toward him, even as thine heart now  
 Pitiful toward us ;  
 Thine, O goddess, turning hither  
 A benignant blameless brow ; 1430  
 Seeing enough of evil done  
 And lives withered as leaves wither  
 In the blasting of the sun ;  
 Seeing enough of hunters dead,  
 Ruin enough of all our year,  
 Herds and harvests slain and shed,  
 Herdsmen stricken many an one,  
 Fruits and flocks consumed together,  
 And great length of deadly days.  
 Yet with reverent lips and fear 1440  
 Turn we toward thee, turn and praise  
 For this lightening of clear weather  
 And prosperities begun.  
 For not seldom, when all air  
 As bright water without breath  
 Shines, and when men fear not, fate  
 Without thunder unaware  
 Breaks, and brings down death.  
 Joy with grief ye great gods give,  
 Good with bad, and overbear 1450  
 All the pride of us that live,

All the high estate,  
 As ye long since overbore,  
 As in old time long before,  
 Many a strong man and a grealfc^  
 All that were.

But do thou, sweet, otherwise,  
 Having heed of all our prayer,  
 Taking note of all our sighs ;  
 We beseech thee by thy light,  
 By thy bow, and thy sweet eyes,  
 And the kingdom of the night,  
 Be thou favourable and fair ;  
 By thine arrows and thy might  
 And Orion overthrown ;  
 By the maiden thy delight,  
 By the indissoluble zone  
 And the sacred hair.

1460

*Messenger.* Maidens, if ye will sing now, shift your  
 song,

Bow down, cry, wail for pity ; is this a time 1470  
 For singing ? nay, for strewing of dust and ash,  
 Rent raiment, and for bruising of the breast.

*Chorus.* What new thing wolf-like lurks behind thy  
 words ?

What snake's tongue in thy lips ? what fire in the eyes ?

*Messenger.* Bring me before the queen and I will speak.

*Chorus.* Lo, she comes forth as from thank-offering  
 made.

*Messenger.* A barren offering for a bitter gift.

*Althcea.* WTial'^are these borne on branches, and the  
 face

Covered ? no mean men living, but now slain  
Such honour have they, if any dwell with death. 1480

*Messenger.* Queen, thy twain brethren and the  
mother's sons.

*Alhcea.* Lay down your dead till I behold their blood  
If it be mine indeed, and I will weep.

*Messenger.* Weep if thou wilt, for these men shall no  
more.

*Alhcea.* O brethren, O my father's sons, of me  
Well loved and well reputed, I should weep  
Tears dearer than the dear blood drawn from you  
But that I know you not un comforted,  
Sleeping no shameful sleep, however slain,  
For my son surely hath avenged you dead. 1490

*Messenger.* Nay, should thine own seed slay himself,  
O queen ?

*Alhcea.* Thy double word brings forth a double death.

*Messenger.* Know this then singly, by one hand they  
fell.

*Alhcea.* What mutterest thou with thine ambiguous  
mouth ?

*Messenger.* Slain by thy son's hand ; is that saying so  
hard ?

*Alhcea.* Our time is come upon us : it is here.

*Chorus,* O miserable, and spoiled at thine own hand.

*Alhcea.* Wert thou not called Meleager from this  
womb ?

*Chorus.* A grievous huntsman hath it bred to thee.

*Alhcea.* Wert thou born fire, and shalt thou not  
devour ? 1600

*Chorus.* The fire thou madest, will it consume even  
thee ?

*Althcea.* My dreams are fallen upon me ; burn thou too.

*Chorus.* Not without God are visions born and die.

*Althcea.* The gods are many about me ; I am one.

*Chorus.* She groans as men wrestling with heavier gods.

*Althcea.* They jrend me, they divide me, they destroy.

*Chorus.* Or one labouring in travail of strange births.

*Althcea.* They are strong, they are strong; I am broken, and these prevail.

*Chorus.* The god is great against her ; she will die.

*AUhcea.* Yea, but not now ; for my heart too is great.

I would I were not here in sight of the sun. 1511

But thou, speak all thou sawest, and I will die.

*Messenger.* O queen, for queenlike hast thou borne thyself,

A little word may hold so great mischance.

For in division of the sanguine spoil

These men thy brethren wrangling bade yield up

The boar's head and the horror of the hide

That this might stand a wonder in Calydon,

Hallowed ; and some drew toward them ; but thy son

With great hands grasping all that weight of hair 1520

Cast down the dead heap clanging and collapsed

At female foet, saying This thy spoil not mine,

Maiden, thine own hand for thyself hath reaped,

And all this praise God gives thee : she thereat

Laughed, as when dawn touches the sacred night

The sky sees laugh and redden and divide

Dim lips and eyelids virgin of the sun,

Hers, and the warm slow breasts of morning heave,

Fruitful, and flushed with flame from lamp-lip hours,

And maiden undulation of clear hair 1630  
 Colour the clouds ; so laughed she from pure heart,  
 Lit with a low blush to the braided hair,  
 And rose-coloured and cold like very dawn,  
 Golden and godlike, chastely with chaste lips,  
 A faint grave laugh ; and all they held their peace,  
 And she passed by them. Then one cried Lo now,  
 Shall not the Arcadian shoot out lips at us,  
 Saying all we were despoiled by this one girl ?  
 And all they rode against her violently  
 And cast the fresh crown from her hais' and now 1540  
 They had rent her spoil away, dishonouring her,  
 Save that Meleager, as a tame lion chafed,  
 Bore on them, broke them, and as fire cleaves wood  
 So clove and drove them, smitten in twain ; but she  
 Smote not nor heaved up hand ; and this man first,  
 Plexippus, crying out This for love's sake, sweet,  
 Drove at Meleager, who with spear straightening  
 Pierced his cheek through ; then Toxeus made for him,  
 Dumb, but his spear spake ; vain and violent words.  
 Fruitless; for him too stricken through both sides 1550  
 The earth felt falling, and his horse's foam  
 Blanched thy son's face, his slayer ; and these being slain,  
 None moved nor spake ; but (Eneus bade bear hence  
 These made of heaven infatuate in their deaths,  
 Foolish ; for these would baffle^ fate, and fell  
 And they passed on, and all men honoured her,  
 Being honourable, as one revered of heaven.

*Althcea.* What say you, women ? is all this not well done ?

*Chorus.* No man doth well but God hath part in him.

*Althcea.* But no part here ; for these my brethren born

Ye have no part in, these ye know not of 1561  
 As I that was their sister, a sacrifice  
 Slain in their slaying. I would I had died for these  
 For this man dead walked with me, child by child,  
 And made a weak staff for my feebler feet  
 With his own tender wrist and hand, and held  
 And led me softly and shewed me gold and steel  
 And shining shapes of mirror and bright crown  
 And all things fair ; and threw light spears, and brought  
 Young hounds to huddle at my feet and thrust 1570  
 Tame heads against my little maiden breasts  
 And please me with great eyes ; and those days went  
 And these are bitter and I a barren queen  
 And sister miserable, a grievous thing  
 And mother of many curses ; and she too,  
 My sister Leda, sitting overseas  
 With fair fruits round her, and her faultless lord,  
 Shall curse me, saying ' A sorrow and not a son,  
 Sister, thou barest, even a burning fire,  
 A brand consuming thine own soul and me.' 1580  
 But ye now, sons of Thestius, make good cheer,  
 For ye shall have such wood to funeral fire  
 As no king hath ; and flame that once burnt down  
 Oil shall not quicken or breath relume or wine  
 Refresh again ; much costlier than fine gold,  
 And more than many lives of wandering men.

*Chorus.* O queen, thou hast yet with thee love-worthy things,

Thine husband, and the great strength of thy son.

*Aithva.* Who shall get Brothers for me while I live?  
 Who ]ear them ? who bring forth in lieu of these? 1590  
 Are not our fathers and our brethren one,

And no man like them ? are not mine here slain ?  
 Have we not hung together, he and I,  
 Flowerwise feeding as the feeding bees,  
 With mother-milk for honey ? and this man too,  
 Dead, with my son's spear thrust between his sides,  
 Hath he not seen us, later born than he,  
 Laugh with lips filled, and laughed again for love ?  
 There were no sons then in the world, nor spears/  
 Nor deadly births of women ; but the gods 1600  
 Allowed us, and our days were clear of these.  
 I would I had died unwedded, and brought forth  
 No swords to vex the world ; for these that spake  
 Sweet words long since and loved me will not speak  
 Nor love nor look upon me ; and all my life  
 I shall not hear nor see them living men.  
 But I too living, how shall I now live ?  
 What life shall this be with my son, to know  
 What hath been and desire what will not be,  
 Look for dead eyes and listen for dead lips, 1610  
 And kill mine own heart with remembering them,  
 And with those eyes that see their slayer alive  
 Weep, and wring hands that clasp him by the hand ?  
 How shall I bear my dreams of them, to hear  
 False voices, feel the kisses of false mouths  
 And footless sound of perished feet, and th^^  
 Wake and hear only it may be their own hounds  
 Whine masterless in miserable sleep,  
 And see their boar-spears and their beds and seats  
 And all the gear and housings of their lives 1620  
 And not the men ? shall hounds and horses mourn,  
 Pine with strange eyes, and prick up hungry ears,  
 Famish and tail at heart for their dear lords,

And I not heed at all ? and those blind things  
 Fall of! from life for love's sake, and I live ?  
 Rurely some death is better than some life,  
 Better one death for him and these and me.  
 For if the gods had slain them it may be  
 I had endured it;(if they had fallen by war  
 Or by the nets and knives of privy death  
 And by hired hands while sleeping, this thing too  
 I had set my soul to suffer ; or this hunt,  
 Had this despatched them, under tusk or tooth  
 Torn, sanguine, trodden, broken ; for all deaths  
 Or honourable or with facile feet avenged  
 And hands of swift gods following, all save this,  
 Are bearable ; but not for their sweet land  
 Fighting, but not a sacrifice, lo these  
 Dead ; for I had not then shed all mine heart  
 Out at mine eyes : then either with good speed, 1640  
 Being just, I had slain their slayer atoningly,  
 Or strewn with flowers their fire and on their tombs  
 Hung crowns, and over them a song, and seen  
 Their praise outflame their ashes : for all men,  
 All maidens, had come thither, and from pure lips  
 Shed songs upon them, from heroic eyes  
 Tears ; and their death had been a deathless life ;  
 But now, ^-j no man hired nor alien sword,  
 By their own kindred are they fallen, in peace,  
 After mucfi peril, friendless among friends, 1650  
 By hateful hands they loved ; and how shall mine  
 Touch these"returning red and not from war,  
 These fatal from the vintage of men's veins,  
 Dead men my brethren ? how shall these wash off  
 No festal stains of undelightful wine,

How mix the blood, my blood on them, with me,  
 Holding mine hand ? or how shall I say, son,  
 That am no sister ? but by night and day  
 Shall we not sit and hate each other, and think  
 Things hate-worthy ? not live with shamefast eyes, 1660  
 Brow-beaten, treading soft with fearful feet,  
 Each unupbraided, each without rebuke  
 Convicted, and without a word reviled  
 Each of another ? and I shall let thee live  
 And see thee strong and hear men for thy sake  
 Praise me, but these thou wouldest not let live  
 No man shall praise for ever ? these shall lie  
 Dead, unbeloved, unholpen, all through thee ?  
 Sweet were they toward me living, and mine heart  
 Desired them, but was then well satisfied, 1670  
 That now is as men hungered ; and these dead  
 I shall want always to the day I die.  
 For all things else and all men may renew ;  
 Yea^son for son the gods may give and take,  
 But never a brother or sister any more.

*fTKdrus.* Nay, for the son lies close about thine heart,  
 Full of thy milk, warm from thy womb, and drains  
 Life and the blood of life and all thy fruit,  
 Eats thee and drinks thee as who breaks bread and  
 eats,

Treads wine and drinks, thyself, a sect of thee ; 1680  
 And if he feed not, shall not thy flesh faint ?  
 Or drink not, are not thy lips dead for thirst ?  
 This thing moves more than all things, even thy son,  
 That thou cleave to him ; and he shall honour thee,  
 Thy womb that bare him and the breasts he knew,  
 Reverencing most for thy sake all his gods.

*Althæa.* But these the gods too gave me, and these my son,

Not reverencing his gods nor mine own heart  
 Nor the old sweet years nor all venerable things,  
 But cruel, and in his ravin like a beast, 1690  
 Hath taken away to slay them : yea, and she,  
 She the strange woman, she the flower, the sword,  
 Red from spilt blood, a mortal flower to men,  
 Adorable, detestable—even she  
 Saw with strange eyes and with strange lips rejoiced,  
 Seeing these mine own slain of mine own, and me  
 Made miserable above all miseries made,  
 A grief among all women in the world,  
 A name to be washed out with all men's tears.

*Chorus.* Strengthen thy spirit; is this not also a god,  
 Chance, and the wheel of all necessities 1701  
 Hard things have fallen upon us from harsh gods,  
 Whorn lest worse hap rebuke we not for these.

*Althæa.* My spirit is strong against itself, and I  
 For these things' sake cry out on mine own soul  
 That it endures outrage, and dolorous days,  
 And life, and this inexpiable impotence.  
 Weak am I, weak and shameful; my breath drawn  
 Shames me, and monstrous things and violent gods.  
 What shall atone ? what heal me ? what bring back  
 Strength to the foot, light to the face ? what herb 1711  
 Assuage me ? what restore me ? what release ?  
 What strange thing eaten or drunken, O great gods,  
 Make me as you or as the beasts that feed,  
 Slay and divide and cherish their own hearts ?  
 For these ye show us ; and we less than these  
 Have not wherewith to live as all these things

Which all their lives fare after their own kind  
 As who doth well rejoicing ; but we ill,  
 Weeping or laughing, we whom eyesight fails, 1720  
 Knowledge and light of face and perfect heart,  
 And hands we lack, and wit; and all our days  
 Sin, and have hunger, and die infatuated.  
 For madness have ye given us and not health,  
 And sins whereof we know not; and for these  
 Death, and sudden destruction unaware.  
 What shall we say now ? what thing comes of us ?

*Chorus.* Alas, for all this all men undergo.

*Althaea.* Wherefore I will not that these twain, O gods,  
 Die as a dog dies, eaten of creeping things, 1730  
 Abominable, a loathing ; but though dead  
 Shall they have honour and such funereal flame  
 As strews men's ashes in their enemies' face  
 And blinds their eyes who hate them : lest men say,  
 ' Lo how they lie, and living had great km,  
 And none of these hath pity of them, and none  
 Regards them lying, and none is wrung at heart,  
 None moved in spirit for them, naked and slain,  
 Abhorred, abased, and no tears comfort them ' :  
 And in the dark this grieve Eurhythemis, 1740  
 Hearing how these her sons come down to her  
 Unburied, unavenged, as kinless men,  
 And had a queen their sister. That were shame  
 Worse than this grief. Yet how to atone at all  
 I know not; seeing the love of my born son,  
 A new-made mother's new-born love, that grows  
 From the soft child to the strong man, now soft  
 Now strong as either, and still one sole same love,  
 Strives with me, no light thing to strive withal;

This love is deep, and natural to man's blood, 1750  
 And ineffaceable with many tears.

Yet shall not these rebuke me though I die,  
 Nor she in that waste world with all her dead,  
 My mother, among the pale flocks fallen as leaves,  
 Folds of dead people, and alien from the sun ;  
 Nor lack some bitter comfort, some poor praise,  
 Being queen, to have borne her daughter like a queen  
 Righteous ; and though mine own fire burn me too,  
 She shall have honour and these her sons, though dead.  
 But all the gods will, all they do, and we 1760  
 Not all we would, yet somewhat; and one choice  
 We have, to live and do just deeds and die.

*Chorus.* Terrible words she communes with, and turns  
 Swift fiery eyes in doubt against herself,  
 And murmurs as who talks in dreams with death.

*Althcea.* For the unjust also dieth, and him all men  
 Hate, and himself abhors the unrighteousness,  
 And seeth his own dishonour intolerable.  
 But I being just, doing right upon myself,  
 Slay mine own soul, and no man born shames me. 1770  
 For none constrains nor shall rebuke, being done,  
 What none compelled me doing ; thus these things fare.  
 Ah, an, that such things should so fare ; ah me,  
 That I am lound to do them and endure,  
 Chosen and constrained to choose, and bear myself  
 Mine own wound through mine own flesh to the heart  
 Violently stricken, a spoiler and a spoil,  
 A ruin ruinous, fallen on mine own son.  
 Ah, ah, for me too as for these ; alas,  
 For that is done that shall be, and mine hand 1780  
 Full of the deed, and full of blood mine eyes,

That shall see never nor touch anything  
Save blood unstanch'd and fire unquenchable.

*Chorus.* What wilt thou do ? what ails thee ? for the  
house

Shakes ruinously ; wilt thou bring fire for it ?

*Althaea.* Fire in the roofs, arid on the lintels fire.  
Lo ye, who stand and weave, between the doors,  
There ; and blood drips from hand and thread, and  
stains

Threshold and raiment and me passing in  
Flecked with the sudden sanguine drops of death. 1790

*Chorus.* Alas that time, is stronger than strongjnen,  
Fate than all gods ; and these are fallen on us.

*Althaea.* A little since and I was glad ; and now  
I never shall be glad or sad again.

*Chorus.* Between two joys a grief grows unaware.

*Althaea.* A little while and I shall laugh ; and then  
I shall weep never and laugh not any more.

*Chorus.* What shall be said ? for words are thorns to  
grief.

Withhold thyself a little and fear the gods.

*Althaea.* Fear died when these were slain ; and I am  
as dead, 1800

And fear is of the living ; these fear none.

*Chorus.* Have pity upon all people for the > sake.

*Althaea.* It is done now ; shall I put back my day ?

*Chorus.* An end is come, an end ; this is of God.

*Althaea.* I am fire, and burn myself ; keep clear of fire.

*Chorus.* The house is broken, is broken ; it shall not  
stand.

*Althaea.* Woe, woe for him that breaketh ; and a rod  
smote it of old, and now the axe is here.

*Chorus.* Not as with sundering of the earth  
 Nor as with cleaving of the sea 1810  
 Nor fierce foreshadowings of a birth  
 Nor flying dreams of death to be  
 Nor loosening of the large world's girth  
 And quickening of the body of night,  
 And sound of thunder in men's ears  
 And fire of lightning in men's sight,  
 Fate, mother of desires and fears,  
 Bore unto men the law of tears ;  
 But sudden, an unfathered flame,  
 And broken out of night, she shone, 1820  
 She, without body, without name,  
 In days forgotten and foregone ;  
 And heaven rang round her as she came  
 Like smitten cymbals, and lay bare ;  
 Clouds and great stars, thunders and snows,  
 The blue sad fields and folds of air,  
 The life that breathes, the life that grows,  
 All wind, all fire, that burns or blows,  
 Even all these knew her : for she is great ;  
 / The daughter of doom, the mother of death,  
 / The sister of sorrow ; a lifelong weight 1831  
 That no man's finger lighteneth,  
 Nor any god can lighten fate ;  
 A landmark seen a-cross the way  
 Where one race treads as the other trod ;  
 An evil sceptre, an evil stay,  
 Wrought for a staff, wrought for a rod,  
 The bitter jealousy of God.  
 For death is deep as the sea,  
 And fate as the waves thereof. 1840

Shall the waves take pity on thee  
 Or the south-wind offer thee love ?  
 Wilt thou take the night for thy day  
 Or the darkness for light on thy way,  
 Till thou say in thine heart Enough ?

Behold jthou art over fair, thou art over wise ;  
 The sweetness" of spring in thine hair and the light in  
 thine eyes.

The light of the spring in thine eyes, and the sound in  
 thine ears ;

Yet thine heart shall wa,x heavy with sighs and thine eye-  
 lids with tears.

Wilt thou cover thine hair with gold, and with silver thy  
 feet ? 1850

Hast thou taken the purple to fold thee, and made thy  
 mouth sweet ?

Behold, when thy face is made bare, he that loved thee  
 shall hate ;

Thy face shall be no more fair at the fall of thy fate.

For thy life shall fall as a leaf and be shed as the rain ;

And the veil of thine head shall be grief ; and the crown  
 shall be pain.

*Althæa.* Ho, ye that wail, and ye that sing, make way  
 Till I be come among you. Hide your tears,

Ye little weepers, and your laughing lips,

Ye laughers for a little ; lo mine eyes

That outweep heaven at rainiest, and my mouth 1860

jThat laughs as gods laugh at us. Fate's are we,

Yet fate is ours a breathing-space ; yea, mine,

Fate is made mine for ever ; he is my son,

My bedfellow, my brother. You strong gods,

Give place unto me ; I am as any of you,  
 To give life and to take life. ^ Thou, old earth,  
 That hast made man arid unmade ; thou whose mouth  
 Looks red from the eaten fruits of thine own womb ;  
 Behold me with what lips upon what food  
 I feed and fill my body ; even with flesh 1870  
 Made of my body. Lo, the fire I lit  
 I burn with fire to quench it; yea, with flame  
 I burn up even the dust and ash thereof,

*Chorus.* Woman, what fire is this thou burnest with ?

*Althcea.* Yea to the bone, yea to the blood and all.

*Chorus.* For this thy face and hair are as one fire.

*Althcea.* A tongue that licks and beats upon the dust.

*Chorus.* And in thine eyes are hollow light and heat.

*Althcea.* Of flame not fed with hand or frankincense.

*Chorus.* I fear thee for the trembling of thine eyes. 1880

*Althcea.* Neither with love they tremble nor for fean.

*Chorus.* And thy mouth shuddering like a shot bird.

*Althcea.* Not as the bride's mouth when man kisses it:

*Chorus.* Nay, but what thing is this thing thou hast  
 done ?

*Althcea.* Look, I am silent, speak your eyes for me.

*Chorus.* I see a faint fire lightening from the hall.

*Althcea.* Gaze, stretch your eyes, strain till the lids  
 drop orf.

*Chorus.* Flushed pillars down the flickering vestibule.

*Althcea.* Stretch with your necks like birds : cry, chirp  
 as they.

*Chorus.* And a long brand that blackens: and white  
 dust. 1890

*Althcea.* O children, what is this ye see ? your eyes  
 Are blinder than night's face at fall of moon.

That is my son, my flesh, my fruit of life,  
 My travail, and the year's weight of my womb.  
 Meleager, a fire enkindled of mine hands  
 And of mine hands extinguished ; this is he.

*Chorus.* O gods, what word has flown out at thy  
 mouth ?

*Althcea.* I did this and I say this and I die.

*Chorus.* Death stands upon the doorway of thy lips,  
 And in thy mouth has death set up his house. 1900,

*Althcm.* O death, a little, a little while, sweet death,  
 Until I see the brand burnt down and die.

*Chorus.* She reels as any reed under the wind,  
 And cleaves unto the ground with staggering feet.

*Althaea.* Girls, one thing will I say and hold my peace.

I that did this will weep not nor cry out,  
 Cry ye and weep : I will not call on gods,  
 Call ye on them ; I will not pity man,  
 Shew ye your pity. I know not if I live ;

Save that I feel the fire upon my face 1910  
 And on my cheek the burning of a brand.

Yea the smoke bites me, yea I drink the steam  
 With nostril and with eyelid and with lip  
 Insatiate and intolerant; and mine hands  
 Burn, and fire feeds upon mine eyes ; I reel  
 As one made drunk with living, whence he draws  
 Drunken delight; yet I, though mad for joy,  
 Loathe my long living and am waxen red

As with the shadow of shed blood ; behold,  
 I am kindled with the flames that fade in him, 1920

I am swollen with subsiding of his veins,  
 I am flooded with his ebbing ; my lit eyes  
 Flame with the falling fire that leaves his lids  
 Bloodless ; my cheek is luminous with blood

Because his face is ashen. Yet, O child,  
 'Son, first-born, fairest—O sweet mouth, sweet eyes,  
 That drew my life out through my suckling breast,  
 That shone and clove mine heart through—O soft knees  
 Clinging, O tender treadings of soft feet,  
 Cheeks warm with little kissings—O child, child, 1930  
 What have we made each other ? Lo, I felt  
 Thy weight cleave to me, a burden of beauty, O son,  
 Thy cradled brows and loveliest loving lips,  
 The floral hair, the little lightening eyes,  
 And all thy goodly glory ; with mine hands  
 Delicately I fed thee, with my tongue  
 Tenderly spake, saying, Verily in God's time,  
 For all the little likeness of thy limbs,  
 Son, I shall make thee a kingly man to fight,  
 A lordly leader ; and hear before I die, 1940  
 ' She bore the goodliest sword of all the world/  
 Oh ! oh ! For all my life turns round on me ;  
 I am severed from myself, my name is gone,  
 My name that was a healing, it is changed,  
 My name is a consuming. From this time,  
 Though mine eyes reach to the end of all these things,  
 My lips shall not unfasten till I die.

*Semichorus.* She has filled with sighing the city,  
 And the ways thereof with tears ;  
 She arose, she girdled her sides, 1950  
 She set her face as a bride's ;  
 She wept, and she had no pity ;  
 Trembled, and felt no fears.

*Semichorus.* Her eyes were clear as the sun,  
 Her brows were fresh as the day ;  
 She girdled herself with gold,  
 Her robes were manifold ;

But the days of her worship are done,  
Her praise is taken away.

*Semichorus.* For she set her hand to the fire, 1960

With her mouth she kindled the same ;  
As the mouth of a flute-player,  
So was the mouth of her ;  
With the might of her strong desire  
She blew the breath of the flame.

*Semichorus.* She set her hand to the wood,

She took the fire in her hand ;

As one who is nigh to death,

She panted with strange breath ;

She opened her lips unto blood,

1970

She breathed and kindled the brand.

*Semichorus.* As a wood-dove newly shot,

She sobbed and lifted her breast;

She sighed and covered her eyes,

Filling her lips with sighs ;

She sighed, she withdrew herself not,

She refrained not, taking not rest;

*Semichorus.* But as the wind which is drouth,

And as the air which is death,

As storm that severeth ships,

1980

Her breath severing her lips,

The breath came forth of her mouth

And the fire came forth of her breath.

*Second Messenger.* Queen, and you maidens, there is  
come on us

A thing more deadly than the face of death ;

Meleager the good lord is as one slain.

*Semichorus.* Without sword, without sword is he  
stricken;

Slain, and slain without hand.

*Second Messenger.* For as keen ice divided of the sun  
His limbs divide, and as thawed snow the flesh 1990  
Thaws from off all his body to the hair.

*Semichorus.* He wastes as the embers quicken ;  
With the brand he fades as a brand.

*Second Messenger.* Even while they sang and all drew  
hither and he  
Lifted both hands to crown the Arcadian's hair  
And fix the looser leaves, both hands fell down.

*Semichorus.* With rending of cheek and of hair  
Lament ye, mourn for him, weep.

*Second Messenger.* Straightway the crown slid off and  
smote on earth,  
First fallen ; and he, grasping his own hair, groaned  
And cast his raiment round his face and fell. 2001

*Semichorus.* Alas for visions that were,  
And soothsayings spoken in sleep.

*Second Messenger.* But the king twitched his reins in  
and leapt down  
And caught him, crying out twice ' O child ' and  
thrice,  
So that men's eyelids thickened with their tears.

*Semichorus.* Lament with a long lamentation,  
Cry, for an end is at hand.

*Second Messenger.* O son, he said, son, lift thine eyes,  
draw breath,  
Pity me ; but Meleager with sharp lips 2010  
Gasped, and his face waxed like as sunburnt grass.

*Semichorus.* Cry aloud, O thou kingdom, O nation,  
O stricken, a ruinous land.

*Second Messenger.* Whereat king (Eneus, straightening  
feeble knees,

With feeble hands heaved up a lessening weight,  
And laid him sadly in strange hands, and wept.

*Semichorus.* Thou art smitten, her lord, her desire,  
Thy dear blood wasted as rain.

*Second Messenger.* And they with tears and rendings  
of the beard

Bear hither a breathing body, wept upon 2020  
And lightening at each footfall, sick to death.

*Semichorus.* Thou madest thy sword as a fire,  
With fire for a sword thou art slain.

*Second Messenger.* And lo, the feast turned funeral,  
and the crowns

Fallen ; and the huntress and the hunter trapped ;  
And weeping and changed faces and veiled hair.

*Meleager.* Let your hands meet  
Round the weight of my head ;

Lift ye my feet  
As the feet of the dead ; 2030

For the flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it molten  
as lead.

*Chorus.* O thy luminous face,  
Thine imperious eyes!  
O the grief, O the grace,  
As of day when it dies!

Who is this bending over thee, lord, with tears and sup-  
pression of sighs ?

*Meleager.* Is a bride so fair ?  
Is a maid so meek ?  
With unchapleted hair,  
With unfilleted cheek, 2040

Atalanta, the pure among women, whose name is as  
blessing to speak.

*Atalanta*      I would that with feet  
                           Unsandalled, unshod,  
                           Overbold, overfleet,  
                           I had swum not nor trod  
 From Arcadia to Calydon northward, a blast of the envy  
                           of God.

*Lleleayer.*      Unto each man his fate ; *I*  
                           Unto each as he saith  
                           In whose fingers the weight  
                           Of the world is as breath ;                    2050  
 Yet I would that in clamour of battle mine hands had laid  
                           hold upon death.

*Chorus.*          Not with cleaving of shields  
                           And their clash in thine ear,  
                           When the lord of fought fields  
                           Breaketh spearshaft from spear,  
 Thou art broken, our lord, thou art broken, with travail  
                           arid labour and fear.

*Mdeager.*        Would God he had found me  
                           Beneath fresh boughs !  
                           Would God he had bound me  
                           Unawares in mine house,                    2060  
 With light in mine eyes, and songs in my lips, and a  
                           crown on my brows !

*Chorus.*          Whence art thou sent from us ?  
                           Whither thy goal ?  
                           How art thou rent from us,  
                           Thou that wert whole,  
 As with severing of eyelids and eyes, as with sundering  
                           of body and soul!

*Meleager.*        My heart is within me  
                           As an ash in the fire

Whosoever hath seen me,  
 Without lute, without lyre,           2070  
 Shall sing of me grievous things, even things that wer'  
 ill to desire.

*Chorus.*       Who shall raise thee  
                   From the house of the dead ?  
 Or what man praise thee  
                   That thy praise may be said ?  
 Alas thy beauty ! alas thy body ! alas thine head !

*Meleager.*     But thou, O mother,  
                   The dreamer of dreams,  
 Wilt thou bring forth another  
                   To feel the sun's beams                   2080  
 When I move among shadows a shadow, and wail by  
 impassable streams ?

*(Eneus.*        What thing wilt thou leave me  
                   Now this thing is done ?  
 A man wilt thou give me,  
                   A son for my son,  
 For the light of mine eyes, the desire of my life, the  
 desirable one ?

*Chorus.*        Thou wert glad above others,  
                   Yea, fair beyond word ;  
 Thou wert glad among mothers ;  
                   For each man that heard                   2090  
 Of thee, praise there was added unto thee, as wings to  
 the feet of a bird.

*(Eneus.*        Who shall give back  
                   Thy face of old years,  
 With travail made black,  
                   Grown grey among fears,  
 Mother of sorrow, mother of cursing, mother of tears ?

*Meleager.*     Though thou art as fire  
                   Fed with fuel in vain,  
                   My delight, my desire,  
                   Is more chaste tTiatiTEhe rain,     2100  
 More pure than the dewfall, more holy than stars are  
                   that live without stain.

*Atalanta.*    I would that as water  
                   My life's blood had thawed,  
                   Or as winter's wan daughter  
                   Leaves lowland and lawn  
 Spring-stricken, or ever mine eyes had beheld thee made  
                   dark in thy dawn.

*Chorus.*        When thou dravest the men  
                   Of the chosen of Thrace,  
                   None turned him again  
                   Nor endured he thy face     2110  
 Clothed round with the blush of the battle, with light  
                   from a terrible place.

*Eneus.*        Thou shouldst die as he dies  
                   For whom none sheddeth tears ;  
                   Filling thine eyes  
                   And fulfilling thine ears  
 With the brilliance of battle, the bloom and the beauty,  
                   the splendour of spears.

*Chorus.*        In the ears of the world  
                   It is sung, it is told,  
                   And the light thereof hurled  
                   And the noise thereof rolled     2120  
 From the Acroceraunian snow to the ford of the fleece of  
                   gold.

*Meleager.*     Would God ye could carry me  
                   Forth of all these •

Heap sand and bury me  
 By the Chersonese  
 Where the thundering Bosphorus answers the thunder  
 of Pontic seas.

*(Eneus.* Dost thou mock at our praise  
 And the singing begun  
 And the men of strange days  
 Praising my son 2130

In the folds of the hills of home, high places of Calydon ?

*Meleager.* For the dead man no home is ;  
 Ah, better to be  
 What the flower of the foam is  
 In fields of the sea,

That the sea-waves might be as my raiment, the gulf-  
 stream a garment for me.

*Chorus.* Who shall seek thee and bring  
 And restore thee thy day,  
 When the dove dipt her wing  
 And the oars won their way 2140

Where the narrowing Symplegades whitened the straits  
 of Propontis with spray ?

*Meleager.* Will ye crown me my tomb  
 Or exalt me my name,  
 Now my spirits consume,  
 Now my flesh is a flame ?

Let the sea slake it once, and men speak of me sleeping  
 to praise me or shame.

*Chorus.* Turn back now, turn thee,  
 As who turns him to wake ;  
 Though the life in thee burn thee,  
 Couldst thou bathe it and slake 2150

Where the sea-ridge of Helle hangs heavier, and east upon  
 west waters break ?

*Meleager.* Would the winds blow me back  
 Or the waves hurl me home ?  
 Ah, to touch in the track  
 Where the pine learnt to roam

Cold girdles and crowns of the sea-gods, cool blossoms of  
 water and foam !

*Chorus.* The gods may release  
 That they made fast;  
 Thy soul shall have ease  
 In thy limbs at the last; 2160

"But what shall they give thee for life, sweet life that is  
 overpast ?

*Meleager.* v 'ftot the life of men's veins,  
 Not of flesh that conceives ;  
 But the grace that remains,  
 The fair beauty that cleaves

To the life of the rains in the grasses, the life of the dews  
 on the leaves.

*Chorus.* "Thou wert helmsman and chief;  
 Wilt thou turn in an hour,  
 Thy limbs to the leaf,  
 Thy face to the flower, 2170

Thy blood to the water, thy soul to the gods who divide  
 and devour ?

*Meleager.* The years are hungry,  
 They wail all their days ;  
 The gods wax angry  
 And weary of praise ;

And who shall bridle their lips ? and who shall straiten  
 their ways ?

*Chorus.* The gods guard over us  
 With sword and with rod ;

Weaving shadow to cover us,  
 Heaping the sod, 2180  
 That law may fulfil herself wholly, to darken man's face  
 before God.

*Meleager.* O holy head of (Eneus, lo thy son  
 Guiltless, yet red from alien guilt, yet foul  
 With kinship of contaminated lives,  
 Lo, for their blood I die ; and mine own blood  
 For bloodshedding of mine is mixed therewith,  
 That death may not discern me from my kin.  
 Yet with clean heart I die and faultless hand,  
 Not shamefully ; thou therefore of thy love  
 Salute me, and bid fare among the dead 2190  
 Well, as the dead fare ; for the best toan iiead  
 Fares sadly ; nathless I now faring well  
 Pass without fear where nothing is to fear  
 Having thy love about me and thy goodwill,  
 O father, among dark places and men dead.

*(Eneus.* Child, I salute thee with sad heart and tears,  
 And bid thee comfort, being a perfect man  
 In fight, and honourable in the house of peace.  
 The gods give thee fair wage and dues of death,  
 And me brief days and ways to come at thee. 2200

*Meleager.* Pray thou thy days be long before thy  
 death,  
 And full of ease and kingdom ; seeing in death  
 There is no comfort and none aftergrowth,  
 Nor shall one thence look up and see day's dawn  
 Nor light upon the land whither I go.  
 Live thou and take thy fill of days and die  
 When thy day comes ; and make not much of death  
 Lest ere thy day thou reap an evil thing.

Thou too, the bitter mother and mother-plague  
Of this my weary body—thou too, queen, 2210  
The source and end, the sower and the scythe,  
The rain that ripens and the drought that slays,  
The sand that swallows and the spring that feeds,  
To make me and unmake me—thou, I say,  
Althaea, since my father's ploughshare, drawn  
[Through fatal seedland of a female field,  
Furrowed thy body, whence a wheaten ear  
Strong from the sun and fragrant from the rains  
I sprang and cleft the closure of thy womb,  
Mother, I dying with unforgetful tongue 2220  
Hail thee as holy and worship thee as just,  
Who art unjust and unholy ; and with my knees  
Would worship, but thy fire and subtlety,  
Dissundering them, devour me ; for these limbs  
Are as light dust and crumbings from mine urn  
Before the fire has touched them ; and my face  
As a dead leaf or dead foot's mark on snow,  
And all this body a broken barren tree  
That was so strong, and all this flower of life  
Disbranched and desecrated miserably, 2230  
Andminished all that god-like muscle and might  
And lesser than a man's : for all my veins  
Fail me, and all mine ashen life burns down.  
I would thou hadst let me live ; but gods averse,  
But fortune, and the fiery feet of change,  
And time, these would not, these tread out my life,  
These and not thou ; me too thou hast loved, and I  
Thee ; but this death was mixed with all my life,  
Mine end with my beginning : and this law,  
This only, slays me, and not my mother at all. 2240

And let no brother or sister grieve too sore,  
 Nor melt their hearts out on me with their tears,  
 Since extreme love and sorrowing overmuch  
 Vex the great gods, and overloving men  
 Slay and are slain for love's sake ; and this house  
 Shall bear much better children ; why should these  
 Weep ? but in patience let them live their lives  
 And mine pass by forgotten : thou alone,  
 Mother, thou sole and only, thou not these,  
 Keep me in mind a little when I die 2250  
 Because I was thy first-born ; let thy soul  
 Pity me, pity even me gone hence and dead.  
 Though thou wert wroth, and though thou bear again  
 Much happier sons, and all men later born  
 Exceedingly excel me ; yet do thou  
 Forget not, nor think shame ; I was thy son.  
 Time was I did not shame thee ; and time was  
 I thought to live and make thee honourable  
 With deeds as great as these men's ; but they live,  
 These, and I die ; and what thing should have been 2260  
 Surely I know not; yet I charge thee, seeing  
 I am dead already, love me not the less,  
 Me, O my mother ; I charge thee by these gods,  
 My father's, and that holier breast of thine,  
 By these that see me dying, and that which nursed,  
 Love me not less, thy first-born : though grief come,  
 Grief only, of me, and of all these great joy,  
 And shall come always to thee ; for thou knowest,  
 O mother, O breasts that bare me, for ye know,  
 O sweet head of my mother, sacred eyes, 2270  
 Ye know my soul albeit I sinned, ye know  
 Albeit I kneel not neither touch thy knees,

But with my lips I kneel, and with my heart  
 I fall about thy feet and worship thee.  
 And ye farewell now, all my friends ; and ye,  
 Kinsmen, much younger and glorious more than I,  
 Sons of my mother's sister ; and all farewell  
 That were in Colchis with me, and have down  
 The waves and wars that met us : and though times  
 Change, and though now I be not anything,                    2280  
 Forget not me among you, what I did  
 In my good time ; for even by all those days,  
 Those days and this, and your own living souls,  
 And by the light and luck of you that live,  
 And by this miserable spoil, and me  
 Dying, I beseech you, let my name not die.  
 But thou, dear, touch me with thy rose-like hands,  
 And fasten up mine eyelids with thy mouth,  
 A bitter kiss ; and grasp me with thine arms,  
 Printing with heavy lips my light waste    flesh,    2290  
 Made light and thin by heavy-handed fate,  
 And with thine holy maiden eyes drop dew,  
 Drop tears for dew upon me who am dead,  
 Me who have loved thee ; seeing without sin done  
 I am gone down to the empty weary house  
 Where no flesh is nor beauty nor swift eyes  
 Nor sound of mouth nor might of hands and feet.  
 But thou, dear, hide my body with thy veil,  
 And with thy raiment cover foot and head,  
 And stretch thyself upon me and touch hands                    2300  
 With hands and lips with lips : be<sup>v</sup> pitiful  
 As thou art maiden perfect ; let no man  
 Defile me to despise me, saying, This man  
 Died woman-wise, a woman's offering, slain

Through female fingers in his woof of life,  
Dishonourable ; for thou hast honoured me.  
And now for God's sake kiss me once and twice  
And let me go ; for the night gathers me,  
And in the night shall no man gather fruit.

*Atalanta.* Hail thou : but I wftth heavy face and feet  
Turn homeward and am gone out of thine eyes, 2311

*Chorus,* Who shall contend with his lords

Or cross them or do them wrong ?

Who shall bind them as with cords ?

Who shall tame them as with song ?

Who shall smite them as with swords ?

For the hands of their kingdom are strong.

## NOTES

I. 1 *ct seq.* An address first to Eos (Aurora), goddess of the sunrise, then to Apollo, the god of the sun, and finally to Artemis (Diana), goddess of the flocks and the chase

II. 35, 3H. each horn of Acheloiis, and the green Euenus. The Achelous, largest of the Greek rivers, rises in Mount Pindus and flows into the Ionian sea opposite Ithaca. The god of the river, in the form of a bull, fought with Hercules, for Deianira, daughter of (Eneus, and was defeated, losing one of his horns. The Euenus is an Arcadian river

1. 47. Ladon. A river of Arcadia.

Mænalus. A mountain of Arcadia, a favourite haunt of Pan.

1. 52. Lelantian pasturage. A fertile plain, in Kubccca, between Chalcis and Eretria.

1. 53. son of Zeus, etc. Hercules, v. note on 1. 35.

1. 69. brown bright nightingale, etc. A legend of which there are several versions. The one referred to here is as follows: Itylus (the i is short) was the son of Tereus and Philomela. He was slain by his mother in a fit of anger on finding a rival in her sister Procne. The anger of Tereus drove them both from the house, and, pursued by him, they were changed by the gods into birds, Procne becoming a swallow and Philomela a nightingale. The song of the latter is supposed to be an undying lament for her son.

1. 108. the Maenad and the Bassarid. Female followers of Bacchus, who were accustomed to work themselves into a frenzy at Bacchic festivals.

1. 149. four-foot plague. The boar.

1. 187. Arcadia. A country south-west of the Gulf of Corinth. The reference is to Atalanta who had come thence.

1. 243. Three weaving women. The Fates : Clotho, who spun the fate of man, Lachesis, who wove it, and Atropos, who, at his death, cut the thread.

1. 274. blind lips. cf. Milton, *Lycidas* : ' blind mouths.'

## I. 276. The Fates again.

1. 316-317 'We may think, at first, that the tears should belong to Grief and the hour-glass to Time, and that the emblems are exchanged only for formal reasons, or to avoid a possible triteness; but a little reflection will show that several things are added by the transposition. With the third line, compare the verse in *A Forsaken Garden*, which begins,

Heart hand-fast in heart

and with the fourth line compare

We are not sure of sorrow, etc.

from *The Garden of Proserpine*. Some connection, though it may be tenuous or extravagant, can almost always be found in Swinburne, perhaps because of his predilection for the abstract and the vague. Vague thoughts articulate one with another more readily than precise thoughts.'—I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism*, p. 190.

1. 391. Peleus was the husband of Thetis, a marine divinity, one of the Nereids (v. note on l. 593), and their son was Achilles, one of the Greek heroes in the Trojan War, hence 'full of the future fame.'

1. 410. Eurotas. The chief river of Laconia, upon which stood Sparta.

1. 434 *et seq.* The reference to 'tender and temperate honours of the hearth' is an example of dramatic irony, since the fate in store for both Helen and Clytemnestra was precisely the opposite, the former being the cause of the Siege of Troy and the latter, after herself murdering her husband Agamemnon, being slain in turn by her son Orestes.

1. 429. Telamon. Brother of Peleus.

1. 431. Salamis. An island off the west coast of Attica.

J. 436. Ancaeus. An Arcadian warrior, one of the Argonauts.

1. 453-465. This moralising is rare in Swinburne, but common in Greek tragedy, which delights in the rapier-play of the single-line dialogue. The compression required for dealing an effective thrust within one line attracted Swinburne, as it attracted Browning in *Balaustion* and Arnold in *Merope*.

1. 511 *et seq.* There is a certain similarity between this passage and that in Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur*, beginning 'I am going a long way with these thou seest.' Swinburne was an admirer of Tennyson.

1. 557. Ares. The god of War, the Roman Mars. Another reference to the vengeance of Artemis and the boar.

1. 593. Nereids. The daughters of Nereus, sea-nymphs of the Mediterranean.

1. 599. Symplegades. Two floating rocks at the entrance to 'the Euxine (Black) Sea, which were supposed to dash together and then rebound (hence irreparable — which cannot be rowed through). After the Argo, in which Meleager sailed, passed between them, they became fixed. The Argo got through by following the course taken by a dove (cf. 1. 2139).

I. 609. bitter flowers. The image of foam-flowers is a favourite one with Swinburne

1. 729-730. an evil blossom. Aphrodite (the Foam-born), the goddess of love, was, in later Greek mythology, said to have come up out of the sea.

1.752. Sweetly divided, The favourite word for 'mortals' in Homer is *ἰ.τ.ποῖρτος*. Its meaning is uncertain, but the traditional interpretation connects it with the verb 'to divide' and explains it as referring to articulate? speech.

1. 854. Tyro. The wife of Cretheus, beloved of the Thessalian river-god Enipeus. Poseidon (Neptune) appeared to her in the form of Enipeus and she became, by him, the mother of Pelias and Neleus.

I. 870 *et seq.* Artemis.

1. 902. Iasius. Father of Atalanta.

1. 962. Tantalus was the father of Niobe. The latter deemed herself superior to Leto, the mother of Artemis, and, as a punishment, Artemis slew Niobe's seven children.

1. 967 *et seq.* The followers of Artemis were vowed to perpetual maidenhood.

1. 1031. Tegea. A city of Arcadia.

I. 1077. the weeping Seven. The Pleiades, a constellation, which, in its ascendant, was believed to bring rain.

1. 1233. Acarnania. The westernmost province of Greece, of which the inhabitants were seafaring men and pirates.

1. 1235 *et seq.* The names of some of the hunters. Any good Classical Dictionary will supply information to those who think they require it.

1. 1257. the keenest eye. Keen-eyed Lynceus. A Greek idiom imitated by Milton, *Paradise Lost*, vi. 355, 'the might of Gabriel fought.'

1. 1258 twice-espoused. His wife Alcestis was brought back from death by Hercules.

1. 1338. The heavy horror. The boar.

1. 1350. melilote. A kind of clover.

1. 1400. Artemis.

1. 1424. Iamus. Son of Apollo and nephew of Artemis.

J. 1447. Without thunder. A reminiscence of the noble description of the death of (Edipus in Sophocles, (*Edipnx Cofoneis*, 1558, as the earlier part of the chorus recalls a chorus in the same play, 668-719.

1. 1465. Orion. According to one of the several legends about Orion, he was slain by Artemis.

1. 1499. I am indebted to the Provost of Eton for supplying the following explanation of th's line' the '*Thesanrus* quotes a line of an unknown poet given in the *Kti/nioloyicoti Jlat/tium MeXta-y/)*' MeXtap 7<ip TOT' *Aypeinrcis Aypav*—' i.e. the name Meleager is punningly derived from the Oreek words meaning 'a bitter hunting.'

1. 1508. The sudden change into another rhythm in this line, a rhythm which is not repeated until line 1806 is worthy of note, as also is the similarity of diction between the t\vo lines. It binds together the possession of Althaea by the strange frenzy which drives her to burn the brand arid the moment when she goes into the palace to do the deed. It is repeated again by the Semi-chorus during the speech of the Second Messenger.

1. 1589 *et seq.* An English reader will probably feel quite out of sympathy with this speech. He may understand that Althaea's grief and indignation for her brothers should alienate her from her son, but he will not understand her arguing sophistically that love to brothers takes precedence of love for children. Yet Swinburne was true to the spirit of Greek tragedy in making Althaea argue the point judicially. Many parallels could be quoted from Euripides, and Swinburne certainly had in mind a famous speech in Sophocles, *Antwone*, 891-928, where Antigone argues that she would do more for a brother than for a son.

1. 1680. sect. Portion cut oil

1. 1754. fallen as leaves. A favourite comparison in Homer (*Iliad* vi. 146) and the Greek poets.

1. 1944. My name that was a healing Althaea connects her name with *d\0ali>€ii>₁* 'to heal.'

1. 2082 *et seq.* (Eneus is addressing Althaea.

1. 2104. winter's wan daughter. The snow.

1. 2121. Acroceraunian. 'High-thundering': a mountain-ridge in western Greece. Cf. Shelley, 'Arethusa arose From her couch of snows In the Acroceraunian mountains.'

ford of the fleece of gold. The Hellespont (Dardanelles, the strait between Europe and Asia), called 'Helle's sea' because in the legend Helle was being carried across it by the golden rair> when she fell into it.

1. 2125. Chersonese. Meleager's or Swinburne's geography is difficult here. 'Chersonese'—which is Greek for "Peninsula"—is the name generally given to the promontory west of the Hellespont. Swinburne seems to apply it to the shore of the Bosphorus (straits of Constantinople).

1. 2151. the sea-ridge of Helle. The Hellespont.

1. 2278. Colchis. The place where the Argonauts found the Golden Fleece.

## BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

*Swinburne's Collected Poetical Works.* 2 vols. (Hcmomann.) This edition contains everything the ordinary student is likely to require.

*Selections from Sivinburne*, edited by Gosse and Wise. (Heinemaim.) A good choice of the best shorter poems.

*Algernon Charles Sivinburne.* (Life) Sir Edmund Gosse. (Macmillan.) The standard biography, characterised by a lightness and humour often absent from such.

*The Home Life of tiwinburve.* Clara Watts-Dunton. (Philpot.) An attempt by Mrs. Watts-Dunton to show that it was during the Putney period that Swinburne's best work was produced. The illustrations are admirable.

*Swinburne.* Hon. Harold Nicolson. English Men of Letters series. (Macmillan.) A combined biographical and critical study, valuable as both.

*The Sacred Wood.* T. S. Eliot. (Methuen.) Pp. 144-150. A short but important essay.

*Greek Tragedy.* J. T Sheppard. (Cambridge University Press.)

## SUBJECTS FOR ESSAYS

1. Has the form of a Greek tragedy imposed any serious limitations upon Swinburne in his writing of *Atalanta* ?
2. 'The English language had never been set to such a thunder of music before' (O. Burdett).
3. 'Only a man of genius could dwell so exclusively and consistently among words as Swinburne' (T. S. Eliot).
4. Write a character of Althaea.
5. Discuss Swinburne's use of alliteration.
6. After you have read *Atalanta*, read the following seven poems of Swinburne: *Lavs Veneris*, *The Triumph of Time*, *Before a Mirror*, *The Forsaken Garden*, *The Garden of Proserpine*, *Hertha*, *Ave atque Vale*, and try to set down how, if at all, they modify the opinion you have already formed of him.
7. Read Shelley's *Arethum* and estimate Swinburne's debt to it.
8. Read the hunting scene in Arnold's *Merope* and compare it with the hunt in *Atalanta*.

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