

Oedipus at Colonus,
Sophocles 497 /6 - 405B.C.

*CHORUS(Str. 1) Thou hast come to a steed-famed land for rest,
O stranger worn with toil, To a land of all lands the goodliest
Colonus' glistening soil.
'Tis the haunt of the clear-voiced nightingale,
Who hid in her bower, among
The wine-dark ivy that wreathes the vale,
Trilleth her ceaseless song;
And she loves, where the clustering berries nod
O'er a sunless, windless glade,
The spot by no mortal footstep trod,
The pleasance kept for the Bacchic god,
Where he holds each night his revels wild
With the nymphs who fostered the lusty child.(Ant. 1)
And fed each morn by the pearly dew The starred narcissi shine,
And a wreath with the crocus' golden hue
For the Mother and Daughter twine.
And never the sleepless fountains cease
That feed Cephisus' stream,
But they swell earth's bosom with quick increase,
And their wave hath a crystal gleam.
And the Muses' quire will never disdain
To visit this heaven-favored plain,
Nor the Cyprian queen of the golden rein.(Str. 2)
And here there grows, unpruned, untamed, Terror to foemen's spear,
A tree in Asian soil unnamed, By Pelops' Dorian isle unclaimed,
Self-nurtured year by year;
'Tis the grey-leaved olive that feeds our boys;
Nor youth nor withering age destroys
The plant that the Olive Planter tends
And the Grey-eyed Goddess herself defends.(Ant. 2)
Yet another gift, of all gifts the most
Prized by our fatherland, we boast--
The might of the horse, the might of the sea;
Our fame, Poseidon, we owe to thee, Son of Kronos, our king divine,
Who in these highways first didst fit
For the mouth of horses the iron bit;*

*Thou too hast taught us to fashion meet
For the arm of the rower the oar-blade fleet,
Swift as the Nereids' hundred feet As they dance along the brine.*

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*CHORUS(Str.)Who craves excess of days, Scorning the common span
Of life, I judge that manA giddy wight who walks in folly's ways.
For the long years heap up a grievous load,
Scant pleasures, heavier pains, Till not one joy remains
For him who lingers on life's weary road And come it slow or fast,
One doom of fate Doth all await,
For dance and marriage bell, The dirge and funeral knell.
Death the deliverer freeth all at last.*

*(Ant. 2)Now Victory to Thebes returns again
And smiles upon her chariot-circled plain.
Now let feast and festal should Memories of war blot out.
Let us to the temples throng,
Dance and sing the live night long.
God of Thebes, lead thou the round.
Bacchus, shaker of the ground! Let us end our revels here;
Lo! Creon our new lord draws near,
Crowned by this strange chance, our king.
What, I marvel, pondering? Why this summons? Wherefore call
Us, his elders, one and all, Bidding us with him debate,
On some grave concern of State?[Enter CREON]*

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*(Ant. 2)Brightest of all the orbs that breathe forth light,
Authentic son of Zeus, immortal king,Leader of all the voices of the night,
Come, and thy train of Thyiads with thee bring, Thy maddened rout
Who dance before thee all night long, and shout, Thy handmaids we,
Evoe, Evoe![Enter MESSENGER]*

Translation by F. Storr