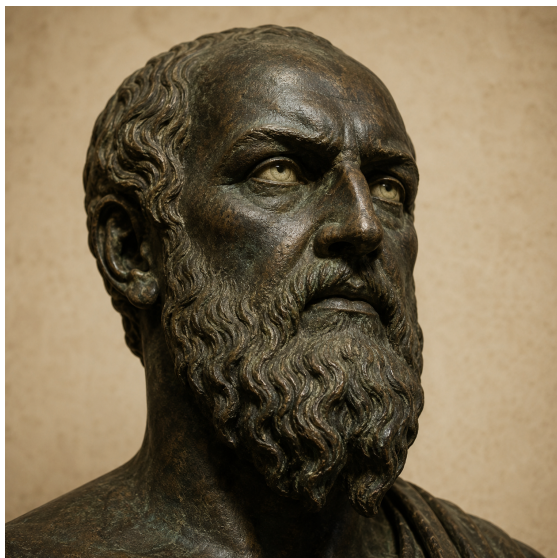




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Aeschylus

The Complete Tragedies

THE SEVEN SURVIVING TRAGEDIES

CLEMENTINIUM EDITIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The epitaph at Gela is a verse inscription of striking reserve. It names Aeschylus, his father Euphorion, and Gela, "rich in grain"; its proof of distinction is the sacred grove of Marathon and the long-haired Mede. It says nothing of theatre. We do not know who composed it. If it was dictated by Aeschylus himself, it presents him above all as a fighter; if not, that image was imposed by later selectors. In either case, the exclusion of tragedy is eloquent.

The rest of the biography rests largely on late evidence. Aeschylus was probably born at Eleusis about 525 BCE and died in Sicily in 456; the Parian Marble's notice of his death is the firmest chronological point. The anonymous Life, a Byzantine lexicon entry, Herodotus, and Plutarch add fragments of information and many retrospective anecdotes. The story that an eagle dropped a tortoise on his bald head, killing him, is memorable precisely as an example of the latter kind of material.

One fact is shared by the evidence: Aeschylus belonged to the generation of the Persian Wars. At Marathon in 490 Athenian hoplites defeated Darius; his brother Cynaegirus was said to have died with his hand severed from a Persian ship's stern. In 480 Athens was evacuated, Xerxes burned the Acropolis, and the Greek fleet won at Salamis, where Aeschylus probably served. Persians (472), the only surviving tragedy on a contemporary event, sets the action at Susa and makes the enemy mourn its defeat.

The political conditions of his theatre were new. Hippias' expulsion in 510 ended hereditary one-man rule, and Cleisthenes'

reforms of about 508 established *isēgoria*, the equal right to speak in the Assembly. Theatre was a civic institution. At the Great Dionysia the eponymous archon selected three competing poets and appointed a wealthy choregos to finance and train each chorus. Each poet presented four works in one day: three tragedies and a satyr play, whose comic chorus consisted of satyrs. The poet also trained the performers as the play's *didaskalos*, its teacher.

Tradition credits Thespis with separating the first actor from the chorus; one actor, however, had no equal interlocutor. Aristotle's *Poetics* credits Aeschylus with increasing the number from one to two. The result was confrontation, deception, persuasion, and face-to-face drama. In *Agamemnon*, Clytemnestra persuades her returned husband to tread the purple cloth, then kills him offstage: the verbal trap requires two actors.

Aeschylus also gave special force to the connected trilogy. Three tragedies could form one multi-generational myth, in which a fault matures across generations and reaches resolution only in the third play. His successors normally chose unrelated subjects. The only complete example to survive is the *Oresteia*: *Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers*, and *Eumenides*. Its accompanying satyr play, *Proteus*, is lost.

The inherited burden is never an excuse. *Hýbris* denotes excess; *díkē* is both judgement and punishment. Justice may be delayed across generations, but *Agamemnon* still chooses to sacrifice Iphigenia, and the cursed Eteocles still chooses to meet his brother in *Seven Against Thebes*. *Páthei máthos*, "through suffering, knowledge," names a lesson whose price remains visible.

Orestes' case makes the problem most acute. He kills his mother Clytemnestra to avenge his father, and the Furies, goddesses of

blood-vengeance, pursue him. In *Eumenides* Athena establishes an Athenian court; the votes are equal, Athena's vote acquits, and the Furies are pacified and granted a cult. The historical setting matters. Ephialtes' reform of 462 removed the Areopagus' political powers while retaining its homicide jurisdiction; the reformer was murdered soon afterwards. The *Oresteia* was produced in 458.

Aeschylus was competing by about 499, but his first victory came only in 484; tradition gives him thirteen victories. In 468 he lost to the young Sophocles, associated with the third actor, a device Aeschylus adopted late. After his death his plays received the exceptional licence to be revived in competition. Aristophanes' *Frogs* (405) imagines Aeschylean verse weighed down by chariots, rivers, and piled corpses. The ancient word *ónkos* conveys that massive weight and grandeur.

What survives is a selection, not a measure of fame. Antiquity credited Aeschylus with seventy to ninety plays, of which only seven complete tragedies remain. Roman educational choice and Byzantine copying determined their fate: works that were not recopied perished. The Byzantine school triad comprised *Persians*, *Seven Against Thebes*, and *Prometheus Bound*; the other four plays survive through very few copies.

That manuscript history remains tangible. *Suppliants* and *Libation Bearers* depend on a single manuscript, the tenth-century parchment Laurentianus 32.9 in Florence. The beginning of *Libation Bearers* is missing there and can be restored only from ancient quotations. Larger sequences are broken as well: *Seven* (467) is the final play of a lost Theban trilogy, while *Suppliants*, dated by papyrus to about 463, opens another lost trilogy.

The seven tragedies in this volume are therefore only a fraction of Aeschylus' output; even including fragments, they amount to scarcely a tenth. Each is accompanied here by a notice and running commentary. The text has been shaped by ancient education, the copying choices of Constantinople, and the survival of parchment; even the connected trilogy was later abandoned. Yet one innovation has remained irrevocable: once drama had acquired two voices, it never returned to one.

NOTE ON THE ENGLISH TEXT

The English translation reproduced here is Herbert Weir Smyth's Aeschylus (Loeb Classical Library, 1922–26), now in the public domain. Smyth's dignified prose and transliteration of names belong to the historical document reproduced. The line numbers used throughout are those of the Greek text.

NOTE ON THE GREEK TEXT

The Greek text after each tragedy is a documentary text of reference, without a critical apparatus. It reproduces F. Storr's public-domain Loeb edition (1922–26), as transmitted through Perseus TEI. Differences from modern critical editions, notably Page and West, are not recorded. The Greek is placed after each play rather than in a general appendix, so that the translation remains adjacent to its ancient witness.

EDITORIAL PRINCIPLES

*Each play is preceded by a notice giving its Greek title, probable date, and dramatic situation, and followed by its Greek annexe. The notices provide orientation without becoming a line-by-line commentary. Dates are bearings, not certainties: only *The Persians* (472) and the *Oresteia* (458) are securely dated, while both the date and the authorship of *Prometheus Bound* remain disputed.*

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

c. 525	Birth of Aeschylus at Eleusis.
490	Marathon; Aeschylus fights there.
484	First attested tragic victory.
480	Salamis.
472	<i>The Persians</i> .
467	<i>Seven Against Thebes</i> .
c. 463	<i>The Suppliant Maidens</i> .
458	The <i>Oresteia</i> (<i>Agamemnon</i> , <i>The Libation Bearers</i> , <i>The Eumenides</i>).
456/455	Death at Gela, Sicily.
Disputed	<i>Prometheus Bound</i> (authorship debated).

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Studies. *Albin Lesky, Greek Tragic Poetry*; *A. F. Garvie, Aeschylus*; *J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet, Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*; and, *on the Oresteia, the commentaries of Fraenkel and Sommerstein.*

THE PERSIANS

Πέρσαι

Greek title. Πέρσαι (Persai).

Date. 472 BCE

Translation. Herbert Weir Smyth (Loeb, 1926), public domain.

Greek text. F. Storr (Loeb, 1912–1913), after the play.

The Persian court at Susa learns of Xerxes' catastrophe at Salamis: the only surviving tragedy on a contemporary historical event.

Darius' ghost, 821–22: hýbris gàr exanthoûs' ekárpōsen stáchyn / átēs, hóthen pánklauton examá théros: "Hybris flowers and bears a crop of ruin, reaped as an all-tearful harvest."

In the spring of 472, eight years after Athens had been captured and its temples burned, the theatre of Dionysus staged enemy grief rather than Athenian triumph. At Susa, a mother-queen, a council of elders, and finally the Great King learn that the expedition against Greece has been destroyed. Men who had fought at Salamis were invited to mourn the defeated enemy. This is the only surviving tragedy to make a recent victory the matter of lament. Its central achievement is to turn victory into tragedy.

It is often called a historical tragedy, and the description is partly right: its event was only eight years old and much of its first audience had witnessed or taken part in the war. It is not sufficient, however. The decisive operation is a reversal of viewpoint. Athenians knew the conflict as victors; the play makes them watch Persian loss, and the moral judgement is supplied by a dead Persian king.

Phrynichus had established the dangerous precedent. His Capture of Miletus was said to have brought a fine and a prohibition on revival because it reopened the pain of an Ionian sister-city's fall. His Phoenician Women, about the wives of sailors in the royal fleet, reportedly began with a eunuch announcing defeat. An ancient hypothesis under the name of Glaucus says that Aeschylus "modelled" Persians on it. The debt is real, but its extent cannot be known because the play is lost. Aeschylus' difference is crucial: he delays the news of defeat, so that the first half mounts in anxiety and lament becomes the end rather than the opening.

Persians won first prize at the Great Dionysia of 472. Its choregos was the young Pericles, son of Xanthippus, in his first attested public office: the future imperial city paid for the lament of an enemy empire. The other plays in the tetralogy were Phineus, Glaucus of Potniae, and the satyr play Prometheus Fire-Kindler. Unlike the Oresteia, they did not form a connected story. Fire, prophecy, and punishment for hybris have been proposed as links, but the lost plays cannot sustain an interpretation built upon them. An early Sicilian revival at Hieron's Syracuse shows that the drama could travel beyond its original civic setting.

Its form is a grave descent, not a sequence of surprises. The audience knows the outcome while the chorus fears what it does not yet

know. The *parodos* calls the elders the Persian *pistá*, the “Faithful” (1–2): *Táde mèn Persôn tôn oichoménōn... pistà kaléitai*. A splendid, epic-like catalogue of leaders and peoples changes gradually into dread, and the chorus asks, *dolómētin d’ apátan theoû / tís anēr thnatòs alýxei* (107–08): who among mortals can escape the god’s ensnaring deception?

Atossa’s dream (176–214) makes the future visible before the characters understand it. Xerxes yokes a Persian and a Greek woman; the Greek breaks the harness and chariot, and Xerxes falls. The Messenger’s cry at 249–52 confirms the audience’s anticipation: *stratòs gàr pàs ólōle barbárōn* (255), “the whole barbarian army has perished.” The opening catalogue becomes a funeral catalogue. His account of Salamis (353–432) moves through the deceptive lure, dawn, the paeon, the constricted strait, the massacre, and the slaughter of Persian elites at *Psyttaleia*. Its near-eyewitness precision may reflect Aeschylus’ own service, though its geography and relation to Herodotus remain debated.

Atossa unites royal magnificence with fear. The chorus calls her “wife of a Persian god, mother of a god” (157); her concern is for wealth and for the ruler as the “eye of the house” (168–69). Her final maternal act is to fetch clothes for her humiliated son (832–51). Her first entrance is in a chariot; she later walks with libations (607–09), a change that makes dynastic collapse visible. Xerxes embodies *hybris*, but he appears only after he has been broken. He is young (*néos*, 744, 782), misled by bad advisers (753–58), and pitied rather than demonised. The faithful chorus becomes the suffering Persian people, and its final lament completes the action.

Darius rises from his tomb in a necromantic lament (598 ff.), summoned with the royal tiara and saffron shoe (660–62). A de-

feated Persian, not a Greek, delivers the play's moral judgement. Xerxes' fault is the bridge and yoke laid across the Hellespont: he enslaves a sacred strait (745). The burning of Greek temples will bring the later disaster at Plataea (809–15). Zeus stands over the over-proud as *eúthynos barys*, a severe auditor: *Zeús toi kolastēs tōn hyperkómpōn ágan / phronēmátōn épestin, eúthynos barys* (827–28). Punishment restores a measure Xerxes has violated. Historical Darius lost at Marathon; the play deliberately idealises him as the standard of measure.

The question of “barbarian” remains an unresolved tension. The drama gives Persian grief individual names, families, widows, and a human cost, yet it opposes eastern despotism, prostration, and subjects called “slaves” to free Greek poleis. The reported cry at Salamis (402–05) summons the Greeks to free their homeland, children, wives, ancestral gods' temples, and ancestral graves. In *Inventing the Barbarian* (1989), Hall argues that the play constructs a Greek/barbarian polarity; Garvie's *Persae* (Oxford, 2009) warns against a reductive ideological reading and insists on the play's humanity. The two readings coexist. The play is both historical tragedy and civic propaganda: Periclean funding, the celebration of Salamis, Athens “impregnable” (348–49), and silence about other cities. Yet its Persian viewpoint and general warning against *hybris* can also address a rising Athenian empire.

The stage image makes judgement material. Darius' tomb is central, and libation and invocation bring the first surviving theatrical ghost on stage. Whether he emerged through a trapdoor or passed over the mound is uncertain; the effect is not: a royal dead man judges the living. Oriental wealth is then reversed in a visible sequence: *polychrýsōn*, “rich in gold” (3), the catalogue,

gold, chariot, and the queen's splendour; then Atossa without her chariot; finally Xerxes in rags, his quiver his only relic (1020–23).

In Aristophanes' *Frogs* (1026 ff.), Aeschylus claims that the play taught Athenians always to desire victory over the enemy and celebrated a noble act. Modern adaptations have drawn opposite but compatible emphases: freedom against despotism, anti-imperialism, anti-war, and the victor's capacity to mourn the enemy. Sellars and Auletta's 1993 version moved Susa's mourning to a Gulf War capital. Broadhead (1960), West's *Aeschyli tragoediae* (Teubner, 1990), Hall, and Garvie remain principal guides. *Persians* is neither pure triumph nor pure compassion: it places Athens, at the threshold of empire, before another empire's fall.

CHARACTERS

CHORUS

ATOSSA

MESSENGER

GHOST OF DARIUS

DARIUS

XERXES

Enter a band of Elders, guardians of the Persian Empire

CHORUS

Here we are, the faithful Council of the Persians, who have gone to the land of Hellas, we who serve as warders of the royal abode, rich in bountiful store of gold, we whom Xerxes, our King, Darius' royal son, himself selected, by virtue of our rank and years, to be the guardians of his realm. Yet as regards the return of our King and of his host, so richly decked out in gold,

the soul within my breast is distressed and presages disaster. For the whole populace of the Asian nation has come and murmurs against its youthful King, nor does any courier or horseman

arrive at the city of the Persians, who left behind them the walled defence of Susa and Agbatana and Cissa's ancient ramparts, and went forth, some on horseback, some in galleys, others on foot

presenting a dense array of war. Such are Amistres and Artaphrenes and Megabates and Astaspes, marshals of the Persians; kings themselves, yet vassals of the Great King,

they press on, commanders of an enormous host, skilled in archery and horsemanship, formidable to look upon and fearful in battle through the valiant resolve of their souls. Artembares, too, who fights from his chariot,

and Masistres, and noble Imaeus, skilled with the bow, and Pharandaces, and Sosthanes, who urges on his steeds. Others in addition the mighty, fecund Nile sent forth — Susiscanes,

Pegastagon of Egyptian lineage, mighty Arsames, lord of sacred Memphis, Ariomardus, governor of ancient Thebes, and the marsh-dwelling oarsmen, well-skilled and countless in number.

Behind them follows a throng of luxurious Lydians and those who hold in subjection all the people of the mainland, whom Metrogathes and brave Arceus, their regal commanders,

and Sardis rich in gold sent forth, riding in many a chariot, in ranks with three and four steeds abreast, a spectacle terrible to behold. They too who live by sacred Tmolus pledge themselves

to cast the yoke of slavery upon Hellas—Mardon, Tharybis, anvils of the lance, and the Mysians, hurlers of the javelin. Babylon, also, teeming with gold, sends a mixed host arrayed in a long line, both mariners borne in galleys

and those who rely on their skill in archery. The nation too which wears the sabre follows from every part of Asia in the fearful procession of the King. Such are the warriors, the flower of the Persian land,

who have departed, and in fierce longing for them the whole land of Asia, their foster-nurse, laments, while parents and wives, as they count the days, shudder at the lengthening delay.

CHORUS

The royal army, dealing destruction to cities, has already passed to the neighboring land upon the facing shore, and this they did by crossing the Hellespont, named for the daughter of Athamas, on a bridge of boats made fast with cables, thereby casting a tightly constructed roadway as a yoke upon the neck of the sea.

CHORUS

The fiery lord of populous Asia is leading his wondrous warrior-flock against the whole earth in two divisions, on foot and by the sea, putting his trust in his stalwart and stern commanders; he himself, a god-like hero whose race is sprung from gold.

CHORUS

With eyes flashing with the dark glare of a deadly dragon, attended by soldiers and mariners in great numbers, and speeding his Syrian chariot, he leads against a people renowned for the spear a warlike host of archers.

CHORUS

And there is no man skilled to withstand the mighty stream of men, and with strong barriers keep out the sea's invincible surge; for Persia's host cannot be withstood, and her men are courageous.

CHORUS

For by the will of the gods Fate has held sway
since ancient time, and has ordained for the Persians the pursuit of rampart-destroying war, the turmoil of fighting horsemen, and the storming of cities.

CHORUS

And they have learned to look upon the precinct of the deep when the broad-wayed sea whitens to foam beneath the tempest's blast, trusting in their finely wrought cables and their devices which give passage to their army.

CHORUS

Yet the insidious guile of god—what mortal man can escape it? Who with agile foot can lightly overleap and escape its toils?

CHORUS

For Delusion, with her fair appearance, lures men astray into her snares, from which it is not possible to escape without meeting with disaster.

CHORUS

Therefore my heart is wrapped in gloom and is racked with fear for the Persian army lest the state learn that the mighty capital of Susa is empty of men.

CHORUS

Fearful I am too that as bands of women cry aloud woe, the
Cissian stronghold will raise a resounding shout responsive
to the beating of breasts,
and that there will be a tearing of fine linen robes.

CHORUS

For all the men-at-arms, those who urge on steeds and those
who march along the plain, have left the city and gone forth,
like bees in a swarm, together with the captain of the host.
They have crossed the headland, projecting into the sea and
common to either continent, through which both shores are
bridged.

CHORUS

And marriage-beds are filled with tears through longing for
husbands;
each Persian woman has sent to the field her warlike and fiery
consort, and now in grief and longing for her beloved lord, is
left forsaken by her mate.

CHORUS

But come, Persians, let us take our place on the steps of this ancient palace and devise some wise and deeply-pondered counsel—for need of this has come upon us—as to how Xerxes our King,

Darius' son, scion of our own race as his forefather's name declares, is faring. Is it the drawing of the bow that has triumphed, or is it the might of the sharp spear-head which has prevailed? Enter Atossa, richly dressed, on a chariot and attended by a numerous retinue

But look, here is a light like the eyes of the god, the mother of our king, my Queen. I bow low before her. It is fitting also that we all address her with words of salutation. The elders prostrate themselves and then rise to their feet. Their leader continues

CHORUS

O Queen, most exalted of Persia's deep-girdled women, venerable mother of Xerxes, wife of Darius, all hail! You were the consort of the Persian's god, and of another god the mother, that is, unless its former good fortune has now forsaken our host.

ATOSSA

For this very reason I have left the gold-decorated palace and the chamber which belongs to Darius and myself, and have come here. My heart, too, is racked with anxiety, and to you, my friends, will I make a disclosure. For I am by no means free from apprehension that wealth, grown great, will, raising a cloud of dust upon the ground, trip up the prosperity which Darius raised not without the favor of some god.

It is for this reason that there is a double concern in my mind: neither to hold in honor vast wealth without men, and that the light of success does not shine, in proportion to their strength, on men without riches. Our wealth, at all events, is ample, but my anxiety is for the light, the salvation of the house, which I regard to be the presence of its lord.

Therefore, since things stand as they do, lend me your counsel in this concern, Persians, my aged trusty servants. For all my hopes of good counsel depend on you.

CHORUS

Be assured, our country's Queen, that you need not twice mention either word or deed regarding that in which it is possible for us to direct you.

For we whom you summon as counsellors in these matters are well disposed towards you and your interests.

ATOSSA

I have been haunted by a multitude of dreams at night since the time when my son, having despatched his army, departed with intent to lay waste the land of the Ionians. But never yet have I beheld so distinct a vision

as that of the last night. This I will describe to you. I dreamed that two women in beautiful clothes, one in Persian garb, the other in Dorian attire, appeared before my eyes; both far more striking in stature than are the women of our time,

flawless in beauty, sisters of the same family. As for the lands in which they dwelt, to one had been assigned by lot the land of Hellas, to the other that of the barbarians. The two, as I imagined it, seemed to provoke each other to a mutual feud, and my son, when he had become aware of this,

attempted to restrain and placate them. He yoked them both to his car and placed the collar-straps upon their necks. The one bore herself proudly in these trappings and kept her mouth obedient to the rein. The other struggled and with her hands

tore apart the harness of the car; then, free of the curb, she dragged it violently along with her and snapped the yoke in two. My son was hurled to the ground and his father Darius stood by his side filled with pity. But Xerxes, when he caught sight of him, tore the garments covering his body.

Such was the vision I beheld in the night. But when I had risen and dipped my hands in the clear-flowing water of a spring, I drew near to an altar with incense in my hand, intending to make an offering of sacrificial cake to the divinities that avert evil, those to whom these rites are due.

But I saw an eagle fleeing for safety to the altar of Phoebus—and out of terror, my friends, I stood speechless. Thereupon I caught sight of a falcon rushing at full speed with outstretched wings and with his talons plucking at the head of the eagle, which did nothing but cower and

yielded its body to his foe. These are the terrors I beheld, terrors too for you to hear. Be assured that if my son should succeed, he would prove to be remarkable indeed, but if he fails, he does not have to answer to the state; if he returns safely, he will hold sway in this land as he did before.

CHORUS

Mother, we would neither alarm you unduly by our words nor raise your hopes too high. If, however, it is something inauspicious that you have seen, visit the gods with supplication and entreat them to avert the evil and to bring to pass what will be beneficial to you, your children, the kingdom, and all else that you hold dear. Next, it is appropriate that you should

offer libations to Earth and the dead; and use auspicious words to address your husband Darius, whom you say you have seen in the night, and ask him to send into the light of day from beneath the earth blessings for you and your son; ask too that the reverse of this may be held in bondage beneath the earth and fade away in gloom. Such is the advice I, relying on my instincts, offer you with kind intent.

According to our interpretation of these portents, the issue will in all respects prove prosperous to you.

ATOSSA

You, its first interpreter, have indeed read the meaning of my dream with goodwill, at least, toward my son and house. May the outcome then prove beneficial! When I return to the palace, I will perform for the gods and my dear ones beneath the earth all those rites which you recommend. Meanwhile, my friends, I would like to learn where Athens is located.

CHORUS

Far from here, to the west where the last rays of our Lord the Sun set.

ATOSSA

Can it then really be that my son had the keen desire to make this city his prey?

CHORUS

Yes, for then all Hellas would be subject to the King.

ATOSSA

Does their army have such a multitude of men?

CHORUS

Yes, it is an army of such magnitude that it has caused great disaster for the Medes.

ATOSSA

And what else have they besides? Do they have sufficient wealth in their homes?

CHORUS

Of silver they possess a veritable fountain, a treasure chest in their soil.

ATOSSA

Is the bow-stretching arrow particularly suited to their hands?

CHORUS

Far from it; they have lances for close fight and shields that serve them for armor.

ATOSSA

And who is set over them as shepherd and is master of their host?

CHORUS

Of no man are they called the slaves or vassals.

ATOSSA

How then can they withstand the attack of an invading foe?

CHORUS

So well as to have destroyed Darius' great and courageous host.

ATOSSA

In truth, your words have given the fathers and mothers of those who are now on their way there dire food for thought.

CHORUS

No, rather I think that you will soon learn the truth of the matter. For here comes one who is beyond a doubt a Persian courier. He bears clear tidings of some issue, be it good or bad.

MESSENGER

O cities of all the land of Asia,
O realm of Persia, and bounteous haven of wealth, at a single stroke all your plenteous prosperity has been shattered, and the flower of the Persians has fallen and perished! Ah, it is a terrible task to be the first to deliver news of disaster. And yet, Persians, I must relate the entirety of the calamity—the whole barbarian host is lost.

CHORUS

Grievous, grievous disaster, strange and cruel. Alas, Persians, weep now that you hear of this calamity.

MESSENGER

Yes, weep, for you hear that the whole army is utterly destroyed; and I myself unexpectedly behold the day of my return.

CHORUS

The life which has been given to us elders is too long, for we have now heard
of this unexpected misery.

MESSENGER

Since I myself was present and did not merely hear what happened from the report of others, I can tell you exactly what kind of disaster was wrought.

CHORUS

Alas, alas! In vain did our vast and variously armed host go forth from the land of Asia against the hostile soil of Hellas.

MESSENGER

Full of the bodies of men who perished by a miserable fate are the shores of Salamis and all the neighboring coasts.

CHORUS

Alas, alas! You say that the bodies of our loved ones, battered by the brine and drenched, are tossing, washed back and forth among the reefs.

MESSENGER

Our bows were of no use, and the whole host has perished, overwhelmed when ship charged on ship.

CHORUS

Raise a doleful and mournful wail for the Persians, the wretched Persians, since they have met with complete and utter ruin. Alas for the destruction of our host!

MESSENGER

O name of Salamis most odious to my ears!
Alas, how I groan when I recall the memory of Athens!

CHORUS

Ah, hateful indeed is Athens to her foes. Now must we remember how many Persian women she has deprived of sons and husbands, lost all in vain.

ATOSSA

Long have I kept silent in my misery, struck with dismay at our disaster; for this calamity is so great that it is not possible to say or even to ask about its extent. Nevertheless mortals must endure affliction when it is heaven-sent.

Compose yourself, and even though you groan at our loss, relate the sum of our disaster and speak out! Who is there that is not dead? Whom of our leaders must we bewail? Who, appointed to wield command, by death left his post empty, without its chief?

MESSENGER

Xerxes himself lives and beholds the light.

ATOSSA

The words you utter bring a great light of joy into my house, and bright day after night wrapped in gloom.

MESSENGER

But Artembares, commander of ten thousand cavalrymen, is being battered now against Silenia's cruel shore. And Dadaces, leader of a thousand men, leapt, struck by a spear, with a nimble bound from his ship. Tenagon, the true-born Bactrians' chieftain, is ranging now around the surf-beaten isle of Ajax. Lilaeus and Arsames, and, third, Argestes, kept buffeting against its rugged shore, whirled around about the island, the breeding-place of doves. Arcteus, too, who lived by the waters of the Egyptian Nile, Adeues, and Pharnuchus of the mighty shield—all these were hurled out of one ship. Matallus of Chrysa, commander of ten thousand,

leader of the Black Cavalry, thirty thousand strong, in death dyed red his thick and shaggy beard, changing its color with a deep crimson stain. Arabus, too, the Magian, perished there, and Bactrian Artabes, a settler now in a rugged land.

Amistris, and Amphistreus, wielder of a painful spear, and brave Ariomardus, whose death brought grief to Sardis, and Seisames the Mysian, and Tharybis, admiral of five times fifty ships, a Lyrnaean by descent, a man of physical beauty, lies dead in a state of misery, no longer attended by good fortune. Syennesis, also, the governor of the Cilicians, foremost in courage, he whose prowess did the foe most harm, found there a glorious death. Such were the leaders about whom I was making my report.

Although our losses were many, I announce but few.

ATOSSA

Alas! The words I hear put the very crown upon our woes; a disgrace to the Persians and cause for shrill lament. But retrace your tale and tell me this clearly:

how great was the number of the Greek ships which gave them confidence enough to go into battle with their armed prows against the Persian army?

MESSENGER

If numbers had been the only factor, be assured that the barbarians would have gained the victory with their fleet. For the whole number of the ships of Hellas amounted to ten times thirty,

and, in addition to these, there was a chosen squadron of ten. But Xerxes, this I know, had under his command a thousand, while those excelling in speed were twice a hundred, and seven more. This is the total of their respective numbers. Do you think that we were simply outnumbered in this contest?

No, it was some divine power that tipped the scale of fortune with unequal weight and thus destroyed our host. The gods preserve the city of the goddess Pallas.

ATOSSA

Is then the city of Athens not yet despoiled?

MESSENGER

No, while her men still live, her ramparts are impregnable.

ATOSSA

But the beginning of the encounter of the fleets, tell me about it. Who began the onset? Was it the Hellenes? Or my son, exulting in the multitude of his ships?

MESSENGER

My Queen, some destructive power or evil spirit, appearing from somewhere or other, caused the beginning of our utter rout.

A Hellene, from the Athenian host, came to your son Xerxes and told this tale: that, when the gloom of black night should set in, the Hellenes would not remain in place, but, springing upon the rowing benches of their ships, would seek, some here, some there,

to preserve their lives by stealthy flight. But Xerxes, when he heard this, comprehending neither the cleverness of the Greek nor that the gods grudged him success, straightway gave all his captains orders to this effect—that, when the sun had ceased to illumine the earth with his beams,

and darkness had covered the region of the sky, they should bring up in a tight group the main body of the fleet, disposed in triple line, to bar the exits and the sounding straits, and station other ships in a circle around the island of Ajax. He gave them a warning too that, should the Hellenes escape an evil doom,

finding by stealth some means of flight for their fleet, it had been decreed that every captain should lose his head. These commands he made with complete confidence of heart, since

he knew not the issue intended by the gods. Our crews then, with no lack of order but with an obedient spirit, prepared their evening meal, while each sailor looped his oar about its thole-pin so that it fitted well. But when the light of the sun had faded and night drew on, each master of an oar and each man versed in arms went on board.

The long galleys cheered each other, line by line; and they held their course as each captain had been ordered, and all through the night the commanders of the fleet kept their whole force cruising to and fro across the strait. Night began to wane,

yet the fleet of the Hellenes in no way attempted to put forth by stealth. When, however, radiant Day with her white horses shone over all the land, a loud cheer like a song of triumph first rang out from the Hellenes, and, at the same instant,

clear from the island crags, an echo returned an answering cry. Terror fell on all the barbarians, balked of their purpose; for then the Hellenes chanted their solemn paean, not as in flight, but as men rushing to the onset with the courage of gallant hearts.

The trumpet with its blast set all their side afire, and instantly, at the word of command, with the even stroke of foaming oars they struck the briny deep. Swiftly they all came clear into view. Their right wing, well marshalled,

led on in orderly advance, next their whole army pressed on against us, and at the same time a loud shout met our ears: On, you men of Hellas! Free your native land. Free your children, your wives, the temples of your fathers' gods, and

the tombs of your ancestors. Now you are fighting for all you have. Then from our side arose in response the mingled clamor of Persian speech, and straightaway the ships dashed together their bronze prows. It was a ship of Hellas

that began the charge and chopped off in its entirety the curved stern of a Phoenician boat. Each captain drove his ship straight against some other ship. At first the stream of the Persian army held its own. When, however, the mass of our ships had been crowded in the narrows, and none could render another aid,

and each crashed its bronze prow against each of its own line, they splintered their whole bank of oars. Then the Hellenic galleys, not heedless of their chance, hemmed them in and battered them on every side. The hulls of our vessels rolled over, and the sea was hidden from our sight,

strewn as it was with wrecks and slaughtered men. The shores and reefs were crowded with our dead, and every ship that formed a part of the barbarian fleet plied its oars in disorderly flight. But, as if our men were tuna or some haul of fish,

the foe kept striking and hacking them with broken oars and fragments of wrecked ships. Groans and shrieks together filled the open sea until the face of black night hid the scene. But as for the the full extent of our disasters, this, even if I had ten days in succession to do so, I could not describe to you.

However, you can be sure that so great a multitude of men never perished in a single day.

ATOSSA

Alas! In truth a vast sea of troubles has burst upon the Persians and the entire barbarian race.

MESSENGER

Be assured of this, not even half of the disaster has as yet been told. A calamity so dreadful as to outweigh these ills twice over befell them.

ATOSSA

But what greater misfortune than this could have befallen them? Speak! What is this other disaster you say came upon our force, sinking the scale to greater weight of ill?

MESSENGER

Those Persians who were in their life's prime, bravest in spirit, pre-eminent for noble birth, and always among the foremost in loyalty to the King himself— these have fallen ignobly by a most inglorious doom.

ATOSSA

Ah, I am truly reduced to misery through this disaster! By what fate was it that you say they met their end?

MESSENGER

There is an island lying before Salamis, a small one and dangerous anchorage for ships; its sea-washed shore is the haunt of Pan, who loves the dance.

There Xerxes dispatched these, his choicest troops, in order that when the Hellenic enemy, wrecked from their ships, should flee in search of safety to the island, they might slaughter their force, an easy prey, and rescue their comrades from the straits of the sea. Grievously did he misjudge the issue. For when some god

had given the glory to the Hellenes in the battle on the sea, on that same day, fencing their bodies in armor of bronze, they leapt from their ships and encircled the whole island, so that our men were at a loss which way to turn. Often they were struck by stones slung from their hands,

and arrows sped from the bow-string kept falling upon them and doing them harm. At last the Hellenes, charging with one shout, struck them and hacked to pieces the limbs of the poor wretches, until they had utterly quenched the life of all.

Xerxes groaned aloud when he beheld the extent of the disaster, for he occupied a seat commanding a clear view of the entire army—a lofty headland by the open sea. Tearing his robes and uttering a loud cry, he straightaway gave orders to his force on land

and dismissed them in disorderly flight. This, besides the one already told, is the disaster you must bewail.

ATOSSA

O hateful divinity, how have you foiled the purpose of the Persians! Cruel was the vengeance which my son brought upon himself for his designs against illustrious Athens; the barbarians

whom Marathon destroyed were not enough. It was in an effort to exact retribution for them that my son has drawn upon himself so great a multitude of woes. But the ships that escaped destruction—tell me about them. Where did you leave them? Can you give a clear report?

MESSENGER

The commanders of the ships which still remained fled with a rush in disorder wherever the wind bore them. As for the survivors of the army, they perished in Boeotian territory, some, faint from thirst, beside a refreshing spring, while some of us, exhausted and panting,

made our way to the land of the Phocians, to Doris and the Melian gulf, where the Spercheus waters the plain with kindly stream. Coming from there, badly in need of food, we received welcome in the Achaean land and the cities of the Thessalians.

There it was that many perished of thirst and hunger, for we were oppressed by both. And we came to the Magnesian land and to the country of the Macedonians, to the ford of the Axios and Bolbe's reedy marsh, and to Mount Pangaeus, in the Edonian land. But on that night the god roused winter before its time and froze the stream of sacred Strymon from shore to shore. Many a man who before that had held the

gods in no esteem, implored them then in supplication, doing obeisance to earth and heaven.

But when our host had made an end of its fervent invocation of the gods, it ventured to pass across the ice-bound stream. And each of us who started on his way before the sun god dispersed his beams, found himself in safety, for the bright orb of the sun with its burning rays

heated the middle section and pierced it with its flames. One after another our men sank in, and fortunate indeed was he who perished soonest. The survivors, after making their way through Thrace with great hardship,

—and few they were indeed—escaped to the safety of the land of their homes; now the city of the Persians may make lament in regret for the beloved youth of the land. What I say is true, yet much remains untold of the ills launched by Heaven upon the Persians. Exit

CHORUS

O unearthly power, source of our cruel distress, with what crushing weight have you fallen upon the whole Persian race!

ATOSSA

How the utter destruction of our host distresses me! O vivid vision of my dreams at night, how clearly did you signify misfortune to me!

And all too lightly did you in turn interpret it. However, since your explanation determined thus, first of all I wish to offer prayers to the gods, and then I will return after I have brought from the palace a sacrificial cake as a gift to Earth and the dead.

I know indeed that it is for what cannot be undone, yet I do this in the hope that something more auspicious may come to pass in the future. But you should confer faithfully with the faithful counsellors in view of what has befallen. And as for my son, if he should come here before I return, comfort him and escort him to the palace, so that he will not inflict on himself some further ill to crown those already ours.
Exit

CHORUS

O sovereign Zeus, by destroying the army of the haughty and multitudinous Persians,
you have shrouded in the gloom of grief the city of Susa and of Agbatana! Many a woman, who has a share in this sorrow, tears her veil with tender hands
and moistens with drenching tears the robe covering her bosom. And the Persian wives, indulging in soft wailing through longing to behold their lords and abandoning the daintily wrought coverlets of their couches, the delight of their youth,
mourn with complainings that know no end. So I too sustain the truly woeful fate of those who are gone.

CHORUS

For now in truth the whole land of Asia, decimated, moans: Xerxes led forth (woe!), Xerxes laid low (woe!), Xerxes disposed all things imprudently with his sea-going vessels. Why then was Darius
in his time so unscathed by disaster, he who was ruler of archers, to the men of Susa a beloved leader?

CHORUS

For infantry and seamen both, the ships, dark-eyed and linen-winged,
led forth (woe!), the ships laid them low (woe!), the ships, under the deadly impact of the foe and by the hands of Ionians. The King himself, as we learn, has barely made his escape over the wintry paths which traverse the plains of Thrace.

CHORUS

And they who were first to meet their doom (alas!), left behind by dire necessity (alas!),
are swept along the Cychrean strand (woe!). Groan and gnash your teeth; in grievous strain shout forth our woes till they reach the heavens (alas!), raise high
your wailing clamor in cries of misery.

CHORUS

Lacerated by the swirling waters (alas!) they are gnawed (alas!) by the voiceless children of the undefiled sea (alas!). The home, bereaved of his presence, laments its head;
and parents, bereft of their children, in their old age bewail their heaven-sent woes (alas!), now that they learn the full measure of their afflictions.

CHORUS

Not now for long will those who dwell throughout the
length and breadth of Asia
abide under the sway of the Persians, nor will they pay further
tribute at the compulsion of their lord, nor will they prostrate
themselves to the earth and do him reverence;
for the royal power has perished utterly.
No longer will men keep a curb upon their tongues; for the
people are set free to utter their thoughts at will, now that the
yoke of power has been broken.
The blood-stained soil of Ajax' sea-washed isle holds all that
once was Persia.

Enter Atossa

ATOSSA

My friends, whoever has experience of misery knows that
when a sea
of troubles comes upon mortal men, they view all things with
alarm; but when fortune flows with prosperous tide, they believe
that this same fortune will forever bring them success.
Now in my case everything seems full of dread; before my
eyes appears the enmity of the gods,
and in my ears there rings a sound that has no note of joy;
such is my consternation at the evil tidings which terrify my
soul. It is for this reason that I have come here from the palace
once again, without my chariot and my former pomp, and
bring, as propitiatory libations for the father of my son,

offerings that soothe the dead, both white milk, pleasant to drink, from an unblemished cow, and bright honey, distillation wrought from blossoms by the bee, together with lustral water from a virgin spring;

and from a rustic source, this unmixed draught, the quickening juice of an ancient vine. Here too is the fragrant fruit of the pale-green olive that lives the entirety of its life in luxuriant foliage; and garlanded flowers, produce of the bounteous earth. But come, my friends,

chant solemn songs as I make these libations to the dead, and summon forth the divine spirit of Darius, while I convey, in honor of the gods, these offerings for the earth to drink.

CHORUS

Royal lady, august queen of the Persians, pour these libations down to the chambers of the earth,

while we, in solemn chant, beseech the guides of the dead beneath the earth to be gracious to our prayers. O holy divinities of the nether world, Earth and Hermes, and you, Lord of the dead,

send up to the light the spirit from below; for if, beyond our prayers, he knows any further remedy for our distress, he alone of mortals can declare how to bring it to accomplishment.

CHORUS

Does our sainted and godlike king hear me as I utter,
in obscure barbaric speech, my dismal and dolorous cries? Or
must I shout aloud the utter misery of my anguish so that it
pierces the earth? Does he hear me from below?

CHORUS

O Earth, and you other rulers of those who dwell in the
nether world, ensure, I implore, that the glorious spirit, the
god of the Persians, whom Susa bore, may quit his abode.
Send to the upper world him the likes of whom the Persian
earth has never entombed.

CHORUS

Beloved indeed was the hero, beloved is his burial mound;
beloved are the qualities that lie buried there. O Aidoneus,
Aidoneus, who convey shades to the upper air, permit our
divine lord Darius to come forth!

CHORUS

For since he did not ever cause the destruction of his people
by senseless and ruinous wars, he bore the name of divine
counsellor
to the Persians; and a divine counsellor he was, since he
guided his people well.

CHORUS

King, our king of old, come forth, draw near! Rise to the
barrow's topmost point,
lift your saffron-dyed sandal, display the crest of your royal
tiara! Come forth, O blameless father Darius.

CHORUS

That you may hear
pitiable and unheard-of sorrows, O Lord of our lord, appear!
For a gloom, like that of Styx, hovers over us, since all the
youth of the land
is now utterly destroyed. Come forth, O blameless father
Darius!

CHORUS

Alas, alas! You whose death your friends bewailed with bitter
tears,
why, my king, my king, why is it that our land has lost all its
three-tiered galleys,
ships that are no more, no more?

The ghost of Darius rises from his tomb

GHOST OF DARIUS

O most faithful of the faithful, comrades of my youth, aged Persians, what is it that is troubling the state? The earth groans and is furrowed by the stamp of men. As I behold my wife by my tomb,

I feel alarm, and I accept her libations in kindly mood; while you, standing near my tomb, make lament, and with shrill cries that summon the spirits of the dead, invoke me piteously. Not easy is the path out of the tomb, for this reason above all, that the gods beneath the earth

are readier to seize than to release. Nevertheless, since I have obtained dominion among them, I have come. But make haste, so that I may not incur blame regarding the time of my sojourn. What is this unexpected ill that weighs the Persians down?

CHORUS

I shrink in awe from gazing upon you.

I shrink in awe from speaking in your presence by reason of my former dread of you.

DARIUS

Since, in compliance with your moanings, I have come from the world below, lay aside your awe of me; make your tale not long, but brief; speak out and deliver your story in its entirety.

CHORUS

I fear to do your bidding; I fear to speak in your presence and deliver to those I love news hard to utter.

DARIUS

Since dread long ingrained in your mind restrains you,
cease, noble woman, venerable partner of my bed, from your
tears and laments, speak to me with all frankness. Afflictions
ordained for human life must, we know, befall mankind. For
many calamities from the sea, many from the land, arise to
mortal men if their span of life is extended far.

ATOSSA

O you who in prosperity surpassed all mortal men by your
happy destiny,
since, so long as you gazed upon the beams of the sun, you
lived a life of felicity, envied of all, in Persian eyes a god, so
now too I consider you fortunate in that you died before you
beheld the depth of our calamities. The whole tale, O Darius,
you will hear in brief space of time: the power of Persia is
ruined almost utterly.

DARIUS

How did it happen? Did some stroke of pestilence or fac-
tional strife come upon the State?

ATOSSA

Neither; but near Athens our whole host has been brought
to ruin.

DARIUS

Tell me, what son of mine led our army there?

ATOSSA

Impetuous Xerxes, depopulating the whole surface of the continent.

DARIUS

Was it by land or sea that he made this mad expedition, the reckless man?

ATOSSA

By both. There was a twofold front of double armies.

DARIUS

But how was it that so vast a land force won a passage to the farther shore?

ATOSSA

By a clever device he yoked the Hellespont so as to gain a passage.

DARIUS

What! Did he succeed in closing the mighty Bosphorus?

ATOSSA

Yes indeed. One of the divine powers must have assisted him in his purpose.

DARIUS

Alas! Some mighty power came upon him so that he was not able to think clearly.

ATOSSA

Yes, since we can see the outcome, what ruin he wrought.

DARIUS

And how then did they fare that you now lament them?

ATOSSA

Disaster to the naval force brought ruin to the force on land.

DARIUS

And did the whole army utterly perish by the spear?

ATOSSA

Yes, and it is for this reason that the whole city of Susa groans at its desolation.

DARIUS

Alas for the loss of our warriors' valiant force and defence!

ATOSSA

And the host of the Bactrians is lost, wholly destroyed: not even an old man is left.

DARIUS

Unhappy man, since he has brought to ruin the youth of our allies.

ATOSSA

But Xerxes, alone and forlorn, with scanty train, they say—

DARIUS

Met his end, how, tell me, and where? Of his safety is there any hope?

ATOSSA

To his joy he reached the bridge yoking the two continents.

DARIUS

And reached our continent in safety? Is this certain?

ATOSSA

Yes, a proven report establishes this. Doubt there is none.

DARIUS

Alas! The fulfilment of the oracles has indeed come swiftly, and it is my son upon whom

Zeus has caused their issue to descend. Yet I was confident that, only after long lapse of time, the gods would in some way bring them to accomplishment; nevertheless, when man hastens to his own undoing, the god too participates with him. A fountain of misfortune has now, I think, been discovered for all I love. A son of mine it was who, in his ignorance, brought these things to pass through youthful recklessness; for he conceived the hope that he could by shackles, as if it were a slave, restrain the current of the sacred Hellespont, the Bosphorus, a stream divine; he set himself to fashion a roadway of a new type, and, by casting upon it hammer-wrought fetters, made a spacious causeway for his mighty host. Mortal though he was, he thought in his folly that he would gain the mastery of all the gods,

yes, even over Poseidon. Must this not have been a disease of the soul that possessed my son? I fear that the plenteous treasure amassed by my toil may become the prey of the spoiler.

ATOSSA

This lesson impetuous Xerxes learned through conversation with evil men. For they kept telling him that, whereas you won plentiful treasure for your children by your spear, he, on his part, through lack of manly spirit, played the warrior at home and did not increase his father's wealth. Hearing such taunts many a time from evil counsellors, he planned this expedition and army against Hellas.

DARIUS

Therefore a calamity
dreadful and unforgettable has been caused by him, a desolating calamity such as never before befell this city of Susa since our Lord Zeus first ordained that one ruler should bear sway over all Asia with its flocks and wield the sceptre of its government.

For Medus was first to be the leader of its host; and another, his son, completed his work since wisdom ruled his spirit. Third, after him, Cyrus, blessed in good fortune, came to the throne and established peace for all his people.

The Lydians and Phrygians he won to his rule, and the whole of Ionia he subdued by force; for he won the favor of the gods through his right-mindedness. Fourth in succession, the son of Cyrus ruled the host. Fifth in the list, Mardus came to power, a disgrace to his native land

and to the ancient throne; but he was slain in his palace by the guile of noble Artaphrenes, with the help of friends whose duty this was. Sixth came Maraphis, and seventh Artaphrenes. And I in turn attained the lot I desired, and many a campaign I made with a valiant force; but disaster so dire as this I brought not upon the state. Yet Xerxes my son, youth that he is, has the mind of youth and does not remember my injunctions. Be sure of this, my age-mates: all of us who have held this sovereign power cannot be shown to have wrought ruin as great as this.

CHORUS

What then, O king Darius? What is the intention of your words? How, after this reverse, may we, the people of Persia, best prosper in time to come?

DARIUS

If you do not take the field against the Hellenes' land, even if the forces of the Medes outnumber theirs. The land itself is their ally.

CHORUS

What do you mean? In what way their ally?

DARIUS

It wastes with famine an enemy force which is too large.

CHORUS

But we will dispatch a force of select and easily managed troops.

DARIUS

Not even the host which now remains in Hellas will be able to return to safety.

CHORUS

How is that? Will not the whole barbarian army cross from Europe over the Hellespont?

DARIUS

Few indeed out of many, if it is right to put any faith in the oracles of Heaven, with regard to what has just been brought to pass; for they are fulfilled, not just some, while others fail. And if this is truth, it is through persuasion of vain hopes that he is leaving behind a body of picked troops.

They are now lingering where the plain is watered by the stream of Asopus which nourishes Boeotia's fields. Here they will meet their crowning disaster in requital for their presumptuous pride and impious thoughts. For, on reaching the land of Hellas,

restrained by no religious awe, they ravaged the images of the gods and set fire to their temples. Altars have been destroyed, statues of the gods have been thrown from their bases in utter ruin and confusion. Therefore, since they wrought such evil, evil they suffer in no less measure; and other evils are still in store:

the spring of their woes is not yet quenched, but it still wells forth. For so great will be the mass of clotted gore spilled by the Dorian lance upon Plataean soil that heaps of dead will reveal, even to the third generation, a voiceless record for the eyes of men

that mortal man should not vaunt himself excessively. For presumptuous pride, when it has matured, bears as its fruit a crop of calamity, from which it reaps an abundant harvest of tears. Bear in mind that such are the penalties for deeds like these, and hold Athens and Hellas in your memory. Let no one of you,

through disdain of present fortune and lust for more, squander his abundant wealth. Zeus, in truth, is a chastiser of overweening pride and corrects with heavy hand. Therefore, now that my son has been warned to be prudent by the voice of God,

instruct him with admonitions of reason to cease from drawing the punishment of Heaven on himself by his vaunting rashness. And as for you, beloved and venerable mother of Xerxes, withdraw to the palace and bring from there clothing which is suitable for him, and prepare to meet your son. For

through grief at his misfortunes, the embroidered apparel which he was wearing has been torn into tattered shreds. Soothe him with words of kindness; for it is to your voice alone, I know, that he will listen. As for me, I depart to the darkness beneath the earth.

Farewell, Elders, and despite your troubles, rejoice while each day is yours; for wealth does not profit the dead at all. The ghost of Darius descends

CHORUS

I grieve as I hear the many misfortunes that are now, and are yet to be, the lot of the barbarians.

ATOSSA

O God! How much grief assails me! But most of all this sorrow wounds me, to hear of the shameful clothes which are now worn by my son. But I will depart, and when I have brought appropriate garments from the palace, I will make attempt to meet my son; for I will not forsake him whom I love so well in his affliction. Exit

CHORUS

Oh yes, it was in truth a glorious and good life under civil government that we enjoyed so long as our aged and all-powerful king, who did no wrong and did not favor war, god-like Darius, ruled the realm.

CHORUS

In the first place we showed to the world armies worthy of our fame, and civil institutions, like towers in strength, regulated all the state; and our return from war brought back our men, unworn and unsuffering, to happy homes.

CHORUS

And what a number of cities he captured!—without crossing the stream of Halys or even stirring from his own hearth: such as the Acheloancities on the Strymonian sea which is located beside the Thracian settlements.

CHORUS

And those outside the lake, the cities on the mainland, surrounded with a rampart, obeyed him as their king; those, too, that boast to be on both sides of the broad Hellespont and Propontis, deeply-recessed, and the outlet of Pontus.

CHORUS

The sea-washed islands, also, off the projecting arm of the sea, lying close to this land of ours, such as Lesbos, and olive-planted Samos, Chios and Paros, Naxos, Mykonos, and Andros which lies adjacent to Tenos.

CHORUS

And he held under his sway the sea-girt islands midway between the continents, Lemnos, and the settlement of Icarus, and Rhodes, and Cnidos, and the Cyprian cities Paphos, Soli, and Salamis, whose mother-city is now the cause of our lament.

CHORUS

And the rich and populous cities of the Hellenes in the Ionian heritage
he controlled by his own will; and at his command he had an
unwearied strength of men-at-arms and of allies from every
nation. But now,
worsted completely in war through disasters on the sea, we
endure this change of fortune no doubt from the hand of
god.

Enter Xerxes in tattered robes, and attended by a scanty retinue

XERXES

Alas, wretched am I who have met this cruel doom
which did not give the faintest sign of its coming! In what savage
mood has Fortune trampled upon the Persian race? What
misery is yet in store for me, unhappy wretch? The strength
of my limbs is loosened as I look upon this aged group of citizens.

Ah, Zeus, I wish that the doom of death had buried me, too,
together with the men who have been laid low!

CHORUS

Alas, my king, for our noble army, for the high honor of Persia's rule,

and for the splendor of the men now cut off by Fate! The land bewails her native youth, slaughtered for Xerxes, who has crowded Hades with Persian slain.

Many warriors, masters of the bow, our country's pride, a great multitude of men, have perished. Alas, alas, for our trusty defence! The land of Asia, the leading power of the earth,

has piteously, yes piteously, been bowed to her knees.

XERXES

Behold me, alas, a fitting subject for lamentation, born a source of ruin to my race and fatherland.

CHORUS

As a greeting for your return home I will lift up an ill-omened cry of woe, the voice, versed in lamentation, of a Mariandy-nian mourner,

a wail attended by many a tear.

XERXES

Utter a strain of lamentation, plaintive and discordant. For Fortune has now veered and turned against me.

CHORUS

I will indeed utter the song of lamentation
in commemoration of your sufferings and of our strongly-
manned ships, buffeted by waves; the plaintive strain of our
land which mourns its sons. And I will cry aloud in lamenta-
tion, shedding many a tear.

XERXES

Yes, for the Ionian naval force, turning the tide of battle,
swept them away, the Ionian host, ravaging the dark sea and
the shore of doom.

CHORUS

Woe! woe! cry aloud, learn about the whole disaster. Where
is the rest of the multitude of your comrades? Where are
those who stood by your side, such as Pharandaces, Susas,
Pelagon, Dotamas, and
Agdabatas, Psammis, and Susiscanes of Agbatana?

XERXES

By the shores of Salamis, dashing against its rugged shore,
I left them, fallen in death from a Tyrian ship.

CHORUS

Woe! woe! cry aloud! Where is your beloved Pharnuchus,
and the courageous Ariomardus? Where is prince Seualces,
or Lilaëus of noble lineage, Memphis, Tharybis and Masis-
tras, Artembares and Hystaechmas? This I ask you.

XERXES

Woe, woe is me!

They beheld ancient and hateful Athens and with one convulsive struggle (alas, alas !) poor wretches, they lie gasping on the shore.

CHORUS

Did you really lose your trusty eyethere, that which counted tens upon tens of thousands of the Persians, Batanochus' son Alpistus . . . son of Sesames, Megabates' son, Parthos and mighty Oebares, did you leave these behind?

Alas, alas, the unhappy men! You speak of woe, surpassing woe, for noble Persians.

XERXES

In truth you stir yearning in me for my gallant comrades when you tell me of woe, surpassing woe, hateful and unforgettable. The heart within me cries out aloud for the wretched ones.

CHORUS

And yet there are others too whom we miss: Xanthis, commander of a myriad Mardian men, and warlike Anchares, Diaexis, too, and Arsaces, captains of the horse, Cegdadatas and Lythimnas, and Tolmus, insatiate in war. I marvel, that they do not follow behind around your wheeled tent.

XERXES

Gone are they who were leaders of the host.

CHORUS

Gone, alas, ingloriously.

XERXES

Alas, alas!

CHORUS

Alas, alas, you powers divine, you brought ruin upon us, unexpected, unmistakable to see, as is the glance of calamity.

XERXES

We have been stricken by misfortune such as will endure for ages.

CHORUS

We have been stricken; it is abundantly clear.

XERXES

By strange woe, strange woe!

CHORUS

It was with bad luck that we encountered Ionia's mariners.
Unfortunate in war, indeed, is Persia's race.

XERXES

How true it is. In the loss of so great an army
I have indeed been dealt a blow, wretched as I am.

CHORUS

What that belonged to Persia, unfortunate one, has not been destroyed?

XERXES

Do you see this remnant of my royal robe?

CHORUS

Yes, I do indeed.

XERXES

And this quiver—

CHORUS

What is this you say has been saved?

XERXES

Treasury for shafts?

CHORUS

Truly a small remnant from an ample store.

XERXES

We have been deprived of defenders.

CHORUS

Ionia's people shrink not from the spear.

XERXES

They are a war-like people. I have lived to behold a calamity I never expected.

CHORUS

Are you speaking of the routed multitude which manned
your ships?

XERXES

And I rent my robe at the disastrous event.

CHORUS

Alas, alas!

XERXES

No, far worse than alas.

CHORUS

Yes, for twofold and threefold—

XERXES

Pain to us, but exultation to our enemies

CHORUS

Yes, and our strength has been maimed.

XERXES

I am stripped of my escort.

CHORUS

By the disasters of your comrades upon the sea.

XERXES

Weep, weep over our calamity, and depart to your homes.

CHORUS

Alas, alas, woe, woe!

XERXES

Cry aloud now in response to me.

CHORUS

A wretched offering from the wretched to the wretched.

XERXES

Cry out, tuning your strain to mine.

CHORUS

Oh, oh! That which has happened is grievous indeed.

Alas, for I too share in your sorrow.

XERXES

Strike, strike, and groan for my sake.

CHORUS

I weep in lamentation!

XERXES

Now cry aloud in response to me.

CHORUS

This care, my lord, is mine.

XERXES

Lift up your voice now in lamentation.

CHORUS

Oh, oh! And with our wailing, alas, will be mingled bruising blows and shrieks of pain.

XERXES

Beat your breast too, and raise the Mysian wail.

CHORUS

Anguish, anguish!

XERXES

And tear, I beg of you, the white hair from your beard.

CHORUS

With clenched nails, with clenched nails, with loud wailing.

XERXES

And utter shrill cries.

CHORUS

This too I will do.

XERXES

And with your fingers tear the robe which drapes you.

CHORUS

Anguish, anguish!

XERXES

Pluck out your locks, and lament our host.

CHORUS

With clenched nails, with clenched nails, with loud wailing.

XERXES

Let tears moisten your eyes.

CHORUS

I am drenched with tears.

XERXES

Cry aloud now in response to me.

CHORUS

Alas, alas!

XERXES

With sounds of wailing go to your homes.

CHORUS

Alas, alas!

XERXES

Alas! through the city.

CHORUS

Alas, indeed!

XERXES

Pour forth your wails as you move along with soft steps.

CHORUS

Alas, alas, O Persian land, grievous now to walk upon!

XERXES

Ah me!

Those that perished in three-tiered galleys, ah me!

CHORUS

I will escort you with dismal sounds of woe. Exeunt omnes