

The Eumenides Book Notes

The Eumenides by Aeschylus

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Author/Context

Born around 524 or 525 B.C. in the city of Eleusis near Athens, the Greek dramatist Aeschylus is known as the first great tragedian. His childhood was spent experiencing many great transitions for the city of Athens, including the expulsion of the last Athenian tyrant in 510 B.C. and the establishment of the Athenian democratic state, ruled by many citizens. Aeschylus also fought in several military campaigns against the Persians at Salamis, Artemisium, and Palatea, as well as at the final defeat of the Persians at Marathon in 490 B.C., where his brother died in battle. These events were very formative in forging the creative mind that would write such dramatic works as the trilogy of *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and *The Eumenides*. Traditionally, Athens held dramatic competitions each year in honor of the Greek god Dionysus, at which three different theater troupes consisting of only two persons each would each act out a series of four plays together in competition for the first prize at the festival. Three of these plays were usually tragedies, plays that focused on a heroic character who falls due to his own folly. However, the fourth play was a more comical, light-hearted work, called a satire. These annual competitions provided an incentive for people to write, as well as creating an important forum for fifth-century dramatists such as Aeschylus to gain recognition for their work.

Aeschylus won first prize at the Athenian festival in 484 B.C., after which he continued to write and compete, while also traveling to further his experience and outlook towards life. In 476 B.C. he went to Etna in Sicily under the advisement of Hieron of Syracuse, where he produced *The Women of Etna* there. Later he returned to Athens and produced the *Persians* in 472 B.C., under the watchful eye of his patron, the Greek statesman Pericles, sponsor of the Parthenon on the great Acropolis rock in Athens. Aeschylus was at last defeated by the younger dramatist Sophocles in 468 B.C., although he made a comeback the following year with a new sequence of plays that included *The Seven Against Thebes*. The *Oresteia* was produced in 458 B.C., the last great work he would create. Aeschylus moved to Sicily soon afterwards, dying in 456 or 455 B.C. at Gela, Sicily. Although during the course of his lifetime he wrote more than seventy plays, today only seven plays survive: *The Seven Against Thebes*, *The Suppliants*, *The Persians*, *Prometheus Bound*, *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and *The Eumenides*.

The Libation Bearers proposed many questions about the workings of Greek society, and it is in *The Eumenides* that we at last find our answers. Unlike the prior two plays which are based on established legends describing the murder of Agamemnon by Clytaemnestra and that of Clytaemnestra by Orestes, events in *The Eumenides* are the sole creation of Aeschylus. For this reason, the play is filled with many references of immediate importance to the people of fifth-century Athens. First and foremost, the question of social equality between men and women is answered quite plainly when Apollo explains how women are merely vessels that nourish the man's seed without contributing anything to the growing baby. Convinced, Athena decides that avenging a father's death is more important than avenging that of a mother, reinforcing the fact that women belong in an inferior role to that of men. The decision to end the *Oresteia* in



Athens is hardly a mistake, for the aged Aeschylus left for Sicily soon after the play's production and died there two years later, making the play a final farewell to the city that was his home and the citizens who were his fellow countrymen.

The establishment of a court by Athena is very important as well, since Athens had traditionally been controlled by a group of aristocrats called the Areopagus Council, meeting on the "Hill of Ares" located northwest of the Acropolis. However, with the growing popularity of democracy in 462 B.C., the Areopagus Council was stripped of all lawmaking responsibilities and given the power only to be a homicide court to try accused murders. This historical event has great significance in understanding *The Eumenides*, for the Furies undergo a similar transformation. Like the Areopagus Council, the Furies are very ancient, and they tried to resist the changed world that surrounds them, clinging stubbornly to their old beliefs. The Furies reflect aristocratic tendencies in their disdain for the younger gods, just as the Areopagus Council surely viewed the young democratic ideas in Athens with this same contempt.

However, just as Athena convinces the Furies that they must accept their new role in the world as protectors of Athens, so too does Aeschylus send this same message to the Areopagus Council, that the world has changed and the Council's role must change as well. The new responsibility is just as important as the old one, however, since trying accused murderers will insure that the city's laws are upheld. Aeschylus instills *The Eumenides* with good wishes for Athens, hoping for its continued growth and prosperity even though his own time on earth is drawing to a close. Athens thus bridges the ancient, uncivilized world that the Furies and Areopagus Council were a product of, and becomes the modernized, rational society that inspired such talented men as Pericles, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, and the first great tragedian, Aeschylus himself.

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Plot Summary

After murdering his mother, Clytaemnestra, and her lover, Aegisthus, Orestes flees Argos and goes to Delphi. There, he seeks protection at the Temple of Apollo because the avenging Furies are tormenting him, infuriated that Clytaemnestra has been slain. Orestes doesn't think that he deserves any punishment for his actions, since he was merely avenging the death of his father Agamemnon, whom Clytaemnestra slew in the bathtub after the Trojan War. In Delphi, Apollo puts the Furies to sleep and instructs Orestes to journey now to Athens, where Athena will offer him greater assistance. He even sends Hermes along to assure that Orestes arrives there safely. After Orestes' departure, Clytaemnestra's ghost appears, demanding revenge for what Orestes has done to her. Frantic, the monstrous creatures awaken and dash away to Athens, joined by Apollo, who still insists that the Furies must leave this man alone.

Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, goes to her temple high up on the Acropolis hill in Athens where Orestes has begged for her to help him. She listens to Orestes' appeal for help but also admits that the Furies have a strong case as well, accusing Orestes of murdering his own mother, a blood relative. Athena declares that she will establish a courtroom there on the Acropolis to decide if Orestes shall be convicted or not, judged by twelve Athenian male citizens whom she shall choose from among the general populace. She adds that Orestes' trial shall serve as a model for handling other accused criminals in the future as well. Upon returning with the jurors, she first asks the Furies to repeat their accusations against Orestes, that he murdered a blood relative, and he should be punished for this atrocity. Athena then allows Orestes the opportunity to defend himself, and he insists again that it was his duty to avenge his father's death, whom Clytaemnestra had murdered.

Apollo then testifies on behalf of Orestes, stating that mothers are not true blood relatives of their children. He compares the mother to a fertile field that a man plants his seed into so that the child can grow, using Athena as an example to prove this point. She was born out of Zeus' head without the assistance of any other woman at all. Apollo insists that, since mothers are not blood relatives of their children, Clytaemnestra is not a blood relative of Orestes and therefore he is freed of any punishment. Having concluded these arguments, Athena prompts the jury to vote to convict or acquit Orestes. When the vote is evenly divided between them, this goddess breaks the tie by favoring Orestes, freeing him from any punishment. Overjoyed, Orestes vows that people in Argos shall forever be allies with the people in Athena's favorite city, Athens.

The Furies are enraged that they have lost, threatening to bring sickness to Athens, but Athena calms them down by offering to share the job of ruling the city. The Furies accept this offer and become protectors of Athens, now called the Eumenides or the "Benevolent Ones." They descend from the Acropolis to golden thrones underground that Athena has prepared for them. This tale of sadness ends with a new promise of hope for Athens. Athena and the powerful Eumenides now protect the city with their divine powers, a virtuous court is established on the Acropolis to punish lawbreakers

rather than people taking the law into their own hands, and Orestes vows that the citizens in his city, Argos, shall always aid Athens in any way that it can.



Major Characters

Orestes: Son of Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra; King of Argos. Orestes was warned by Apollo that he would suffer if he did not avenge Agamemnon's death by killing Clytaemnestra. After murdering his mother and her lover, Aegisthus, Orestes is pursued by the avenging Furies. He flees Argos to Apollo's temple at Delphi, seeking protection. Apollo puts the Furies to sleep for awhile, instructing Orestes to journey to Athens, where the goddess of wisdom, Athena, will help him. Soon after, Apollo and the Furies join Orestes at Athens where they participate in a public trial decided by twelve Athenian jurors. In the end the jurymen are divided in their decision, and Athena casts the deciding vote, acquitting Orestes. Overjoyed, he vows that citizens of Argos shall forever be allies with Athens and returns to his home city in peace, since the Furies cannot torment him any more.

Apollo: Son of Zeus and Leto; brother of Artemis; Greek god of light, music, and prophecy. Apollo protects Orestes from the Furies after he arrives at his Temple at Delphi. Later, Apollo testifies on behalf of Orestes at his trial at Athena's temple on the Acropolis in Athens. He insists that Orestes had a duty to avenge his father's death by killing Clytaemnestra, explaining that she was not in fact a blood relative of Orestes at all. Apollo uses Athena as an example of how mothers contribute nothing to a baby's creation, since she was born out of Zeus' head without the help of any woman. Since the Furies insist that Orestes must be punished for murdering a blood relative, Apollo convinces Athena that Agamemnon was the only blood relative of Orestes, acquitting him. After the trial, Apollo leaves Athens without another word.

Athena: Daughter of Zeus; Greek goddess of wisdom and war; the patron goddess of Athens; born from Zeus' head dressed in full battle armor. Athena is called to her temple on the Acropolis rock when Orestes arrives there, clutching her statue and begging for help. Hearing about his suffering, she realizes that a big decision needs to be made about whether Orestes should be punished as the Furies wish, or if he should be forgiven. Athena decides to establish a court on the Acropolis to deal with other accused criminals in the future as well, finding twelve Athenians to serve as jurors in Orestes' trial. She directs the Furies to state their accusations and then gives Orestes the chance to defend himself, with help from Apollo. Apollo convinces Athena that mothers are not blood relatives of their children, prompting her to tip the even balance in the jury's vote, favoring Orestes. Afterwards, she calms the irritated Furies by convincing them to rule Athens with her, after much persuasion. Athena leads them to a secret place beneath the ground where they will sit on golden thrones and bless the Athenian populace. Athena is pleased to hear Orestes' promise that Argos shall be allies with Athens, declaring that it will be the greatest city.

Minor Characters

Clytaemnestra: Daughter of Tyndareus and Leda; wife of Agamemnon, King of Troy; mother of Orestes. Clytaemnestra was outraged when Agamemnon sacrificed their



eldest daughter Iphigenia to the goddess Artemis, murdering him after the Trojan War. Orestes returned to Argos later and murdered her to avenge Agamemnon's death. Clytaemnestra's ghost appears at Apollo's temple in Delphi, demanding that the Furies punish Orestes for killing her. Her wish for revenge is unfulfilled, as Orestes is later acquitted with Athena's help after going through a public trial.

Chorus of Furies: Ancient goddesses of revenge with the heads of monstrous women, with snakes for hair; created from the blood that was shed when Zeus' father, Cronus, castrated his father, Uranus. The Furies punish the worst sins that humans can commit, especially kindred bloodshed. They show great contempt for the younger gods of Zeus' generation, demanding respect because they are so much older. At Clytaemnestra's insistence, they torment Orestes, demanding his death for killing Clytaemnestra. Athena determines that mothers are not blood relatives of their children, and the Furies are forced to leave Orestes alone. Athena then convinces the infuriated Furies to cast aside their rage to become peaceful protectors of Athens, ruling at her side. The Furies agree after much persuasion, transforming into the Eumenides or the 'Benevolent Ones.' They then only wish for peace and love throughout Athens. The Furies finally get the respect they have sought by becoming a part of this younger world they had once despised.

Agamemnon: Son of Atreus and Aerop; King of Argos; father of Orestes; husband of Clytaemnestra. Agamemnon was murdered by his wife after returning from the Trojan War. Apollo informed Orestes of his duty to avenge Agamemnon's death by killing Clytaemnestra. Orestes completed this task, and Agamemnon's restless spirit was at last laid to rest.

Iphigenia: Eldest daughter of Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra. In order for the Greek ships to sail away to Troy, the goddess Artemis demanded that Agamemnon sacrifice Iphigenia at a small town called Aulis. Clytaemnestra was outraged when Agamemnon did this, murdering him after the Trojan War to avenge Iphigenia's unfortunate death.

Aegisthus: Son of Thyestes; cousin of Agamemnon; King of Argos; lover of Clytaemnestra. Aegisthus helped Clytaemnestra to plot Agamemnon's murder because Agamemnon's father, Atreus, had murdered his older siblings. Once this revengeful act was done, Aegisthus crowned himself king of Argos with Clytaemnestra as his queen. Orestes later slew Aegisthus to avenge Agamemnon's death and punish this adulterer. Aegisthus' spirit does not appear, demanding revenge like that of Clytaemnestra, because he was not a blood relative.

Atreus: Son of Pelops; King of Argos; father of Agamemnon and Menelaus; brother of Thyestes. Atreus cooked Thyestes' children in the oven, exiling Thyestes from Argos after learning that he had a love affair with Atreus' wife, Aerope. Thyestes' son, Aegisthus, later returned to Argos and plotted the murder of Atreus' son, Agamemnon, in order to get revenge for what Atreus had done to his father.

Thyestes: Son of Pelops; brother of Atreus; father of Aegisthus. Thyestes had a love affair with Atreus' wife, Aerope, prompting a jealous Atreus to cook Thyestes' children in the oven and feed them to him. Thyestes then raised his remaining son, Aegisthus, in



exile, never to return to Argos. Aegisthus later plotted the murder of Atreus' son, Agamemnon, in order to get revenge for what Atreus had done to Thyestes.

Aerope: Wife of Atreus; mother of Agamemnon and Menelaus. After Aerope had a love affair with her brother-in-law Thyestes, a jealous Atreus cooked Thyestes' children in the oven.

Pythia: Priestess in the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. Many travelers come to the Pythia to hear prophesies about the future, for she is a direct bridge to these humans and Apollo, god of prophesy. The Pythia gets her name because the temple once was controlled by a monstrous python snake. This python was shot dead by Apollo's arrows, and he was thereafter known as 'Pythian Apollo.' Because the priestess lives in the temple and forms a link to Apollo, she is in turn called the 'Pythia.' She runs out of the temple after seeing a bloody Orestes inside with the Furies, declaring that Apollo himself must deal with this situation.

Bromius: Another name for Dionysus, Greek god of wine and revelry. Bromius rules Delphi in the fall and winter, sharing the Temple of Apollo as his home during these months. The Pythia only gives prophesies during the spring and summer for this reason, since Apollo controls the temple during this time only.

Hermes: Greek messenger god and guide into Hades for dead spirits. Apollo sends Hermes to protect Orestes from the Furies as he journeys to Athens. Hermes is not heard from again after Orestes reaches his destination.

Zeus: King of the gods; Greek god of the heavens; son of Cronus and Rhea; father of Apollo and Athena. Many characters show great reverence for Zeus, except for the Furies who mock Zeus for being such a young god compared to them. Apollo insists that Zeus himself supported Orestes murderous actions against Clytaemnestra.

Mother Earth: Called Gaia, she is the first mother goddess of the world, from which all other gods came. Mother Earth was the first owner of the sacred temple at Delphi, eventually giving it to her daughter Themis, who was Apollo's great aunt. The temple at Delphi is very old and has belonged to many gods.

Themis: The daughter of Uranus and Mother Earth; sister of Phoebe; Greek goddess of Divine Justice. Themis owned the temple at Delphi after Mother Earth gave it to her. Themis gave it to her sister, Phoebe, who eventually gave the temple to her grandson, Apollo, god of truth, light, and prophesy.

Phoebe: Daughter of Uranus and Mother Earth; sister of Themis; grandmother of Apollo; Greek goddess of the Moon. Phoebe eventually gave the temple at Delphi to her grandson, Apollo, as a birthday present. Apollo is sometimes called 'Phoebus Apollo' because of his descent from her.

Hades: God of the Underworld; brother of Zeus; son of Cronus. Hades rules over the Underworld (also called Hades), where all human spirits go when their bodies die. There they are judged and treated accordingly; the wicked are punished, and the



virtuous are blessed. Although the Furies claim to despise the younger gods such as Zeus, they praise Hades as being an god whom they respect.

Jury of twelve men: Twelve Athenian male citizens chosen by Athena to decide if Orestes should be punished or not for murdering Clytaemnestra. This jury system serves as a model for future court cases in Athena as well, as Athena establishes a tribunal there on the Acropolis. The jury's vote is evenly divided with six votes in favor of conviction and six favoring acquittal. Athena tips the balance by voting for acquittal, thus sparing Orestes from punishment. This incident models that in future Athenian court cases, if there is a tie again, then the judge presiding shall cast the deciding vote.

Herald: A messenger who blows his trumpet loudly to get the Athenians' attention, as the first court trial is beginning on the Acropolis in Athens. Athena wants the citizens to observe and learn how to conduct a trial in the future without her help.

Cronus: Son of Uranus and Gaia; Greek god of Time; father of Zeus; brother of Themis and Phoebe. Cronus castrated Uranus' penis, stealing his power, and the avenging Furies were born from Uranus' blood. Zeus overthrew Cronus, imprisoning him for what he had done to Uranus. The Furies compare Zeus' actions against Cronus to Clytaemnestra's avenging actions against Agammon, justifying his murder. Apollo replies that Zeus did not kill Cronus, for he merely imprisoned him. Clytaemnestra made a mistake went by going to the extreme and murdering her husband in cold blood.



Objects/Places

Argos: A city located on the Peloponnesian Peninsula in southern Greece. The Argive king Tantalus began a pattern of destruction for Argos after he offended the gods by feeding them his son Pelops at a banquet. King Pelops' sons continued this as Atreus cooked Thyestes' children, exiling him brother afterwards. Clytaemnestra murders Agamemnon later after he killed her daughter Iphigenia, thus continuing this cycle of death and jealousy for the royal house of Argos.

Trojan War: A war fought at Troy between the native Trojans and the invading Greeks. Started by Paris, who stole Menelaus' wife Helen, Menelaus asked his brother to help rescue her. Led by Agamemnon, the Greek army fought for ten long years, losing many brave warriors. The Greeks won after deceiving the Trojans into bringing a wooden horse into the city's walls, thinking that it was a peace offering. However, Greek soldiers hidden within later crawled out secretly, opening the city gates for the entire army to invade the city. Troy was burned to the ground, its adult males were slain, and its men and children were enslaved.

Troy: A city located in the eastern Mediterranean, in the country that is known as Turkey today. Ruled by Priam, Troy was besieged for ten long years during the Trojan War. The Greeks wanted to rescue the Greek Helen from the Trojan prince Paris, who had kidnapped her. Troy was finally defeated through deception, and the city was burned to the ground.

Oracle of Apollo: Located at Delphi, many travelers would go to hear the Oracle at Apollo's temple. There, the Pythia would relate prophesies for the future, given to her directly from Apollo himself. The Oracle was the name for the temple that travelers would go to, and also the Oracle is another name for the prophesies that travelers would hear once they arrived there.

Delphi: A city northwest of Athens on the Greek mainland. Also called Pytho because of the legend of Apollo reclaiming the city after slaying the python snake, Delphi was a very old, sacred city. Hordes of people would make a pilgrimage there to visit the Oracle. The Pythia describes how control of Delphi has passed from many hands, from Mother Earth to Themis to Phoebe to Apollo, and also to Bromius in the winter months. Orestes goes to Delphi for protection against the avenging Furies. From there, Apollo sends him along to Athens.

Temple of Apollo: Site of the Oracle, where people hear prophesies from the Pythia, priestess of Apollo. Orestes goes to the Temple of Apollo seeking protection. The Pythia is frightened after seeing Orestes inside with blood-stained hands while the Furies lay all around him. She insists that Apollo himself must come to deal with this situation.

Hades: The Greek Underworld, where all human spirits go when their bodies die. Ruled by the god Hades, this place is also a court of sorts as well. As each spirit arrives, he is judged by Hades and assigned a home in the afterlife. Wicked souls went down to



Tartarus, where they were punished, most mediocre souls went to the Asphodel Fields, which was a middle level where they saw neither suffering nor bliss. The most virtuous souls were allowed to dwell in the Elysium Fields, where they experienced eternal happiness and bliss for their good lives.

Temple of Athena: Temple dedicated to Athena, goddess of wisdom, located on the Acropolis rock in central Athens. As Apollo has instructed, Orestes goes into the Temple of Athena and hugs the statue of Athena that is within, seeking her help in dispelling the Furies. There, Athena appears and facilitates a public trial decided by twelve Athenian male citizens; she breaks the tie vote, freeing Orestes from punishment. The Temple of Athena shall serve as a courtroom for future court cases as well, as Athena uses this trial as a model for how future accused criminals should be dealt with.

Acropolis: Literally the word means 'Upper city,' the name for the great, rocky hill that towers high above Athens. A very holy place, it is the site of the Pantheon housing shrines to the goddess Athena. The Pantheon was not built until 447 B.C., however, ten years after the play was written. A much smaller shrine existed on the Acropolis, called the 'Temple of Athena Nike,' and it is this temple that is most likely referred to in *The Eumenides*. The Acropolis was the religious center of Athens, due to its imposing height above the city clustered at its feet.

Athens: A city located southeast of Delphi on the Greek mainland; birthplace of the playwright Aeschylus. Athens is where the long history of bloodshed ends for Orestes' family, as Athena peacefully resolves the dispute between him and the avenging Furies. Athena promises that Athens will become the greatest city for many reasons: two powerful divinities, Athena and the Eumenides, now protect the city, and Orestes vows that Argos will forever be allies with Athens. A court has also been established to provide due process for accused criminals, outlawing the ancient cycle of revenge that the Furies had once supported. The future of Athens holds a promise of enduring prosperity.



Quotes

Quote 1: "May all [gods]/grant me that this of all my entrances shall be/the best by far. If there are any Hellenes here/let them draw lots, so enter, as the custom is./My prophesy is only as the god may guide." Lines 29-33

Quote 2: "Things terrible to tell and for the eyes to see/terrible drove me out again from [Apollo's] house/so that I have no strength and cannot stand on springing/ feet, but run with my hands' help and my legs have no speed." Lines 34-37

Quote 3: "You would sleep, then? And what use are you, if you sleep?/It is because of you I go dishonored thus/among the rest of the dead.../I am driven in disgrace. I say to you/that I am charged with guilt...And yet/I suffered too, horribly, and from those most dear,/yet none among the powers is angered for my sake/that I was slaughtered, and by matricidal hands./Look at these gashes in my heart, think where they came/from." Lines 94-104

Quote 4: "Sleep and fatigue, two masterful conspirators,/have dimmed the deadly anger of the mother-snake." Lines 124-125

Quote 5: "Let go/upon this man the stormblasts of your bloodshot breath,/wither him in your wind, after him, hunt him down/once more, and shrivel him in your vitals' heat and flame." Lines 136-139

Quote 6: "Such are the actions of the younger gods. These hold/by unconditional force, beyond all right, a throne/that runs reeking blood,/blood at the feet, blood at the head.../[Apollo] has spoiled his secret shrine's/hearth with the stain, driven and hallowed the action on./He made man's way cross the place of the ways of god/and blighted age-old distributions of power." Lines 162-172

Quote 7: "This house is no right place for such as you to cling/upon...by [your] judgment given, heads are lopped/and eyes are gouged out, throats cut, and by the spoil of sex/the glory of young boys is defeated, where mutilation/lives, and stoning, and the long moan of tortured men.../Listen/to how the gods spit out the manner of that feast/your love leans to." Lines 185-192

Quote 8: "But I shall give the suppliant help and rescue, for/if I willingly fail him who turns to me for aid,/his wrath, before gods and men, is fearful thing." Lines 232-234

Quote 9: "Whether now ranging somewhere in the Libyan land/beside her father's crossing and by Triton's run/of waters she sets upright or enshrouded foot/rescuing there her friends, or on the Phlegraean flat/like some bold man of armies sweeps with eyes the scene,/let her come! She is a god and hears me far away." Lines 292-297

Quote 10: "Over the beast doomed to the fire/this is the chant, scatter of wits,/frenzy and fear, hurting the heart,/song of the Furies/binding brain and blighting blood/in its



stringless melody.../Men's illusions in their pride under the sky melt/down, and are diminished into the ground, gone/before the onset of our black robes, pulsing/of our vindictive feet against them." Lines 341-371

Quote 11: "Is there a man who does not fear/this, does not shrink to hear/how my place has been ordained,/granted and given by destiny/and god, absolute? Privilege/primeval yet is mine, nor am I without a place/though it be underneath the ground/and in no sunlight and in gloom that I must stand." Lines 389-396

Quote 12: "You wish to be called righteous rather than act right." Lines 430

Quote 13: "He died/without honor when he came home. It was my mother/[Clytaemnestra]/of the dark heart, who.../cut him down. The bath is witness to his death./I was an exile in the time before this. I came back/and killed the woman who gave me birth. I plead guilty./My father was dear, and this was vengeance for his blood./Apollo shares responsibility for this./He counterspurred my heart and told me of pains to come/if I should fail to act against the guilty ones." Lines 458-467

Quote 14: "Here is dilemma. Whether I let them stay or drive/them off, it is hard course and will hurt. Then, since/the burden of the case is here, and rests on me,/I shall select judges of manslaughter, and swear/them in, establish a court into all time to come." Lines 480-484

Quote 15: "Now/the House of Justice has collapsed./There are times when fear is good./It must keep its watchful place/at the heart's controls. There is/advantage/in the wisdom won from pain./Should the city, should the man/rear a heart that nowhere goes/in fear, how shall such a one/any more respect the right?/Refuse the life of anarchy." Lines 515-526

Quote 16: "He calls on those who hear not, caught inside/the hard wrestle of water./The spirit laughs at the hot-hearted man,/the man who said 'never to me,' watches him/pinned in distress, unable to run free of the crests./He had good luck in his life. Now/he smashes it on the reef of Right/and drowns, unwept and forgotten." Lines 558-565

Quote 17: "Let the stabbing voice of the Etruscan/trumpet, blown to the full with mortal wind, crash out/its high call to all the assembled populace./For in the filling of this senatorial ground/it is best for all the city to be silent and learn/the measures I have laid down into the rest of time." Lines 567-572

Quote 18: "This [the murder of Clytaemnestra] is justice. Recognize then how great its strength./I tell you, follow our father's will. For not even/the oath that binds you is more strong than Zeus is strong." Lines 619-621

Quote 19: "The mother is no parent of that which is called/her child, but only nurse of the new-planted seed/that grows. The parent is he who mounts. A stranger she/preserves a stranger's seed, if no god interfere.../There can/be a father without any mother. There [Athena] stands,/the living witness, daughter of Olympian Zeus,/she who



was never fostered in the dark womb/yet such a child as no goddess could bring to birth." Lines 658-666

Quote 20: "I shall make great your city and its populace./So I have brought this man to sit beside the hearth/of your house, to be your true friend for the rest of time,/so you shall win him, goddess, to fight by your side,/and among men to come this shall stand a strong bond/that his and your own people's children shall be friends." Lines 668-673

Quote 21: "Since you, a young god, would ride down my elder age,/I must stay here and listen to how the trial goes,/being yet uncertain to loose my anger on the state." Lines 731-733

Quote 22: "There is no mother anywhere who gave me birth,/and, but for marriage, I am always for the male/with all my heart, and strongly on my father's side./So, in a case where the wife has killed her husband, lord/of the house, her death shall not mean most to me." Lines 736-740

Quote 23: "Gods of the younger generation, you have ridden down/the laws of the elder time, torn them out of my hands./I, disinherited, suffering, heavy with anger/shall let loose on the land/the vindictive poison/dripping deadly out of my heart upon the ground;/this from itself shall breed/cancer.../What shall I do? Afflicted/I am mocked by these people." Lines 778-789

Quote 24: "In complete honesty I promise you a place/of your own, deep hidden underground that is yours by right/where you shall sit on shining chairs beneath the hearth/to accept devotions offered by your citizens." Lines 804-807

Quote 25: "The wind I breathe is fury and utter hate./Earth, ah, earth/what is this agony that crawls under my ribs?/Night, hear me, o Night,/mother. They have wiped me out/and the hard hands of the gods/and their treacheries have taken my old rights away." Lines 840-847

Quote 26: "No, let our wars rage outward hard against the man/who has fallen horribly in love with high renown./No true fighter I call the bird that fights at home./Such life I offer you, and it is yours to take./Do good, receive good, and be honored as the good/are honored. Share our country, the beloved of god." Lines 864-869

Quote 27: "A place free of all grief and pain. Take it for yours.../No household shall be prosperous without your will.../So we shall straighten the lives of all who worship us.../Stay here, then. You will win the hearts of others, too." Lines 893-901

Quote 28: "Let it come out of the ground, out of the sea's water,/and from the high air make the waft of gentle gales/wash over the country in full sunlight, and the seed/and stream of the soil's yield and of the grazing beasts/be strong and never fail our people as time goes,/and make the human seed be kept alive." Lines 904-909

Quote 29: "Let there blow no wind that wrecks the trees./I pronounce words of grace./Nor blaze of heat blind the blossoms of grown plants.../Let no barren deadly



sickness creep and kill./Flocks fatten. Earth be kind/to them, with double fold of fruit/in time appointed for its yielding. Secret child/of earth, her hidden wealth, bestow/blessing and surprise of gods." Lines 938-948

Quote 30: "Go then. Sped by majestic sacrifice/from these, plunge beneath the ground. There hold/off what might hurt the land; pour in/the city's advantage, success in the end.../For good things given,/your hearts' desire be for good to return." Lines 1006-1013

Quote 31: "Gracious be, wish what the land wishes,/follow, grave goddesses, flushed in the flame sprung/torchlight gay on your journey./Singing all follow our footsteps./There shall be peace forever between these people/of [Athena] and their guests. Zeus the all seeing/met with Destiny to confirm it./Singing all follow our footsteps." Lines 1040-1047



Topic Tracking: Forgiveness

Forgiveness 1: Although the Furies pursue him and demand his own death for the murder of Clytaemnestra, Orestes still asks Apollo for forgiveness. He did commit the crime of matricide, but he justifies it because it was to avenge Agamemnon's death.

Forgiveness 2: Clytaemnestra's spirit refuses to forgive her son, Orestes, for murdering her. She awakens the Furies, ordering these avenging goddesses to pursue Orestes and "with him" in their wind. She is a very vengeful woman who also refused to forgive her husband for murdering their eldest daughter, Iphigenia.

Forgiveness 3: The god Apollo wishes to forgive Orestes' crime of murder, but the Furies refuse to forgive him, for they are harsh, merciless goddesses. Apollo thinks that they are too harsh in demanding more bloodshed and pain as a punishment for crimes, implying that the Furies should learn to be more forgiving.

Forgiveness 4: The avenging Furies mock Apollo and the younger gods because they are so forgiving and merciful towards humans, for these goddesses were born during a time when gods dominated humans, showing only cruelty and control towards them. As a result, they do not understand Apollo's way of thinking.

Forgiveness 5: Hades is a younger god and the brother of Zeus, but the Furies still admire him for holding men accountable for their actions after they die and are judged. Hades does not forgive men for their crimes, punishing them each based on how well their lives were lived.

Forgiveness 6: The Furies refuse to excuse Orestes actions under any circumstances even though he was avenging the death of his father. That Orestes must be punished is a matter of principle, to set an example for anyone else who may want to kill his mother. His actions cannot be forgiven under any circumstances.

Forgiveness 7: Once again, the Furies adhere to their black and white perception of the world, blindly following laws by the book rather than consciously thinking about what exactly they are doing. The trial has not even begun yet, but the Furies already insist that he is a guilty man, comparing him to a drowning sailor lost at sea, as his body is crushed against the rocks.

Forgiveness 8: Apollo defends Orestes' actions, declaring that even Zeus, the king of the gods, supported Orestes' vengeful actions against his mother. This god of prophesy states that Orestes must be forgiven, because he was avenging Agamemnon's earlier murder.

Forgiveness 9: The Furies remain angry and lash out verbally against Apollo, claiming that he bribed the older gods with wine to support him. Even though Apollo made a strong argument in favor of Orestes, these avenging goddesses refuse to forgive the



young man for murdering Clytaemnestra, threatening to harm Athens if the jury votes for an acquittal.

Forgiveness 10: Athena has broken the jury's tied vote, acquitting Orestes, yet the Furies still refuse to respect this decision, declaring that they will bring sickness and death to Athens. A fair trial has been conducted and a decision already made, but the avenging goddesses still won't forgive Orestes, even though they can't do anything to change the decision now.

Forgiveness 11: The goddesses of wisdom repeatedly offers the Furies to become protectors of Athens, bringing prosperity to the city rather than the destruction they have always sought. The Furies remain defiant, refusing to forgive Orestes or Athena for stopping them.

Forgiveness 12: At long last, the Furies finally accept Athena's generous offer, transforming into the Eumenides, "The Benevolent Ones." They forgive Orestes and Athena, vowing to protect true justice and virtue now in Athens so that the city can prosper and flourish. By this change of heart, the Furies become more rational beings, no longer erratic and unpredictable, learning how to love and nourish instead of how to hate and destroy.

Forgiveness 13: After much persistence, Athena succeeds in convincing the Furies to join her in ruling Athens. As a result, the Furies learn the strong lesson of forgiveness that they had resisted for their entire lives. Previously, they had only known how to make people suffer and feel pain for their crimes. By forgiving Orestes, the Furies become wiser creatures, for they understand that he was in fact avenging his dead father Agamemnon, excusing him from punishment. Rather than blindly punishing criminals, these goddesses become more rational and reflective, much like Athena herself.



Topic Tracking: Humility

Humility 1: The priestess of Apollo, called The Pythia, is very humble, attributing all of her prophetic powers to the gods above. She is not arrogant at all, praying that the gods will allow her to give accurate prophesies before entering the temple to recite oracles.

Humility 2: Orestes takes responsibility for what he has done, admitting that he has murdered Clytaemnestra. He is very humble, asking politely for Apollo's assistance in defending him against the avenging Furies. Orestes respectfully kneels before Apollo's altar.

Humility 3: The Furies are filled with arrogance, showing no humility at all towards Apollo or any of the younger gods from Zeus' generation. Because they are older gods, the Furies automatically assume that these younger gods are inferior to them.

Humility 4: Although Apollo declares that he will protect Orestes because he has been so pious, the Furies refuse to respect Apollo's kind request to leave Orestes alone. These avenging goddesses insist that it is their duty to punish the young man no matter what Apollo or any god tells them. They are filled with arrogance and have no boundaries in place to stop them.

Humility 5: The avenging goddesses continue to believe that they know everything and that these younger gods are ignorant. The Furies have no humility or restraint to what they do, stating that the younger gods are inferior to them, including even Zeus the king of the gods.

Humility 6: Orestes has been very respectful towards Apollo, but the Furies still accuse him of being arrogant and breaking "sacred laws" prohibiting matricide. This man shows more humility towards the gods than even the Furies, however, and Apollo continues to protect him because of this. The avenging goddesses insist that he will suffer terribly because of his "arrogance."

Humility 7: Apollo remains humble and selfless, saying that he did not encourage Orestes to murder Clytaemnestra independently, but instead it was done with the support of Zeus himself. Even this god of prophesy shows respect towards his fellow gods by conferring with them, unlike the Furies who remain fixated only on their own point of view.

Humility 8: The goddess of wisdom, Athena, urges the Athenian citizens to always remain humble, using the court as a place where justice can be carried out in an honorable manner, rather than falling prey to corruption. Humility continues to be an important element of Greek society, for it insures that people and gods alike shall lead prosperous lives.

Humility 9: The Furies accuse Apollo of being arrogant, insisting that he does not have any reverence for them. However, it is in fact the Furies who have treated Apollo and all



of the younger gods with great contempt throughout. They blindly fault others for the same offenses that they continue to commit. The Furies thus have no humility.

Humility 10: Although they had previously promised to respect whatever conclusion that Athena and her court shall come to in deciding the fate of Orestes, the Furies become violently angry when he is acquitted. They threaten to fill Athens with death because Athena has voted against them. Rather than respecting Athena as an equal, the Furies treat her like an inferior being because of their arrogant pride. They have no humility.

Humility 11: Athena remains humble in addressing Furies, respecting them as if they were her equals even though they are so cruel towards her. Being the goddess of wisdom, surely humility is a natural understanding that she has within her. This is an understanding that the selfish Furies have yet to attain, as they continue to threaten and mock the younger gods.

Humility 12: Even as the Furies accuse Athena of having no reverence or humility towards them, Athena replies that they are wrong. Indeed, the goddess of wisdom points out that she has been extremely respectful towards the Furies by even offering for them to rule Athens together with her. Hearing these words, the Furies finally listen to her offer.

Humility 13: The Furies find humility at long last after recognizing Athena as an equal and agreeing to rule Athens at her side. Rather than remaining filled with arrogance, the Furies cast aside their pride and take their place in this new world of younger gods, accepting a new role in turn that is much changed from their old responsibility of mercilessly punishing wicked crimes. Now they are known as the Eumenides, "The Benevolent Ones."

Humility 14: At the end of the play, the Furies declare that Athens will prosper and become the greatest city as long as the Athenian citizens remain humble and dutiful to the gods. If they are not humble, then these citizens will suffer for their arrogance. The Furies have become humble as well, setting an example by respecting humans instead of despising them as they did before.



Topic Tracking: Motherhood

Motherhood 1: The Pythia shows reverence to Mother Earth, the goddess from whom all of the other gods were born. Mother Earth was the first owner of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. Eventually giving it to her daughter, Themis. Motherhood is portrayed in a respectful way.

Motherhood 2: Clytaemnestra insists that Orestes has committed the most wicked crime of all by murdering his own mother. She calls herself a "mother snake," implying that the avenging Furies are her children. Here she is not a kind mother, but instead she is the mother of harsh revenge.

Motherhood 3: As Iphigenia's mother, Clytaemnestra felt that it was her duty to avenge her eldest daughter's death by murdering Agamemnon. She is very protective of her children, just as Orestes is equally protective of Agamemnon by eventually murdering Clytaemnestra.

Motherhood 4: The Furies state that matricide is the worst crime that one can commit, because a child should have the highest respect for his mother. Apollo disagrees, insisting that it is a more wrongful crime for a wife to instead kill her own husband. He has less respect towards motherhood than the Furies have, probably because he is a male and favors Orestes.

Motherhood 5: Although Apollo states that he will protect Orestes, the Furies proclaim that the "mother blood" binds them to torment Orestes. Because he has shed the blood of his own mother, Clytaemnestra, the Furies feel that it is their duty to punish him for this crime, although Apollo doesn't think that there is any need for this at all.

Motherhood 6: It is evident that Orestes did indeed murder his mother, Clytaemnestra, but Apollo wishes to excuse Orestes from any punishment because he was avenging his father's wrongful death. The Furies, however, insist that the circumstances surrounding the murder are irrelevant, and Orestes must be punished to set an example to other people who might want to kill their mothers.

Motherhood 7: The Furies justify Clytaemnestra's actions because she was avenging the death of her eldest daughter, Iphigenia, whom Agamemnon had sacrificed at Aulis, declaring that it is a mother's right to defend the honor of her children. Apollo replies that the manner in which Clytaemnestra murdered her husband was so cruel and dishonorable that she demanded a just punishment such as what she received at the hands of Orestes.

Motherhood 8: Apollo states that mothers are not in fact blood relatives of their children, suggesting that they are merely vessels to hold the growing man's seed within her, just as a fertile field grows crops until they are ready to be harvested. He refers to Athena as an example, since she was born out of Zeus' head without the assistance of any woman.



Motherhood 9: The avenging Furies call themselves the children of darkness, declaring that Night is their mother. This suggests that they are the opposite of Apollo, who is god of light and truth. In contrast, the Furies are goddesses of darkness.

Motherhood 10: No longer children of darkness, the Furies become protectors of Athens together with Athena. Clytaemnestra's appeals for revenge are forgotten, and motherhood is cast aside as inferior to the father's role in developing a child due to Athena's tie-breaking vote that acquits Orestes of all accusations. She accepts Apollo's argument that women are merely vessels to hold the growing seed that the man has implanted within them.



Line 1-234

After slaying his mother Clytaemnestra, Orestes has fled away from his city of Argos because he is tormented by the avenging Furies. The god Apollo supported Orestes' actions, encouraging him to punish her for murdering his father Agamemnon. This man was stabbed to death by Clytaemnestra soon after he had returned with the prophetess Cassandra from the Trojan War. Clytaemnestra killed her husband out of grief because he had sacrificed their eldest daughter, Iphigenia, to the goddess Artemis in order that she would send wind so that the Greek fleet could sail off to fight at Troy.

Clytaemnestra's anger was increased after discovering that Agamemnon had sex with the captured Trojan, Cassandra, although she was unfaithful herself in her husband's absence, for her lover Aegisthus helped her to plot the murder. He took control of the kingship in Argos after Agamemnon's murder with Clytaemnestra as his queen, and the young prince Orestes was sent away to live in exile.

In contrast, Aegisthus was seeking revenge from the sins of Agamemnon's father Atreus by punishing his son. This man battled for the kingship of Argos against Aegisthus' father, Thyestes. When Atreus learned that Thyestes had been having sexual relations with his wife Aerope, he cooked Thyestes' children alive and fed them to him unknowingly at a banquet. Discovering what had happened, Thyestes fled with the infant Aegisthus, who avenged Atreus' crimes by plotting the murder of his son Agamemnon. Yet Orestes slew both Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus, although the pursuing Furies do not care about Aegisthus' death. He was merely an adulterer, but it is a terrible sin to kill one's own mother. They torment Orestes, swarming around his head and clouding his thoughts. He then fled in pain far away from Argos and has begun a journey to reach the Oracle of Apollo in the city of Delphi. There, he hoped to discover why Apollo betrayed him, having assured him initially that he would endure no punishment for murdering Clytaemnestra, because he was avenging the more terrible death of his father.

Now, Orestes has not yet arrived at Delphi, and the priestess of Apollo, called the Pythia, is going about her daily business at the temple of Apollo, sending a prayer to the gods above and recalling events that have occurred in history. She names the people who have owned the sanctuary at Delphi before Apollo. First there was the Mother Earth, followed by her daughter Themis. Then Themis gave the temple to her sister Phoebé, who was Phoebus Apollo's grandmother. The sacred spot at Delphi was then given to Apollo, and it is to there that people now come to hear prophesies about what the future may bring.

The Pythia also recognizes that the goddess of wisdom, Athena directs all advice that she may give, because of the insight that is needed to see into the future. She adds that the temple at Delphi is sacred to another god named Bromius, also called Dionysus. He is the Greek god of wine and revelry. After all of this is said, the Pythia has makes it clear that Delphi has a great importance to many gods. She then urges any people standing outside of the temple to come within to hear Apollo's prophesies, "May all [gods]/grant me that this of all my entrances shall be/the best by far. If there are any



Hellenes here/let them draw lots, so enter, as the custom is./My prophesy is only as the god may guide" Lines 29-33. She recognizes that she is merely a vessel through which Apollo speaks and that she has no prophetic powers herself.

Topic Tracking: Humility 1

Topic Tracking: Motherhood 1

Going within the temple, the Pythia hopes that this will be her one of her best sessions of prophesizing. She abruptly returns, excited and in a panic, crying aloud that she has seen an awful scene within the temple. She laments, "Things terrible to tell and for the eyes to see/terrible drove me out again from [Apollo's] house/so that I have no strength and cannot stand on springing/ feet, but run with my hands' help and my legs have no speed" Lines 34-37. The frightened woman, who is unaware that Orestes has returned to Delphi, describes exactly what she saw within the temple. First, there was a man with bloody hands "postured in the suppliant's seat," which is a location where one may ask for forgiveness. In front of him is a group of monstrous women, and from their "eyes drips the foul ooze" sleeping upon chairs; these are the same Furies that have tormented Orestes since he murdered his own mother Clytaemnestra. Obviously, the Furies have chased him all the way to Delphi. The Pythia is confused, insisting that she can do nothing to deal with this situation. Instead, she states that Apollo himself must come. Waiting for Apollo, Orestes is not angry or defiant, but instead he is seeking answers and forgiveness, even though his hands are stained with his mother's blood.

Topic Tracking: Forgiveness 1

At this moment, the doors of the temple open up. Inside, just as the Pythia described, Orestes kneels with blood-stained hands while the monstrous Furies surround him, sleeping, their bodies sprawled haphazardly across rows of chairs. Apollo, too, stands before Orestes accompanied by the message god, Hermes, who also leads dead souls into Hades. Apollo addresses Orestes, declaring that he will not allow Orestes to be punished by the avenging Furies. This god of prophesy adds that he will even protect Orestes, proclaiming that he has even put the Furies to sleep. Apollo instructs the man to flee away from Delphi, noting that the Furies will continue to torment him. In order to resolve the situation, Apollo tells him to go to the temple of Pallas Athena on top of the Acropolis in Athens. He instructs Orestes to embrace the statue of Athena in the temple there, and there he will then be judged for his crime of murdering his mother by Athena. Apollo tells Orestes not to worry, since it was Apollo "who made you strike your mother down." Orestes was merely following instructions from a god, rather than killing his mother for no reason.

Topic Tracking: Humility 2

Orestes states that Apollo knows that Orestes has done know wrong. Orestes also reminds him not to abandon him, even as he has been tormented by these Furies until Apollo had put them to sleep. Apollo reminds Orestes not to be afraid, and he asks Hermes to accompany Orestes and watch over him as he makes the journey from Apollo's temple in Delphi to Athena's temple in Athens. These three figures leave the



temple of Apollo, and at once the angry ghost of Clytaemnestra appears and tries to wake up the Furies. She is very upset that they have stopped pursuing her son Orestes, from whom she demands vengeance. Crying aloud, she addresses the Furies, "You would sleep, then? And what use are you, if you sleep?/It is because of you I go dishonored thus/among the rest of the dead.../I am driven in disgrace. I say to you/that I am charged with guilt...And yet/I suffered too, horribly, and from those most dear,/yet none among the powers is angered for my sake/that I was slaughtered, and by matricidal hands./Look at these gashes in my heart, think where they came/from" Lines 94-104. She claims that the Furies tormented her after she murdered Agamemnon.

Furthermore, the dead queen blames them for not tormenting Orestes, who has also committed the foul crime of killing his own mother. She feels as if none of the gods care about what her son has done to her, urging the Furies to pursue Orestes again. Clytaemnestra wants death for her son, in order that her death be avenged, just as Agamemnon's death was avenged by the murder of Clytaemnestra. One murder begets another. As this ghost speaks, the Furies begin to awaken from their slumber, moaning aloud in response to her words. Clytaemnestra taunts them, saying that it does no good to make noises because Orestes has already escaped. The Furies continue to make monstrous sounds, becoming louder and faster. Frustrated, Clytaemnestra simply says "Get on your feet quickly" and she later adds "Sleep and fatigue, two masterful conspirators,/have dimmed the deadly anger of the mother-snake" Lines 124-125. She compares herself to a "mother snake," suggesting that the Furies are perhaps her children.

Topic Tracking: Motherhood 2

At long last the Chorus of Furies rises up from the chairs, talking aloud in its sleep, "Get him, get him, get him, get him. Make sure." Pleased to see that they are waking up, Clytaemnestra urges the Furies to pursue Orestes immediately, giving him no mercy, "Let go/upon this man the stormblasts of your bloodshot breath,/with him in your wind, after him, hunt him down/once more, and shrivel him in your vitals' heat and flame" Lines 136-139. The dead queen of Argos feels no love towards her son at all, hoping that Orestes will feel pain from the Furies until he dies, shriveled in the Furies' "heat and flame." This woman does not care that Apollo and Hermes protect her son. It was revenge that drove Clytaemnestra to kill Agamemnon, because he sacrificed their daughter Iphigenia at the start of the Trojan War. Aegisthus helped her to plan this murder, because Agamemnon's father Atreus had cooked his brothers in the oven and fed them to Aegisthus' father, Thyestes. Revenge has filled the house of Argos. Aegisthus killed to avenge his dead brothers and exiled father, Clytaemnestra killed to avenge her dead daughter, Orestes killed to avenge his dead father. Now Clytaemnestra demands that Orestes be killed in order to avenge her own death.

Topic Tracking: Forgiveness 2

Topic Tracking: Motherhood 3

After speaking these words, the ghost disappears, and the Chorus of Furies begin to speak aloud excitedly. They call Orestes a "hunted beast," cursing Zeus by calling him a



"young god," because he did not punish Orestes. Rather than showing any reverence for the gods, these ancient goddesses of revenge curse Apollo as well for his role in putting them to sleep. Like Zeus, Apollo is called a "younger god." The Furies question the lack of respect that these gods have for divine law, choosing instead to help the humans instead of asserting their supremacy, "Such are the actions of the younger gods. These hold/by unconditional force, beyond all right, a throne/that runs reeking blood,/blood at the feet, blood at the head.../[Apollo] has spoiled his secret shrine's/hearth with the stain, driven and hallowed the action on./He made man's way cross the place of the ways of god/and blighted age-old distributions of power" Lines 162-172.

The Furies disdain the younger gods such as Apollo or Zeus and value the old gods such as Themis or Phoebe, who controlled the temple at Delphi before Apollo. They declare that Apollo has defiled the holiness of the temple because he has decided to help out a murderer, Orestes. The Furies suggest think that humans have control over the gods' actions since "man's way" crosses the "place of the ways of god." Angered, the Furies continue to complain, insisting that they will never give up until Orestes is dead.

Topic Tracking: Humility 3

At this moment, Apollo reappears, ordering the Furies to leave his temple, or he will shoot them with his bow and arrow. Just as the Furies show little respect toward him, Apollo does not show much respect toward these goddesses either. Apollo states, "This house is no right place for such as you to cling/upon...by [your] judgment given, heads are lopped/and eyes are gouged out, throats cut, and by the spoil of sex/the glory of young boys is defeated, where mutilation/lives, and stoning, and the long moan of tortured men.../Listen/to how the gods spit out the manner of that feast/your love leans to" Lines 185-192. He criticizes these avenging women for their harsh, painful torture of humans, as they demand decapitation, stoning, and other such violent deaths for criminals, stating that the other gods dislike their form of punishment. He rejects their old, unforgiving system of justice in favor of his own, newer version. It appears that this is a conflict perhaps between the older gods and the older way of handling crimes, and the newer gods with a different interpretation of what justice should be. Apollo and the Furies do not understand each other's point of view. Instead, they resort to name-calling.

Topic Tracking: Forgiveness 3

The Furies refuse to leave, insisting that Apollo is more guilty than Orestes, because he encouraged him. Curious, Apollo asks the Chorus to explain the importance of this since Orestes was just avenging the worse death of his father, whom Clytaemnestra had murdered in cold blood. They reprimand Apollo for protecting him afterwards as well, but Apollo is unconcerned, adding that the Furies have no business to be there in the first place. The Chorus replies that it is their duty to avenge crimes of matricide. Apollo mocks these words, "Sound forth your glorious privilege." The Furies state that if a



woman kills her husband, it is not as terrible a crime as killing your own mother because a wife and husband are not blood relatives.

Topic Tracking: Motherhood 4

Apollo is stunned to hear this news, insisting that crimes against one's own blood are no longer considered to be crimes. Marriage is more meaningful than being blood relatives because "married love between/man and woman is bigger than oaths, guarded by right/of nature." The Furies do not view Clytaemnestra's actions to be criminal, because she and Agamemnon were not blood relatives. The god of prophesy thinks that this is ridiculous, replying that Athena, goddess of wisdom, shall will make a wise decision. Apollo believes that she will agree with him, adding if the Furies continue to bother Orestes, then they will get into trouble because they are wrong. They talk back to him, telling him not to make that judgment so soon before they have even heard from Athena.

The Furies respond that although Apollo is a god after all, they cannot obey him, declaring that the "motherblood" forces them to torment Orestes until he dies. Apollo says that they can do whatever they want, but he is forced to protect Orestes similarly for different reasons, stating "But I shall give the suppliant help and rescue, for/if I willingly fail him who turns to me for aid,/his wrath, before gods and men, is fearful thing" Lines 232-234. Now, Apollo is actually afraid of Orestes' anger if he refuses to help him as well as the anger of the other gods. Just as it is the Furies' duty to pursue Orestes for killing Clytaemnestra, so too is it Apollo's duty to defend Orestes against their attacks. The two divinities are driven by different forces. The Furies do not understand why Apollo cares so much about this human, and Apollo does not understand why the Furies care so little for him and are so cruel. Again, this is a conflict between the old world of which the Furies are a part, where the gods controlled many human events, and now it appears that the newer gods work together with the humans more. Rather than trying to destroy, these newer gods such as Apollo want to heal and forgive. The Chorus of Furies and Apollo leave the temple at Delphi, going separately to Athena's temple at Athens to have her settle their dispute over the fate of Orestes.

Topic Tracking: Forgiveness 4

Topic Tracking: Humility 4

Topic Tracking: Motherhood 5



Lines 235-565

Meanwhile, Orestes has arrived at the Acropolis hill at Athens. Just as Apollo instructed him to do, the young man goes within and kneels on the floor, embracing the statue of Athena. He explains that it was Apollo who advised him to go to her for assistance so that she can make a judgment in his "trial." The Chorus of Furies arrives and frantically begin searching for Orestes, calling themselves "hounds after the bleeding fawn." Seeing him, they become very excited and declare that he must give them the "red blood" of his body for them to suck out of him. They mention that the god of the Underworld, Hades is very great because he punishes men for their crimes on earth after they die. Oddly enough, Hades is a younger god just like Apollo and Zeus, for he is Zeus' brother. Yet these avenging goddess do not have any problem with him. Unafraid, Orestes does not flee this time and instead responds to them that his sin of matricide is disappearing, because of the piety he showed back in Delphi at Apollo's temple. Because he made a sacrifice there to the gods, he is forgiven for this crime of matricide. He calls out for Athena to assist him in dealing with these Furies, declaring that she will save him.

Topic Tracking: Forgiveness 5

Orestes admires Athena very much, "Whether now ranging somewhere in the Libyan land/beside her father's crossing and by Triton's run/of waters she sets upright or enshrouded foot/rescuing there her friends, or on the Phlegraean flat/like some bold man of armies sweeps with eyes the scene,/let her come! She is a god and hears me far away" Lines 292-297. This goddess of wisdom is very bold, known to "rescue her friends" from danger; Athena's effect on humans is compared to "a bold man of armies." She is Orestes' hope in dealing with these avenging Furies. The Chorus of Furies insists that no one can save him from their clutches, because the crime of matricide is an unforgivable sin no matter what, adding that they want to drain away all of his blood and take his life. They ramble on about how Orestes' hands are stained with his mother's blood, and he will suffer intolerably for this, since nobody can stop their rage from devouring his soul, cursing Apollo for trying to stop them.

They continue to sing about sucking his blood, repeating the same words again and again in a rather primitive way, "Over the beast doomed to the fire/this is the chant, scatter of wits,/frenzy and fear, hurting the heart,/song of the Furies/binding brain and blighting blood/in its stringless melody.../Men's illusions in their pride under the sky melt/down, and are diminished into the ground, gone/before the onset of our black robes, pulsing/of our vindictive feet against them" Lines 341-371. Orestes is called a "beast" as the Furies loom over him, and the Furies describe themselves as having "scatter of wits/frenzy and fear." This suggests that they are rather erratic, unpredictable creatures, since they are in a frenzy. Finally, the Chorus punishes any men who are prideful and do not respect the gods. Although Orestes already told them that he has made a sacrifice to Athena, the Furies pay absolutely no attention to this.



The Furies do not forgive, but instead they punish anyone who does not respect the gods' laws, referring to the law against matricide in this situation. Yet Apollo already said that Zeus abolished the laws against murdering blood relatives. The human institution of marriage is a far more important relationship than just being blood relatives. Again, this is a conflict between the old world and the new world, as the Furies adhere to older, harsher laws that existed before Zeus was born. Although Orestes is forgiven and protected by the younger gods, the Furies still recognize the old gods as the authority in the world. They do not realize that the world has changed, refusing to surrender their harsh, primal perception of justice.

The Furies later rejoice that they represent the old world that existed before these younger gods, proclaiming that everybody in the world is afraid of their wrath, "Is there a man who does not fear/this, does not shrink to hear/how my place has been ordained,/granted and given by destiny/and god, absolute? Privilege/primeval yet is mine, nor am I without a place/though it be underneath the ground/and in no sunlight and in gloom that I must stand" Lines 389-396. These avenging goddesses call themselves "primeval" because they have existed for so very long, predating the arrival of Zeus and Apollo by far. They cry again that every man fears their wrath, because these Furies are so very powerful; they are filled with pride themselves now, even though they criticize men when they are prideful. These women live in the darkness underground, emerging only when a man has committed such a foul crime as Orestes has done.

The Furies do not realize that there are in fact many people who don't fear them any longer. Apollo treats them with extreme disapproval, for he portrays them to be savage and even uncivilized because of their thirst for blood and their enjoyment of harsh penalties, such as decapitation. Orestes doesn't fear the Furies any more either, for Apollo has given him confidence after making a promise to protect him. The young man is confident that Athena will understand his point of view and decide that the Furies are wrong in their ways of thinking, because they don't recognize that the world had changed from the way it used to be. The Furies mistakenly think that men and gods respect them as much as they did. In truth, they think that the Furies are lowly, monstrous creatures.

Topic Tracking: Humility 5

As Orestes and the Furies confront each other, Athena arrives at the temple dressed in full battle armor. She does not wear a dress or any of the clothing that would be customary for a female. The goddess of wisdom explains that she has rushed to arrive there as quickly as she could after hearing Orestes' appeal for help, although she was at Troy receiving land and weapons that the other Greek commanders had left there for her near the Scamandrus River. Curious, she asks what exactly is going on, as the Chorus of angry Furies moans nearby. Athena describes them not as goddesses or as humans, but instead as being "like no seed ever begotten." The Furies are outsiders from the human and godly worlds alike. They are creatures of the ancient past. However, Athena declares that their argument shall be heard because her temple is the "place of the just" and she shall see that justice is served. The Furies tell her that they



torment murderers, indicating that Orestes is a man whom they currently pursue because he killed his mother, Clytaemnestra. Athena asks if there was a reason why he killed her, or if maybe he was afraid of someone else's anger, referring perhaps to the restless spirit of Agamemnon.

The Furies respond that his reasons for murdering are irrelevant, because the bare fact remains that he committed matricide. Athena dismisses this, saying to them "You wish to be called righteous rather than act right" Lines 430, suggesting that the Furies do not deliver justice in actuality and instead just want everybody to think that they do. Instead, they are shallow creatures that fail to rationalize their actions. Rather than thinking about the exact circumstances surrounding a crime, such as in the situation with Orestes, the Furies exact a false sense of justice. These creatures respond by saying simply that she can then make the final decision in their disagreement then, and they will respect it. If Athena decides that Orestes is guilty, then they will continue to torment him, but if she decides that he is innocent from crime then they will leave him alone. Agreeing on this, Athena asks Orestes to describe his point of view, giving him a chance to defend himself. Orestes responds that he did not come to the Acropolis in order to find forgiveness for killing Clytaemnestra, but instead it was to ask Athena for protection against the Furies, who refuse to leave him alone.

Topic Tracking: Forgiveness 6

Topic Tracking: Motherhood 6

Orestes goes on to explain that he has come to Athens all the way from Argos and that his father Agamemnon is the very man who led the Greek forces to victory at Troy, adding that "He died/without honor when he came home. It was my mother/[Clytaemnestra]/of the dark heart, who.../cut him down. The bath is witness to his death./I was an exile in the time before this. I came back/and killed the woman who gave me birth. I plead guilty./My father was dear, and this was vengeance for his blood./Apollo shares responsibility for this./He counterspurred my heart and told me of pains to come/if I should fail to act against the guilty ones" Lines 458-467. The young man admits that he killed his mother, but it was in response to his father's death. The god Apollo instructed Orestes that he was obligated to kill Clytaemnestra, or else he would suffer himself. The fact that he killed this woman is clear and evident, but what remains to be seen is whether or not Orestes should be punished for this act, as the Furies insist he must be. He chose to avenge his father, and now he asks Athena to decide what should happen next. Should the Furies torment him to the death, or should the Furies leave him alone? Orestes states that, as the Furies have said, he too will accept any decision that Athena shall make, whether it is for better or worse.

The goddess of wisdom becomes very thoughtful, declaring that there is no one man who can make a judgment in a situation such as this, nor does she have the authority to make such an important decision, either. Athena would like to see that justice is served, and although she knows that Orestes is not a villain and will not harm Athens, the Furies also have a valid argument as well, because he has murdered his own mother. She warns that if the Furies do not win this disagreement and Orestes goes free, then they might bring Athens great sickness, just to spite Athena for not siding with them.



Pondering these things, Athena declares, "Here is dilemma. Whether I let them stay or drive/them off, it is hard course and will hurt. Then, since/the burden of the case is here, and rests on me,/I shall select judges of manslaughter, and swear/them in, establish a court into all time to come" Lines 480-484. Because the disagreement is a very tricky situation, and the Furies will cause destruction whether they win the case and torment Orestes, or if they lose the case and poison Athens, Athena will find men to serve as a jury and hear the two sides of this disagreement.

These men will then make a decision after hearing the evidence, and a court shall thus exist from that point forward there on the Acropolis hill high above the city of Athens. Athena urges the Furies and Orestes to go and prepare their respective arguments before she returns, so that the trial can begin when the jury arrives, leaving the temple to go down into the city in search of the most devout citizens to serve as jurors. Rather than using her divine wisdom to solve this disagreement, Athena instead turns to humans for justice. This was a problem that the Furies pointed out earlier, because they think these younger gods help humans out too much, instead of dominating them. The Furies represent an older world and an older way of thinking that existed before Zeus, when humans were at the mercy of the gods. Now things are very different, and the gods work with the humans cooperatively. After Athena leaves, the Chorus of Furies laments that if Orestes is found to be not guilty and suffers no punishment, then people everywhere will start murdering their parents because they think that they can get away with it just like Orestes has done. For this reason, the Furies insist again that he must be punished.

If Orestes is found not to be guilty, then the Furies say they will unleash death against all men, in order to prevent this lawlessness from becoming widespread. The avenging monsters cry aloud, "Now/the House of Justice has collapsed./There are times when fear is good./It must keep its watchful place/at the heart's controls. There is/advantage/in the wisdom won from pain./Should the city, should the man/rear a heart that nowhere goes/in fear, how shall such a one/any more respect the right?/Refuse the life of anarchy" Lines 515-526. They have cataclysmic visions of what will happen to the world if Orestes escapes punishment, since there will be no justice to this matricidal murderer.

Men will no longer fear the Furies' wrath if Orestes is found innocent; they insist that fear is necessary in a city to maintain order. If there is no fear of consequences, then men will begin committing more crimes, and society will fall apart. The Furies call this lifestyle anarchy, where there is no government. They address Orestes, still kneeling before the statue of Athena, urging him to simply accept the consequences for what has happened rather than trying to fight back, warning "Vengeance will be upon you." The Chorus says that the just man has nothing to worry about, but a man who takes the law into his own hands shall suffer intolerably for what he has done.

The Furies use a frightening comparison for any man who dares to break the sacred laws of the gods by comparing the criminal to a sailor whose ship has been badly ruined by some storm. Lost at sea, "He calls on those who hear not, caught inside/the hard wrestle of water./The spirit laughs at the hot-hearted man,/the man who said 'never to



me,' watches him/pinned in distress, unable to run free of the crests./He had good luck in his life. Now/he smashes it on the reef of Right/and drowns, unwept and forgotten" Lines 558-565. The criminal is killed, for there is no one who can save him from the justice that is owed to him. This is the perception that the Furies have of Orestes.

Like the sailor lost at sea, Orestes said 'never to me' when thinking about being punished for killing his mother, Clytaemnestra. The Chorus warns him that he was wrong and he, too, will feel the "reef of Right," the claws of the Furies' justice as he is tormented. Orestes will be forgotten, and nobody will mourn for him because he is such a villain; he must be punished to set an example for anyone else who may want to murder their parents, otherwise people will start thinking that they can get away with it. The two sides remain in deep disagreement. The Furies insist that Orestes is quite guilty even as Orestes protests his innocence. They wait impatiently for the return of Athena so that they may present their arguments to the jury.

Topic Tracking: Forgiveness 7

Topic Tracking: Humility 6



Line 566-733

At this moment, Athena returns to her temple at the Acropolis in Athens, accompanied by twelve jurors who will make a decision after hearing the disagreement between the Chorus of Furies and Orestes. Athena orders her Herald to sound the trumpet and announce that the court session will begin. This way, all Athenian citizens will know what is going on. She explains, "Let the stabbing voice of the Etruscan/trumpet, blown to the full with mortal wind, crash out/its high call to all the assembled populace./For in the filling of this senatorial ground/it is best for all the city to be silent and learn/the measures I have laid down into the rest of time" Lines 567-572. Athena is establishing a court that will try other cases in the future as well. She wants everyone in Athens to watch what she is doing, so that they will be able to properly resolve future disagreements between other groups of people. As the trumpets sound, <MAJ2.Apollo suddenly appears again. Angry, the Furies demand to know why he has come there, insisting that it is none of his business. Apollo replies that he has come to testify on Orestes' behalf, defending him for the murder of Clytaemnestra. He urges Athena to proceed with the trial, and so she begins, acting as the judge and facilitator of the trial.

First, she asks the Furies to explain what Orestes has been charged with exactly, stating that the pursuer must begin every court case so that it is clear what the purpose of the trial is. These words set a standard for how future trials shall be conducted, with the plaintiff speaking first. The Furies interrogate Orestes in front of the jury, asking if he killed Clytaemnestra; he readily admits this, describing how he cut her throat with his sword. Yet he states that Apollo prompted him to kill her to avenge the death of his father, Agamemnon. The Furies reply that Clytaemnestra has suffered for her crime, but Orestes the murderer is still living. They insist that there was never a need to punish Clytaemnestra, because Agamemnon was not a blood relative, but because he killed his own mother, Orestes must suffer intolerably.

In defense, Orestes calls Apollo to the stand to explain why he was justified in killing Clytaemnestra. The god of prophecy states plainly, "This [the murder of Clytaemnestra] is justice. Recognize then how great its strength./I tell you, follow our father's will. For not even/the oath that binds you is more strong than Zeus is strong" Lines 619-621. Apollo reaffirms that Orestes did the right thing, suggesting that even Zeus himself supported this action. He urges everyone to recognize "how great its strength." This point of view is very much in contrast to that of the Chorus of Furies.

Topic Tracking: Forgiveness 8

Topic Tracking: Humility 7

Apollo next states that the cruel manner in which Agamemnon was murdered justifies Orestes' actions. Agamemnon had just returned from a great victory in the Trojan War and was taking a bath, when Clytaemnestra restrained his arms in a robe and chopped him into pieces with an ax. This was a cowardly, dishonorable way to kill. Apollo calls this the "death of a great man" who was killed by means of deception from his very own wife. The Furies don't believe that Zeus would support this action, declaring that Zeus



once handcuffed and imprisoned his own father, Cronus for crimes that he had committed. The Chorus insists that Zeus supports punishing men as much as women, for Clytaemnestra was merely avenging the death of their eldest daughter Iphigenia whom he had sacrificed so that the Greek ships could sail to Troy.

Apollo replies that imprisonment and murder are two totally different things. Clytaemnestra did not imprison or handcuff Agamemnon to punish him; she murdered him in cold blood. The Furies ask what would happen to Orestes if he is forgiven for this crime, declaring that he will live his life in misery anyway because no other city will want him to live there, including his home city of Argos. People everywhere will be disgusted that he spilled the blood of his own mother.

Topic Tracking: Motherhood 7

The god of prophecy rejects this argument from the Chorus of Furies, declaring that mothers are not in fact blood relatives of their children at all. He states that women are merely vessels that hold the man's seed. They are like the soil of a farm that nurtures the seeds that are planted there, until they bloom. The man is the only true blood relative of a child and as such, Orestes was fully justified in avenging his father's death, "The mother is no parent of that which is called/her child, but only nurse of the new-planted seed/that grows. The parent is he who mounts. A stranger she/preserves a stranger's seed, if no god interfere.../There can/be a father without any mother. There [Athena] stands,/the living witness, daughter of Olympian Zeus,/she who was never fostered in the dark womb/yet such a child as no goddess could bring to birth" Lines 658-666. As an example to support this argument that mothers are not blood relatives of their children, Apollo refers to Athena, the very judge at this trial. She was born after popping out of Zeus' head, without any help from any woman, mortal or godly. Apollo declares that Orestes was completely justified in avenging Agamemnon's death, because the man is the only blood relative of the child. The mother is merely an empty vessel to hold the growing child until he is born.

Topic Tracking: Motherhood 8

After using Athena as an example for why Clytaemnestra is not Orestes' blood relative, Apollo adds that if Orestes is indeed acquitted for this crime, then Orestes will go home to Argos, and he shall insure that the Argive citizens shall forever be allies with the Athenians. He says these words with great confidence, "I shall make great your city and its populace./So I have brought this man to sit beside the hearth/of your house, to be your true friend for the rest of time,/so you shall win him, goddess, to fight by your side,/and among men to come this shall stand a strong bond/that his and your own people's children shall be friends" Lines 668-673. If Athena forgives Orestes for killing Clytaemnestra, then she will have many benefits. Rather than furthering a pattern of destruction and murder that has afflicted the rulers of Argos ever since Atreus was king, now Athena can insure future peace, prosperity, and friendship between Athens and Argos as well.



With these words said, Athena next asks if the Chorus of Furies or Apollo have any other arguments to add, but both sides rest their cases and wait to hear the jury's decision. The goddess of wisdom turns to these twelve men, reminding them about the holiness of the Acropolis where they stand. Because of this, she warns them not to "muddy their own laws/with foul infusions." She encourages them to make the best decision based upon the evidence that they have heard, and not to make a poor decision. If a poor decision is made, that will be unjust and the court will become foul and meaningless. She adds that this court shall be present on the Acropolis to decide many cases in the future as well, saying "I establish this tribunal." Athena adds that the citizens of Athens must use the court to accomplish good and to honor the laws that the city has established.

Topic Tracking: Humility 8

Next she asks the jury of twelve men to cast their votes about whether or not Orestes is guilty for the crime of killing a blood relative. The Furies warn as the voting occurs that they will destroy Athens if the jury rules against them. Apollo reassures the jury not to be afraid of the Furies because the king of the gods, Zeus, will protect them all from any danger. The Furies reply that regardless, they will return to Athens and destroy the countryside. Apollo reprimands them, accusing them of having no respect for any gods at all; they have no humility and instead worry about their own selfish anger. The two continue to argue back and forth and resort to name-calling. Apollo says that if a man is faithful and worships the gods dutifully, then he is obligated to protect that man.

The Furies accuse Apollo of overturning the older order of gods that ruled before Zeus since he "won the ancient goddesses over with wine." Apollo warns that the Furies will not win the case, nor will they be able to cause any destruction in response to this at all. The Furies say that Apollo has no respect for them, for they are much older than he is. They calm their anger down a bit as they wait to hear the decision of the jury, "Since you, a young god, would ride down my elder age,/I must stay here and listen to how the trial goes,/being yet uncertain to loose my anger on the state" Lines 731-733. Apollo has insulted them greatly and these avenging creatures are resentful of him. They all sit expectantly to hear from Athena.

Topic Tracking: Humility 9

Topic Tracking: Forgiveness 9



Lines 734-1047

However, a surprising event has occurred! The jury of twelve men has cast an even number of votes. Six jurors have voted for Orestes to be guilty, but six jurors have voted for Orestes to be not guilty. The final, deciding vote is left up to Athena, who is the overseer of this trial. Because she understands Apollo's argument, and because she herself is living proof that a mother is not really necessary to have a child, Athena has cast a vote of "not guilty." Athena was born herself from the head of Zeus without any woman's assistance, thus she would naturally tend to favor the men rather than the side of these avenging women. She dresses like a man, and she behaves aggressively as a man would. She defends her reasons for this by saying, "There is no mother anywhere who gave me birth,/and, but for marriage, I am always for the male/with all my heart, and strongly on my father's side./So, in a case where the wife has killed her husband, lord/of the house, her death shall not mean most to me" Lines 736-740. Athena sympathizes with Orestes because she feels far greater loyalty towards her father than she does for any wife of his. After all of the votes have been counted and the final decision is announced, Orestes is filled with joy. This burden is suddenly lifted from his shoulders, and he is free to go, unmolested by the insidious Furies.

Orestes thanks Athena, Apollo, and Zeus alike for aiding him against the Furies, stating that he wishes to return to his home city of Argos immediately, where he will rule as his father's successor. He promises that Argos shall forever be an ally of Athens in protecting it against any enemy that may wish to attack it, adding that even after he is dead, any ruler or person who does aid Athens in times of need will be cursed until they fulfill this promise. The man wishes Athena and the citizens of Athens the best of luck in preserving themselves against all enemies. Orestes leaves the Acropolis and Athens, not to be heard from again. He returns to Argos and reestablishes order after Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra's many years of tyrannical rule over the city. With nothing else said, Apollo also leaves the temple of Athena and goes off to an unknown destination, his job finished there with the acquittal of Orestes.

The Chorus of Furies, however remains behind and is very, very upset to observe what has just happened. Lamenting, they cry aloud, "Gods of the younger generation, you have ridden down/the laws of the elder time, torn them out of my hands./I, disinherited, suffering, heavy with anger/shall let loose on the land/the vindictive poison/dripping deadly out of my heart upon the ground;/this from itself shall breed/cancer.../What shall I do? Afflicted/I am mocked by these people" Lines 778-789. The Furies are filled with rage that their authority has been questioned by Athena and the citizens of Athens, promising to destroy the city and fill it with death. They feel that the younger gods should have some respect for them because they are so ancient, although they refuse to accept that the world has changed from the way it was when they were young. Now there is a court to punish people, and their avenging powers are no longer effective.

Topic Tracking: Forgiveness 10

Topic Tracking: Humility 10



Athena attempts to comfort the Furies, urging them not to become angry or to bring sickness to Athens. She states that the Furies are not mocked at all, but instead Zeus himself made the decision to spare Orestes from punishment. Athena offers a compromise, stating "In complete honesty I promise you a place/of your own, deep hidden underground that is yours by right/where you shall sit on shining chairs beneath the hearth/to accept devotions offered by your citizens" Lines 804-807. Rather than being separate from the younger gods, relics from an ancient time, Athena asks the Furies to work together with the younger gods. If the Furies will put aside their anger, they can be worshipped just like any younger god, instead of being considered primitive and uncivilized, because of their thirst for blood. Now they can even have golden thrones under the earth where they will rule, if they accept Athena's generous offer. She promises that people will respect them, which is something that the Furies have wanted all along. However, the avenging Furies merely chant those exact same words again, "Afflicted/I am mocked by these people." They appear not to hear what Athena has said because they are so consumed with anger after losing the court case.

The goddess of wisdom assures them again, stating that these Furies are not dishonored and that they are truly goddesses. She adds that Zeus supports her actions as well, adding "I am the only god/who knows the keys to where his thunderbolts are locked." She encourages the Furies to "be reasonable" instead of acting out of pure impulse. She asks the Furies to share her throne, her "pride of worship," assuring them that many people will respect them if they accept her offer. Athena tries to get the Furies to look ahead at a greater future that extends far beyond Orestes and Clytaemnestra. The Furies fail to understand what exactly she is offering to them. These avenging goddesses scream aloud that "The wind I breathe is fury and utter hate./Earth, ah, earth/what is this agony that crawls under my ribs?/Night, hear me, o Night,/mother. They have wiped me out/and the hard hands of the gods/and their treacheries have taken my old rights away" Lines 840-847. They call upon the powers of darkness to aide them now, jealous of these younger gods such as Athena and Zeus and insisting that they have stolen away their authority to punish murderers. The Furies refuse to accept Athena's offer to become a part of this new order of gods, remaining angry and vengeful.

Topic Tracking: Humility 11

Topic Tracking: Motherhood 9

Athena is calm and rational. She doesn't get angry after observing their reaction, warning the Furies that if they leave Athens and go to some other land, they inevitably will regret that they rejected her offer, for Athens is destined to become a great city in the future. Again, she describes her offer for the Furies to join her in becoming protectors of Athens, striking fear into the hearts of enemies and giving strength to the Athenian citizens. She patiently repeats, "No, let our wars rage outward hard against the man/who has fallen horribly in love with high renown./No true fighter I call the bird that fights at home./Such life I offer you, and it is yours to take./Do good, receive good, and be honored as the good/are honored. Share our country, the beloved of god" Lines 864-869. Rather than bringing death, Athena urges the Furies to become creatures of goodness, protectors of the greatest city of Athens. The goddess asks them to do good



to others and in return people will treat them well. If they bring evil to others, then people will not respect the Furies. Thus, the key to earning the respect that they have sought is to forgive, rather than wreaking an endless wave of destruction across the land as they threaten to do now. They insist that Athena and Zeus are "younger gods" and that the Furies are naturally superior to them in power simply because they are older.

Topic Tracking: Forgiveness 11

Yet again the Furies chant the same lines again that they uttered earlier, "The wind I breathe is fury and utter hate..." They do not listen to Athena, because they are so consumed by rage. These chant erratically, calling upon the powers of darkness yet again to aide them in destroying the land. Athena is still patient, even though it appears that she is making little progress in appeasing these avenging goddesses. She insists that she has been very kind to them, and if they continue to say that the younger gods have no respect then they will be wrong. Indeed, it is quite obvious that she has tried to talk to the Furies as equals even as they continue to ignore her. True to her name, the goddess of wisdom makes her offer again to share the power to rule Athens with her, saying again "Yours [is] the baron's portion in this land/if you will, in all justice, with full privilege."

In spite of the Furies' rudeness, she remains polite and still leaves her offer open that will give the Furies the respect they have sought, rather than being despised and feared as they are now because they are so primitive and ancient. Finally, the Furies look up and ask what exactly Athena means. They ask what powers they will have if they accept Athena's offer, to which she replies "A place free of all grief and pain. Take it for yours.../No household shall be prosperous without your will.../So we shall straighten the lives of all who worship us.../Stay here, then. You will win the hearts of others, too" Lines 893-901. The Furies are stunned that Athena would give them this much power, that any household that wishes to be prosperous in Athens must have their permission. They like the idea of this new responsibility and look upon Athena more favorably, for they would be ruling over Athens together with her.

Topic Tracking: Humility 12

Athena assures them that together, they will assure loyalty from all of the citizens in Athens, and in return Athens will become the greatest city. At long last, the Furies excitedly accept this offer, casting away their dark powers in favor of this new responsibility. Athena urges them to cast a positive spell over the city, filled with goodness instead of death, "Let it come out of the ground, out of the sea's water,/and from the high air make the waft of gentle gales/wash over the country in full sunlight, and the seed/and stream of the soil's yield and of the grazing beasts/be strong and never fail our people as time goes,/and make the human seed be kept alive" Lines 904-909. No longer creatures of darkness, now the Furies shall bring light and love into the hearts of men. They finally learn the hard lesson that they have avoided all along because of the internal resentment that they had for this younger generation of gods.



No longer outcasts, now the Furies are filled with an inner peace. They shall serve the common good now, basking in the light of wisdom and rationality that Athena carries with her. With these combined powers, Athens will become the greatest city because its citizens will be filled with great wisdom, furthered by the fact that Athena has shown the citizens how to conduct a courtroom trial in order to judge accused criminals. No longer will men randomly pursue one another and take the law into their own hands as the Furies had once wanted to do. The establishment of a court on the Acropolis augments the greatness that the city of Athens shall bring into the world. The Furies become creatures of rational thought rather than being creatures of pure emotion. They vow allegiance to the city of Athens.

Topic Tracking: Humility 13

After the Furies accept this offer, Athena announces that the Furies will be creatures of darkness no more. Instead, they will be creatures of goodness, called the "Eumenides." The Chorus announces kind words yet again, no chanting erratically, "Let there blow no wind that wrecks the trees./I pronounce words of grace./Nor blaze of heat blind the blossoms of grown plants.../Let no barren deadly sickness creep and kill./Flocks fatten. Earth be kind/to them, with double fold of fruit/in time appointed for its yielding. Secret child/of earth, her hidden wealth, bestow/blessing and surprise of gods" Lines 938-948. It is difficult to believe that these are indeed the same creatures that had only moments before cursed all men for their disrespect. Now the Eumenides demand prosperity all citizens in Athens. Athena urges the Athenians to hear these spoken words. The Eumenides declare that they forbid any murder between men, stating that the high laws of the land shall punish any criminals by using the court system that Athena has established. The goddess of wisdom is impressed and thanks Zeus for giving her the power to convince the Furies to rule Athens with her, rather than destroying it.

Now called the Eumenides, "The Benevolent Ones," the Furies promise to protect the goodness of mankind. Athens shall never have civil wars because they shall not allow it, urging all citizens of Athens to unify under their rule. If the Athenians squabble amongst themselves, then that will cause the destruction of the entire city. Athena urges these Eumenides to stand by these promises, proud that they have become so much more improved than before. The Chorus of Eumenides prepares to leave and sit on their golden chairs underground that Athena has established for them. Athena responds that she shall lead them to where this holy place shall be, saying "Go then. Sped by majestic sacrifice/from these, plunge beneath the ground. There hold/off what might hurt the land; pour in/the city's advantage, success in the end.../For good things given,/your hearts' desire be for good to return" Lines 1006-1013.

The goddess urges them to always protect the city of Athens, and in return the Chorus of Eumenides states that they will bring prosperity for the city, "Life will give you no regrets." Athena begins to line all citizens together in a long parade of people that will lead the Eumenides to their new holy throne beneath the city of Athens, carrying with them the "light of flaring torches" to guide the way underground. The Eumenides are destined to bring light into the darkness and to create good from evil. The old world of



the Furies and this new world of the younger gods Athena and Zeus are joined together at long last, through this remarkable transformation of the Furies.

As the procession of people and gods is assembled with Athena leading the crowd, all of the Athenian women who walk with the Eumenides praise them aloud, "Gracious be, wish what the land wishes,/follow, grave goddesses, flushed in the flame sprung/torchlight gay on your journey./Singing all follow our footsteps./There shall be peace forever between these people/of [Athena] and their guests. Zeus the all seeing/met with Destiny to confirm it./Singing all follow our footsteps" Lines 1040-1047. All people follow Athena as she leads the Eumenides away from the Acropolis down into this secret place beneath the ground. The citizens of Athens show respect now, wishing for them to bring everlasting peace for Athens and to let the city defeat its enemies.

No longer goddesses of darkness and revenge, the Eumenides have become protectors of Athens, inspired and given a new purpose by wise Athena. They seek to defend the innocent and promote justice throughout the city. The Furies are respected by all Athenian citizens and even by Athena herself. All along, these monstrous women were merely seeking acceptance from the younger generation. They clung tightly to their visions of an older, more merciless world of which they were a product and imposed these same ancient values upon the modern world. Finally, the Furies learn to embrace change and become a part of this new world rather than living as outcasts.

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With these words spoken, the future of Athens appears to be very bright, indeed. Athena and the Eumenides shall insure its future prosperity, as long as the Athenian people remain dutiful to them. Also, the House of Argos has found peace after the judgment of Athena, and the kind Orestes has regained that city's throne which had been stolen from him by Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. Agamemnon's death has been avenged, and Clytemnestra's suffering is rightfully ignored now that there shall be no one to avenge her death. Orestes has promised an everlasting brotherhood between Athens and Argos, vowing that the two cities shall forever protect one another in times of need.

Athena has also established a court of justice in Athens to deal with accused criminals, rather than having one man judging them to be guilty or innocent. Now there are to be public trials decided by a large jury of men. In spite of the sadness that began when Agamemnon came home from Troy, the tale of Orestes ends with promises of a bright future for Athens and all of Hellas. It reasserts faith in the gods and carries a new hope to the Athenian populace. Goodness shown to others brings back goodness in return. The gods urge humans to take responsibility for their actions, holding them accountable for things that they do, vowing not to blindly punish for no reason. If a man lives justly, he shall have prosperity. If a man lives wickedly, he shall suffer. That is the justice that Athena has taught, and that is the lesson of forgiveness that the Furies have learned.

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