

The Oresteia of Aeschylus

Eumenides

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Eumenides

Dramatis Personae

Priestess of Apollo

Apollo

Hermes (silent)

Ghost of Clytemnestra

Orestes

Athena

Chorus of Eumenides (Furies)

Second Chorus (Women of Athens)

Jurymen, Herald, citizens of Athens (silent parts)

Priestess

First in my prayer I honour the goddess who, first of all
the gods, herself gave prophecy, yes, Gaia; then Themis,
her daughter, who, according to the myth, succeeded to
the seat of prophecy; and in the third allotment, no
force put forth, her sister willing, Phoebe took her place,
another child of Earth and yet another of the Titan breed.
And she it was that gave the privilege to Apollo as
a birthday gift, who thereby took himself the name of Phoebus.
Accordingly, he left behind the seas of Delos and its reefs
to find safe landfall on the busy coasts of Attica and come
to this place to make his home beneath Parnassus' mount. 10
The children of Hephaestus were his escort then, who did
him mighty honour; and they it was that made the road
for him, transformed this savage land and made it tame.
The people gave him honours when he came, along
with Delphus, lord and guiding master of the land.
And Zeus imbued his godly spirit with the skills
of prophecy and placed him fourth upon the seer's chair.
For Loxias the mantic god is himself the very son of Zeus.
These are the gods who figure in the prologue to my prayer. 20
I honour too Athena in my speech, whose statue stands
before the temple door, also the Nymphs of the hollow crags,
numinous Corycian haunt of the gods and wheeling birds.
Bromios also has his place, lest I forget, from where
the god once marshalled and led out his Bacchic hordes,
ensnaring Pentheus in his fate, as if he were a hunted hare.
I have invoked also the springs of Pleistus and Poseidon's
might, but last, and highest of all, the name of Zeus;
and now I go to sit in prophecy upon the sacred throne.
And may they grant that I might make by far the best 30
of all the entrances that I have ever made into this place.
If any Greeks are here, let them come in, according to
the custom and the lot and I will speak, as guided by the god.

Things so fearful to speak of, so fearful, too, to look upon
that I have lost all strength, cannot walk upright more,
have forced me from the halls of Loxias!
I crawl upon my hands, my feet have lost their nimbleness.
No more than a child is an old woman stricken with fear.
I made my quiet way to the nook where the wreathes

your way across the trodden vastness of the earth, beyond
 the sea itself and all the island cities it surrounds.
 Do not too soon grow weary as you labour on your way,
 but coming to Athene's citadel, stop there and take
 in your embrace her ancient image carved in wood. 80
 That is the place where we will find the judges for
 this matter, and we shall have beguiling argument
 and strategy to win your full acquittal in this case.
 For I it was persuaded you to end your mother's life.
 Take care your senses are not overwhelmed with fear.
 And you my brother, Hermes, sibling of a single sire,
 watch over him, be true to your appointed task 90
 as guide, so named, escort this man who is my suppliant.
 Lord Zeus himself respects the rights of refugees,
 of those that go among men well protected by you.

Ghost of Clytemnestra

I pray you, slumber on! Hey there! What use asleep?
 It is because of you that I am so despised among
 the others who are dead - insults from those I killed
 are constant in this underworld of withered death,
 my place of shameful wandering. I say to you that I
 have suffered blame severely at their hands;
 and at the hands of nearest kin I suffered death - 100
 and not one of the gods feels rage on my behalf,
 or at my slaughter at the hands of matricides.
 Behold each one of you these wounds of mine,
 [for even in sleep the heart's darkness is lit by the eyes,
 although the fate of mortal men is hidden in the day.]
 Indeed my hands have gorged your lapping tongues
 with offerings propitiate of drink, not poured from wine,
 while on the flaming hearth I sacrificed a feast for you,
 nocturnal, holy, in the time not shared by other gods.
 And all of this I see is effort trampled underfoot. 110
 And he is gone, escaped and lightly running like
 some fawn, and that from out the nets we set for him.
 He has sprung clear away and mocks you mightily.
 Hear me! For what I say concerns my very soul,
 and understand, you goddesses that live beneath
 the earth, that Clytemnestra's ghost makes this appeal.

Chorus

- (The Chorus whimpers and moans.)
- Cl. I pray you, whimper on! The man gone, fled ever farther away.
He has his friends to help him, friends I do not share.
- Ch. (The Chorus whimpers and moans.) 120
- Cl. You have fallen too deeply asleep, no longer pity my plight.
The man, his mother's murderer, yes mine, is gone.
- Ch. (The Chorus whimpers and moans.)
- Cl. You moan and groan in your sleep. Awaken! Quickly!
What is your fated duty save to manufacture ill?
- Ch. (The Chorus whimpers and moans.)
- Cl. Sleep and labour have conspired successfully
to sap the anger from this dreadful snake.
- Ch. (The Chorus redouble the shrillness of their cries.)
- Cl. Seize him, seize him, seize him, seize him! Hearken! 130
This quarry is a figment of your dreams, yet you give tongue
just like a dog that is set in his mind on his work.
What are you doing? Up! Let not your labours conquer you,
nor slacken your resolve in sleep and so forget my grief.
Scourge your heart with taunts deserved!
These will serve to spur your conscience.
Vomit bloodshot breath upon him,
wither him with blasts of inward fire,
exhaust him, run him down once more to earth.
- Ch. Awaken all, wake each one up, you, you and her and I! 140
Asleep? Get up, kick off your cloak of sleep,
Were these our dreams mere empty premonition?
- [str.a Howl, howl and howl again! Loved ones, we are
betrayed (yes, much betrayed, our work in vain)
unspeakably betrayed, oh howl!
Insufferably wronged!
He has fallen from our nets, the beast is gone.
Succumbing to sleep I have lost our prey.
- [ant. A Ah, son of Zeus, you ever were the thief! 150
And you have ridden down our aged immortality,
in honouring the suppliant, a godless man,
his mother's bitter labour pain.
And you, a god, have snatched away the matricide.
How can you justify these things?

Ch. Great lord Apollo, listen also in your turn.
 You are yourself no mere accessory to this crime,
 but yours alone the deed and so the total guilt. 200

Ap. How so? So much and no more extend your explanation.

Ch. Yours was the word to prompt the stranger's matricide.

Ap. Mine was the word to prompt a father's retribution.

Ch. You offered to host a bloodstained murderer.

Ap. I sent him to this shrine to come as suppliant.

Ch. And do you dare to heap abuse upon this company?

Ap. Because you are not fit to come and go inside this house.

Ch. This office has been prescribed for us -

Ap. What is this office? Come, boast about your noble privilege!

Ch. The hounding from home of those who do their mothers harm. 210

Ap. And what of a woman who murders her man?

Ch. That is not the same as the spilling of kindred blood.

Ap. You count as insubstantial and quite worthless then
 the marriage rites and pledges sworn by Hera and by Zeus?
 So Aphrodite too is thrown aside, who is the source of things
 most dear to mortals, is dishonoured by your argument.
 For the marriage bed, apportioned to a man and wife,
 has much more moment than any legally binding oath.
 If you relax your quest when such as these do kill
 each other, do not punish them nor even grimly scrutinize 220
 their crime, then I deny the justice of your hounding of
 Orestes. A mother's rights I know you take too much
 to heart, a father's clearly are of less concern to you.
 However, Pallas herself will oversee the hearing of this case.

Ch. There is no way in which I shall ever let this man go free.

Ap. Pursue him then and store up greater trouble for yourself.

Ch. Do not curtail in argument the privileges which are mine.

Ap. I would not even take your privileges as a gift,

Ch. No, for by the throne of Zeus at least you are reputed great;
 but, since it is a mother's blood that drives me, I 230
 will seek for what is just and hunt this fellow down.

Ap. I will, however, guard the suppliant and rescue him;
 for among men and gods alike the anger of the suppliant
 is terrible indeed, should one betray him willingly.

ties of hospitality, or parents near and dear.
For Hades is huge, calls men to reckonings
within the earth,
scrutinising all with watchful diligence.

Or. From bitter experience of my own I know, have learned
the many times when it is right to speak and equally
when to hold one's tongue, but in this matter I now
have been advised to speak by a teacher who is wise;
Blood fades and the stain upon my hand grows faint, 280
pollution born of matricide is being washed away.
For at the hearth of Phoebus, while still fresh, the stain
was driven out and cleansed with sacrifice of swine.
It would take me long to tell the story from the start
of how many men I've met to whom I've caused no harm.
[Time in its lengthy passage heals and cleanses all.]
And now from mouth untainted let me call in piety
upon the mistress of this land of Athens, call on her
to be my saviour; she will gain as her reward, no force
of arms expended, both myself and the Argive land 290
and men as trusted friends, just allies evermore.
Now whether her martial foot is set upon the sands
of Libya, or by the surge and lift of Triton's flood
she helps her friends in war or, bold as any mortal
hero, she surveys the flat Phlegraean plain, why let
her come - however far away, a goddess hears -
that she might gain for me acquittal in this case.

Ch. Neither Apollo nor Athena's strength might serve
to save you, from your fate, abandoned as you are
and lonely, and from losing any sense of happiness,
a bloodless shadow only, tit-bit for the nether gods.
Do you not even deign reply, but merely splutter words,
although you are already fatted and prepared for me?
Your living flesh will feast me prior to the ritual
butchery. Hear now this song to bind your very soul.

Let us join in the dance, for we
have decided to show
off our muse in its horror,
and tell of the duties apportioned 310
our band among men.

We think of ourselves as honest and just.
Upon the man who can show his hands free of guilt
there steals no malice born of us,
he shall go through his life unscathed.
But the guilty ones, like this man here,
that seek to hide their bloodied hands,
we appear as their victims' witnesses,
and stand at last before the culprit, avengers
of the blood that spilled.

320

[str. a. Mother that gave me birth, yes
mother Night, spirit of vengeance
among both the quick and the dead,
hear me, I pray. For Leto's adolescent son
dishonours me, has robbed me
of this quarry, sacrifice well set
to cleanse a mother's death.

[ep hymn. a. And when he has been sacrificed,
this song above his corpse to bring insanity,
to bring destruction of the mind,
the Furies' hymn,
no lyre, to wither in chains
the soul of mortal man.

330

[ant. a. Fate spun this our fatal task,
allotted it to us to be
our own in perpetuity:
pursuit of those of mortal men
on whom the guilt
of heinous crime has chanced
to fall until the underworld, but
even then the dead are not entirely free.

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[ep hymn. b. And when he has been sacrificed,
this song above his corpse to bring insanity,
to bring destruction of the mind,
the Furies' hymn,
no lyre, to wither in chains
the soul of mortal man.

[str. d. He will keep! We are skilled
and powerful, mindful of
the evil done, stern we are
and hard for men to deviate,
following our trade, despised,
outcasts of gods and other,
in the sunless humid steeps,
where blind and sighted
stumble both as one.

[ant. d. Who does not fear me now,
which man has never feared 390
on hearing of my role,
established by fate, conceded
absolute by gods? Still I keep
my ancient privilege, am not
without respect,
although my place beneath
the ground is sunless, dark.

Athena From far away I heard the shouts and summoning cry,
from Scamander's bank, where I had taken there
possession of the land allotted as choice gift
to Theseus' sons for all eternity, our share
substantial of the spoils of war, won by the spear 400
and granted by the leading warriors of the Argive host.
From there I came in haste, my feet unwearied, borne
along wingless in the rustle and whirl of the Aegis' fold.
But what is this strange gathering I see below?
It's not that I'm afraid, but the spectacle is strange
indeed. Who are you? My words are for you all.
Yes, you, the stranger, clinging to my image there!
You too that are like no race of things begotten, 410
nor seen by gods nor deemed as goddesses by them,
nor stamped yet in the shapes that mortals wear -
but piety and justice both forbid my speaking ill of these
congregated here when I have no knowledge of a crime.

Ch. Virgin daughter of Zeus, soon all will be revealed.
We are the stygian children of Night and in our homes
beneath the earth we are called Arai, the Curses.

Ath. I know your race and all the names that you are called.

Ch. And soon you will understand the office that I hold.
Ath. I would like that, if one of you would clearly tell me. 420
Ch. We hound out murderers from their homes.
Ath. And where is the end that is set to the killer's flight?
Ch. In a place where happiness is never more allowed.
Ath. And such is the exile you wish to hurl on him?
Ch. It is - he chose for himself the role of matricide.
Ath. Was he constrained through fear of someone's wrath?
Ch. Where is the goad to justify a mother's death?
Ath. Both parties are present, but only half the case.
Ch. He would not accept an oath or wish to give his own.
Ath. You wish to be reputed just, but not to act as such. 430
Ch. Explain yourself! Your wit is not impoverished.
Ath. Injustice must not win, I say, because of technicalities.
Ch. Then question him and fairly judge the case yourself.
Ath. And would you vest authority for this case in me?
Ch. Of course! We honour you as you have honoured us.
Ath. What answer, stranger, do you wish to make in turn?
Announce your place of birth, your race and fate
at first, and then defend yourself against this charge,
if indeed it is the case that, trusting in the justice of
your case, you set yourself to guard this statue at 440
my hearth, a solemn suppliant, a second Ixion.
Respond to every point that I might clearly understand.
Or. Athena, lady, first I shall dispel the worry that I see
from what you said just now disturbs you most.
I am not a suppliant, nor had I any stain upon
my hands when I sat down beside your statue here.
I will tell you certain proof of all of this: it is the law
that any blood polluted man must hold his peace,
until the slaughterings of new born beasts, by a man
well versed, can clean away the blood with blood. 450
Long since at the homes of other men I was absolved
of blood guilt both with running streams and victims dead.
This scruple then, I say, should cause you no embarrassment.
As to my race and standing that shall you swiftly learn.
I am an Argive; my father - ask, and make me proud! -
was Agamemnon, commander of the sea-borne warriors,
in company with whom you made the Trojan town of Ilium
a town no more. This man, he died disgracefully on his
return to home. My mother, black of heart and mind,

destroyed him; embroidered were the nets she caught
him in, and they bore witness to the murder in the bath. 460

And I came home at last from lengthy banishment,
to kill her, yes, the one who gave me birth - and I shall not
deny it - in murderous requital for my dear father's death.
And Loxias was equally responsible and my accomplice,
foretelling tortures fit to goad the very heart of me,
if I should fail to work my vengeance on the guilty ones.
Now you must judge if I have justice on my side or not;
My fate is in your hands and I am quite content at that.

Ath. This matter is too big for any single mortal man to judge, 470

whatever he may think; it is not even right for me to make
a judgement in a murder case, when passions are so sharp -
the more because you come as suppliant, well schooled
in hardship, purified and pose no threat to this my house.
These creatures too, though, have their fated, fatal task,
and should they not gain victory in this affair, henceforth
the venom of their malice walks abroad to fall upon
the land and bring disease eternal and insufferable.

Such then is the way of it - dilemma: let him stay, or drive
him off. Both courses might go hard with me. 480

Yet, since this matter came to me for settlement, then shall
my city take you in, as someone as yet free of guilt, and I
shall set in place a solemn court of judges sworn to deal
with homicide, from this day forth until the end of time.
Prepare your evidence and summon up your witnesses,
that our procedures in this case may serve the case
of justice. I shall return when I have chosen from
my citizens the ones best qualified to rightly analyse
this case and not betray their oaths with unjust mind.

Ch. The sacrosanctity of law will be
[str. a. thrown over, should
the plea made by this noxious
matricide prevail.

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An action such as this will harness all
mankind in moral anarchy.
For there will surely be in future time
a complex store of pain, as children
kill the ones that gave them birth.

- [ant. c. For all of time I say to you,
respect the shrine of justice;
Your eyes on profit 540
never spurn her underneath your impious heel,
for vengeance will pursue.
The fated end awaits.
In the light of this let each man honour his parents
well and let him respect also
the rights of guests
that come to his gate.
- [str. d. The man who is just without constraint 551
will not be unrewarded;
total destruction could never be his.
Yet I say the transgressor, in boldness
of heart, embarking much plunder, past
all that is just, shall, in time's fullness, feel
the storm's force strike sail in the wreckage
and tangle of sheets.
- [ant. d. Grappling the whirling eye of the storm
he prays, but none listen to him;
the god rather laughs at the hot-headed man, 560
had seen that man boast, " Never me!"
Helpless beneath the downrushing crest;
this man, who once had been glad in his life,
smashes down on justice's reef,
destroyed, unwept, forgot.
- Ath.** Give tongue and call to order, herald, all the folk
and you, sir, fill your mortal lungs and let
the trumpet's blast speak loud its piercing note
to heaven's vault and all the gathered throng.
For, while this council now convenes, my demand 570
is silence so the city all may learn the ordinances I
have set in perpetuity, and also these two parties here,
in order that this case for murder may be fairly tried.
- Ch.** Apollo, lord, you have no jurisdiction here.
Pray tell us what your interest is in this affair.
- Ap.** I come to act as witness in defence - for by the law this man
is suppliant to me, dependent of my hearth and home,

and I it was that cleansed him of pollution's stain - am come
to help him make his case; I bear responsibility for
the fact of this man's mother's death. Begin, Athena, take
control, since you have understanding of procedures here. 580

Ath. I now declare this court in session. You may begin.
Speak first as prosecuting counsel and from the start
instruct us properly on all the details of your case.

Ch. We are many, but our statement will be brief.
Respond to our examination point for point.
First: are you or are you not a matricide?

Or. I am. This thing I freely do confess.

Ch. The first round of the three is ours at once.

Or. You should not boast as if I were knocked down. 590

Ch. You now must tell the manner of her death.

Or. I will. With sword in hand I cut her throat.

Ch. By whose advice and council were you swayed?

Or. By oracles divine, delivered by my witness here.

Ch. The prophet god persuaded you to matricide?

Or. I never have complained of this and do not do so now.

Ch. But if the verdict snares you, then perhaps you will.

Or. I have faith - my father helps me from the tomb.

Ch. You trust the dead when you have killed your mother?

Or. She bore the stigma of a twofold guilt. 600

Ch. How so? Instruct the judges in your reasoning.

Or. She killed her husband and so my father too.

Ch. Yet you still live: her murder freed her from her guilt.

Or. Why did you not hound her to flight while yet she lived?

Ch. The man she killed was not of kindred blood.

Or. But I, you say, am of my mother's blood?

Ch. Because, you murderer, she nurtured you beneath
her girdle! How can you deny you shared her blood?

Or. Now you bear witness, Lord Apollo, and explain,
I pray, how just my execution of my mother was. 610
For we shall not deny the facts and how they stand;
please, give us your opinion on my bloodshed's justice, or
the lack of it, so that I might defend myself to these.

Ap. I shall speak to you with justice, gentlemen, in this
great court of Athens and, as a prophet, will not lie.
No utterance of mine made ever from the Delphic throne
about any man, woman or state has lacked the sanction
and authority of Zeus, Olympian father of gods and men.

You will realise the strength our case possesses when
I say to you, you must yourselves obey my father's will. 620
Not even your oath is stronger than the will of Zeus.

Ch. And was it Zeus, as is your claim, that backed the oracle
that told Orestes here to exact vengeance for a father's death
and hold of no account at all a mother's claim?

Ap. Of course! For a man of noble blood, invested by
the gods with regal sceptred power, for him to die
outweighs by far a woman's death, especially if
it was a woman killed him, not with an Amazon's
swift shafts, but rather in the way that you shall learn,
Athena, as will also those sat here to judge this case. 630
She welcomed him back from the war with words
that smiled, this man that had done very well,
but when he took his bath, to make an end, she threw
a shrouding cloth upon her husband, tripped him, hacked
him down, engulfed in crafty all enfolding robes.
This is the fate that I describe befell a man, a warrior,
revered by all in all respects, the captain of the fleet.
That I might rouse the anger of the folk whose task
this trial is, I also have described this woman as she was.

Ch. Zeus honours first the father's side by your account, 640
but Zeus himself chained Kronos up, his ancient sire!
Does this not mean you contradict yourself? I formally
request you gentlemen to hear and note this evidence.

Ap. Foul, loathsome beasts you are and execrated by the gods!
Zeus might yet release those chains and end that custody,
for many the ways and means there are to freedom;
but when the thirsty dust sucks in a man's lifeblood,
when once he's dead, there is no resurrection for him.
My father did not make up spells that might
accomplish this, although all else he can redispense, 650
completely rearrange the universe by force of will alone.

Ch. Take care how you are pleading for this man's release.
Shall he inherit his father's property in Argos, when he
has spilled his mother's blood, his own, upon the ground?
At what shrines and public altars will he make observance?
The brotherhoods will bar him from their lustral rites.

Ap. I will answer this, and note the soundness of my argument.
A mother, so called, is not, in fact, the parent of the child,
merely the vessel that nurtures, protects the new sown seed;

the father that sows the seed makes life, while she plays host, 660
 keeps safe the plant, unless some god brings hurt to it.
 I shall demonstrate to you the proof of this;
 a father might give birth without a mother's help - close by,
 a witness to the fact is Athena, daughter of Olympian Zeus.
 She was not even fostered in the darkness of a womb,
 was rather such a child as no plain goddess could produce.
 Athena, in so far as I am able - and in all respects - I will
 bring great advantage to your city and its populace,
 wherefore I sent this man to be a suppliant at your hearth, 670
 that he might be your trusted friend for evermore,
 that you might gain him, goddess, as an ally for yourself,
 as well as his descendents, while these proceedings ever will
 remain an earnest of your own care for Athens' future state.
Ath. And might I now instruct these jurymen to bring their well
 considered and just verdict in, both statements made?
Ap. For our part we have fired our every shaft.
 I wait to hear the outcome of the case.
Ath. Well, what shall I do to stay quite blameless in your eyes?
Ch. You have heard what you have heard - so cast your votes,
 my friends, respecting in your hearts the oaths you swore. 680
Ath. Pray hear my dispensations, gentlemen of Attica, that sit
 in judgement here in this initial case of bloody homicide.
 The people of Athens shall have from this day forth,
 for evermore, a permanent council of judges to meet
 upon this rocky hill, where once the Amazons did pitch
 their tents what time, enraged at Theseus, they launched
 their expedition against him and raised, upon this spot,
 a new uprearing city, threatening the old, and here
 they sacrificed to Ares, wherefore, this place is named
 the rock of Ares, "Areopagus"; the mana of this place, 690
 and the inborn dread of citizens, that quells injustice, shall,
 both day and kindly night alike, prevent the citizens
 from introducing laws that foster revolution by foul
 and muddy means. If once you make the water bad
 that once was clear, you nevermore will find it fit to drink.
 I counsel you, the citizens in government,
 to honour neither anarchy nor despotism, nor yet
 to banish from the city totally the sense of dread.
 For justice is the child of fear among all mortal men.
 So if you, the citizens, maintain a healthy sense of dread, 700

respect, you will secure a bulwark to protect the land
and constitution, the like of which no other nation has,
not the barbarous Scythians, nor in the heart of Pelops' land.

I establish this council as incorruptible by bribes,
as venerable and swift to anger, a watchful guardian
for the land and ever awake that you may sleep in peace.
I have revealed my counsel for the future for
the populace, but now you must stand up and choose
the ballot stone and so decide the verdict in this case,
respecting the oath you took. The time for talk is done. 710

Ch. In turn my counsel is that you should not insult
our company, which then would be a danger to the land.

Ap. I too suggest you hold in deep regard my oracles,
which are of Zeus, and do not render them unfulfilled.

Ch. You dabble in matters of blood with no authority;
the future oracles you dispense will be unclean.

Ap. And was my father wrong when he chose to purify
the archetypical Ixion, both murderer and suppliant?

Ch. Talk! I will prove in time to come a savage visitor
in this land, unless I gain the verdict I desire. 720

Ap. Among both the elder and the younger gods
you are held in low esteem, and I shall win.

Ch. In Pheres' house your actions were the same,
persuading the Fates to let a mortal live.

Ap. And is it not right to help at all times the man
who worships you, especially when his need is dire?

Ch. You undermined the dispensations of an elder time,
beguiling with wine the elder goddesses.

Ap. You soon will find you have not won the case, but you
will spit your venom at your enemies to no effect! 730

Ch. Since you, a younger god, would ride your elder down,
I shall stay to learn the outcome of this case; for I
am undecided whether to vent my anger on the state.

Ath. Mine is the task to make the final judgement here;
and I shall cast this vote in favour of Orestes.
There is no mother that gave me birth and I prefer
the male in all respects - except for a mate - with all
my heart, and I am completely on my father's side.
And so I will not think of more account a woman's death,
who killed her man who was the guardian of the house. 740
Orestes wins, even if the votes are equally cast.

As quickly as you can shake out the pebbles from
the urns, those of the judges whose allotted task this is.

Or. Apollo, Phoebus how do you think the decision will go?

Ch. O Night, black mother, are you watching now?

Or. Now is the time for me to choose the noose, or live.

Ch. Ours now to reap our due reward, or be destroyed.

Ap. Shake out the tokens, friends, with all due care,
be scrupulous in counting out the court's decision.
The absence of sound judgement brings disaster. 750
A single vote restores the fortunes of a fallen house.

Ath. This man is found not guilty of the charge of blood;
the votes are equal cast on either side.

Or. Athena, you have been the saviour of my house,
and you did grant me haven when I was driven from
my native land; it will be spoken thus among the Greeks,
"The man of Argos lives once more among his goods
ancestral, thanks to Lady Pallas and to Loxias,
and thirdly through the all pervading sway of Zeus
the Saviour." - ashamed at the death of my father, 760
Zeus kept me safe, when he saw my mother's advocates.
And now I shall go home, but not before
I swear a solemn oath before this land and all
its folk that from this day onward into the very depth
and fullness of time no man, who is the current helmsman of
my state, shall march and bring his well armed force
of spears against you. For when I am myself inside
the tomb my present oath will torture those who break
its terms with ill success, disaster and futility,
and render them dispirited upon the road, their march 770
unlucky so that they will learn to rue their enterprise;
But if its terms are kept, why then the men of Argos
will always hold Athena's state in high esteem and be
your warlike ally, even as I too shall ever smile on you.
And so farewell, Athena, and your city's populace;
I pray you prove too hard a match for all your enemies,
that you might live victorious and safe beneath the spear.

CH. Alas, the younger gods have ridden down
[**str. A** the older laws, appropriated them themselves.
I am bereft of honour in this land, poor wretch 780
that I am, and my anger is deep;
release the venom, vindictive, venomous, from the heart,

to drip on the earth
and to blight it! Whence
cancers, famine, sterility, ah - Justice! Justice!
Sweep over the land
to drop your filth on the earth to the ruin of men.
Do I groan? What to do?
I am mocked. Intolerable things
I have known in this place! 790
Unhappy, unloved, we, daughters of Night,
suffer wrong and despite.

Ath. Be persuaded by me and do not grieve too hard.
For you were not defeated, since the votes in the case
were evenly cast - and this is no disgrace to you.
The simple fact is that Zeus' evidence was plain,
as was Apollo's evidence that he had prophesied
that only by this deed could Orestes escape harm.
And so will you spew poisonous anger on the earth? 800
Take care, do not be angry with my land and make
it barren, raining down your demon drops to spear
and blight and savage the land's increase of seed.
In the name of all that is right I promise you
will have a place to call your own within the just
and hollow hill, with shining thrones to sit upon,
receiving tribute and honour from my citizens.

CH. Alas, the younger gods have ridden down
[ant. A] the older laws, appropriated them themselves.
I am bereft of honour in this land, poor wretch 810
that I am, and my anger is deep;
release the venom, vindictive, venomous, from the heart,
to drip on the earth
and to blight it! Whence
cancers, famine, sterility, ah - Justice! Justice!
Sweep over the land
to drop your filth on the earth to the ruin of men.
Do I groan? What to do?
I am mocked. Intolerable things
I have known in this place! 820
Unhappy, unloved, we, daughters of Night,
suffer wrong and despite.

Ath. You are not bereft of honour, and neither must your rage
provoke you goddesses to make the land of men untenable.
I have the ear of Zeus and so... but why say that? -
Also, alone of all the gods, I know the key to the place
wherein the thunderbolt of Zeus is kept locked up;
and yet there is no need of that. Be swayed by me
and do not recklessly hurl and mouth your spells 830
against the land, to bring disaster on the crops.
Soothe your anger's sombre swell and bitterness
and be an honoured and holy sharer in my land;
when you receive the first fruits of this mighty land
as sacred offerings for children born and the marriage rite,
thereafter and for evermore you will approve my words.

Ch. That I should suffer this, yes, I!
[str. b. Ancient in wisdom, to live dishonoured beneath
the earth, loathed and despised.
My breath is rage and I am total wrath. 840
Ahhh! Pain and rage!
What is this pain that penetrates my heart,
my lungs? Listen, Mother!
Night! The guile of the gods, hard to resist, has sundered
me from my time honoured role, and I nothing am.

Ath. I understand your rage; for you are of the elder time.
And so your wisdom is deeper far than mine,
although Lord Zeus has granted me no little wit. 850
Come, live here in this alien land and you, in time,
will also grow to love it well. I tell you this.
The onward flow of history will bring a richer store
of honour to these citizens. And should you take
an honoured place beside Erechtheus house, you too
will win, from men and women in procession, goods
the like of which you could not have from any other race.
Do not import whetstones of blood and strife
into my home to rouse destructive fury in the young
men's hearts, to make them mad with passions stone 860
cold sober, just as if they took their model from
the fighting cock, and so induce among Athenians
a lust for civil strife and outrage aimed at fellow citizens.
Let rather our wars be foreign and plentiful, so to provide

free rein to those possessed of terrible thirst for fame;
I have no time for the man who struts and preens at home.
Such are the choices I can give and you can take:
be good to us and be well treated with all honour in return
and take a share in this land that is favoured of god.

- Ch.** That I should suffer this, yes, I!
[ant. b. Ancient in wisdom, to live dishonoured beneath 871
the earth, loathed and despised.
My breath is rage and I am total wrath.
Ahhh! Pain and rage!
What is this pain that penetrates my heart,
my lungs? Listen, Mother!
Night! The guile of the gods, hard to resist, has sundered
me from my time honoured role, and I nothing am. 880
- Ath.** I shall not grow tired of telling you the benefits
in store, so you can never say that you, as elder gods,
were driven into exile, away from the land, dishonoured
by my youth and the people who govern this town.
But if Persuasion's awe is held by you in high regard,
that issues from my tongue to charm and soothe -
then you will stay; but if you do not wish to stay,
it is not just for you to let your rage descend upon
this city, nor to let your rancour harm my citizens.
There is for you the share due one who owns 890
the land, who shall be justly honoured evermore.
- Ch.** Mistress, what precisely is this place you promise me?
Ath. One that is completely free from grief. Receive it as your due.
Ch. And if I do, what honour then awaits me there?
Ath. No single house will prosper without your help.
Ch. You will ensure that I shall have such strength?
Ath. We shall steer straight the lives of them that honour us.
Ch. You will secure my rights in this in all the time to come?
Ath. It is not proper for me to promise things I cannot do.
Ch. You seem to have charmed me into letting go my wrath. 900
Ath. And so you will by living here gain many friends.
Ch. What magic do you bid me place in song upon this land?
Ath. A song that is proper to this time of common victory:
a song from the earth and the depths of the sea,
from the sky, like a breeze full of sunlight, light

and bright airs that descend, caressing the land;
a song to ensure the abundance of fruit in the land,
never failing, and a wealth of fine beasts for the folk,
ensuring the safety and health of their mortal seed.
Increase the wealth of those who worship you. 910
For I love the race, to which these righteous men
belong, with the love that a gardener feels for his plants.
All such is yours to grant, while I shall never allow
the reputation of the city, won in the glorious strife
and records of war, to fade on the lips of mankind.

CH. I shall accept Athena's fellowship,
[str. a. shall not despise the town
where Zeus himself and mighty Ares dwell,
fortress of the gods,
safekeeper of the altars
of the Greeks, a delight to the gods; 920
for which I pray,
in kindly prophecy,
that the sun's bright
light might
enrich her life with bounty
from the earth.

Ath. And let me act with all good will to these
my fellow citizens, great goddesses, hard
to appease, who settled here at my request.
They have been allotted the task of managing all 930
the business of men,
while the one who offends their rage,
will not know the source of disaster;
The guilt of generations past will drive
him into their grasp, and silent destruction,
despite his loud cries, hostile their anger,
is utterly his.

Ch. Let no storm winds blow to harm their trees -
[ant. a. I speak of favours I may grant -
nor scorching heat blast and stifle propagation,
exceeding limits set within the land, 940
and let no noxious plague

assail the harvest, while Pan,
let him nurture the sheep,
fertile with twins
born in due time;
and may the land's folk,
 rich with the gifts of the earth
repay the bounty of the gods.

Ath. And do you hear these words and understand
their sense, you guardians the town?
For great is the strength of the Fury, 950
the mistress, among both the dead and the gods,
manifestly disposing as well the lives of the live,
how they are, for some singing,
for others- a lifetime of tears
to dim their eyes.

Ch. I proclaim against
[str.b. untimely deaths of men
cut down in their prime, grant rather lives
of enjoyment, with loving wives, o you Fates, immortals 960
you are and have power,
sibling deities,
goddesses, fair sharers
in all households,
through all time fruitful
in your just visitations, in all ways
most respected of gods.

Ath. I am filled with delight
at these blessings
approved for my land; delighted I am by the eyes 970
of Persuasion that guided my tongue and my mouth,
when I spoke to their anger and rage;
but Zeus of the Council prevailed;
my struggle for good will also prevail
for all time.

Ch. I pray that civil strife that knows
[ant. b. no end to evil never may surge
and thunder through this state.

Let not the thirsting dust soak up the purple blood 980
of citizens, nor let men
in passion for vengeance wreak
vendetta and feud in the state,
but men of like mind
let them share with one will
both their joys and their objects of hate.
For this is the source of much health among men.

Ath. At the last they have the wisdom and sense to find
their way to words of good will.
From these faces of dread I foresee an accrual 990
of much that is good for these men of the state.
For so long as you in kindness and honour esteem
these kindly ones, so you will guide aright
your town and land
in all the business that you do.

Ch. Be glad and enjoy the wealth it is fated you have.
[str. c. Be glad you citizens
that sit beside the throne of Zeus,
beloved of the virgin one, beloved
by Zeus, be glad and ever temperate. 1000
Beneath the wings of Pallas
even Zeus the father honours you.

Ath. And fare you well in gladness too; for I
must hasten now to show the way
by the sacred light to your home, these women
in attendance. Go then, sped upon your way
beneath the earth by holy sacrifice, from there
to keep at bay whatever harms the land,
from there to send us benefits, to bring
the city victory.

You, lead the way, you citizens, 1010
the children of Cranaus, for these
our new come residents. And may
the folk be grateful for their favours.

Ch. And fare you also well, be glad and fare you well,

[ant. c. all citizens of this citadel,
 both human and divine;
 all you that have a share
 in Pallas' city never will regret
 our residence here, enjoying
 good fortune for life. 1020

Ath. I thank you for these words of kindness and send
 you on your way by the flaring torch's light
 to places underneath the earth below this land,
 in company with these priestesses, the women who guard
 my holy image, rightly so. May you come to the heart
 of Theseus' land, come all of you, a noble throng
 of children, women, all the company of elder folk

 Now honour our guests with purple robes,
 and let the glow of the torches' fire precede them,
 that for the rest of time this company might smile 1030
 in kindness on this land and its wealth of noble men.

Chorus of Athenian Women

[str. a. Make your way, honoured guests, almighty
 offspring, not children, of Night, in your
 procession contented - let the city be still.

[ant. a. Make your way to the fastness of earth primeval;
 may your fortune be such that you honours receive
 and much sacrifice - let the city be still.

 Come holy goddesses, smiling in kindness upon us,
 blessing the land as you go, flushed with the pleasure 1041
 and glow of the torch on the road.
 Now lift up your voice in the hymn!

 The treaty is sealed everlasting between these guests
 and the people of Pallas Athena; thus Zeus the all watchful,
 thus also the Fates have decreed.
 Now lift up your voice in the hymn!