Libation Bearers

AESCHYLUS

c. 525–456 BC

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Χοηφόροι

Translated from the Greek with AI (Claude) and edited

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Libation Bearers · Aeschylus (c. 525–456 BC)

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INTRODUCTION

Years after Clytemnestra killed Agamemnon, their son Orestes returns from exile to Argos, sent by Apollo to avenge his father. At Agamemnon's tomb he finds his sister Electra, who has come with a chorus of captive women to pour offerings sent by Clytemnestra after a terrifying dream.

Brother and sister recognize each other, and over the grave they and the chorus call on their dead father in a great lament that is also a summoning of strength. Then Orestes enters the palace in disguise, and the play moves toward the one act no Greek audience could watch without horror: a son killing his mother.

Libation Bearers is the second play of the *Oresteia* (458 BC): *Agamemnon,* then *Libation Bearers,* then *Eumenides*. Its title comes from the chorus, the women who carry the libations to the tomb.

Libation Bearers

Argos, at Agamemnon's tomb and then before the palace, some years after his murder.

PROLOGUE

Orestes returns from exile, leaves locks of hair at his father's tomb, and hides as women approach.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
1	**ORESTES** Ἑρμῆ χθόνιε, πατρῷ' ἐποπτεύων κράτη, σωτὴρ γενοῦ μοι ξύμμαχός τ' αἰτουμένῳ· ἥκω γὰρ ἐς γῆν τήνδε καὶ κατέρχομαι. τύμβου δ' ἐπ' ὄχθῳ τῷδε κηρύσσω πατρὶ κλύειν, ἀκοῦσαι … … … πλόκαμον Ἰνάχῳ θρεπτήριον. τὸν δεύτερον δὲ τόνδε πενθητήριον … οὐ γὰρ παρὼν ᾤμωξα σόν, πάτερ, μόρον οὐδ' ἐξέτεινα χεῖρ' ἐπ' ἐκφορᾷ νεκροῦ. … τί χρῆμα λεύσσω; τίς ποθ' ἥδ' ὁμήγυρις στείχει γυναικῶν φάρεσιν μελαγχίμοις πρέπουσα; ποίᾳ ξυμφορᾷ προσεικάσω; πότερα δόμοισι πῆμα προσκυρεῖ νέον; ἢ πατρὶ τῷμῷ τάσδ' ἐπεικάσας τύχω χοὰς φερούσας νερτέροις μειλίγματα;	**ORESTES** Hermes of the underworld, you who watch over my father's power, be my savior and my ally, I beg you. I have come to this land; I am back from exile. And on this mound of the tomb I call on my father to hear, to listen … … … a lock of hair for Inachus, in thanks for my upbringing, and this second one, in mourning … For I wasn't there, father, to lament your death, and I didn't stretch out my hand when your body was carried out. … What's this I see? What is this crowd of women coming this way, so conspicuous in their black cloaks? What misfortune should I take this for? Has some new grief struck the house? Or am I right to guess that they're bringing libations to my father, offerings to soothe the dead below?[1]
16	οὐδέν ποτ' ἄλλο· καὶ γὰρ Ἠλέκτραν δοκῶ στείχειν ἀδελφὴν τὴν ἐμὴν πένθει λυγρῷ πρέπουσαν. ὦ Ζεῦ, δός με τείσασθαι μόρον πατρός, γενοῦ δὲ σύμμαχος θέλων ἐμοί.	It can't be anything else. I think I see Electra, my own sister, coming, marked out by her bitter grief. Zeus, let me avenge my father's death, and be my ally; stand with me willingly.
20	Πυλάδη, σταθῶμεν ἐκποδών, ὡς ἂν σαφῶς / μάθω γυναικῶν ἥτις ἥδε προστροπή.	Pylades, let's stand out of the way, so I can find out clearly what this band of women has come to pray for.

PARODOS

Captive women bring libations from Clytemnestra after her nightmare and lament the unavenged blood.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
22	**CHORUS** ἰαλτὸς ἐκ δόμων ἔβαν χοὰς προπομπὸς ὀξύχειρι σὺν κτύπῳ. πρέπει παρηὶς φοινίοις ἀμυγμοῖς ὄνυχος ἄλοκι νεοτόμῳ· δι' αἰῶνος δ' ἰυγμοῖσι βόσκεται κέαρ.	**CHORUS** Sent out from the house I have come to escort the libations, with the sharp beat of hands. My cheek shows red with gashes, fresh furrows cut by the nail—

1 The play's first lines survive only in quotations by later writers, so there are gaps. A young man would dedicate a lock of his hair to his local river, here the Inachus of Argos, in thanks for his upbringing.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	λινοφθόροι δ' ὑφασμάτων λακίδες ἔφλαδον ὑπ' ἄλγεσιν, προστέρνῳ στολμῷ πέπλων ἀγελάστοις ξυμφοραῖς πεπληγμένων.	but all my life my heart has fed on cries of grief. In my anguish the linen is ripped, my woven clothes torn to rags, the robe that covers my breast struck by sorrows that know no laughter.
32	τορὸς δὲ Φοῖβος ὀρθόθριξ δόμων ὀνειρόμαντις, ἐξ ὕπνου κότον πνέων, ἀωρόνυκτον ἀμβόαμα μυχόθεν ἔλακε περὶ φόβῳ, γυναικείοισιν ἐν δώμασιν βαρὺς πίτνων. κριταί τε τῶνδ' ὀνειράτων θεόθεν ἔλακον ὑπέγγυοι μέμφεσθαι τοὺς γᾶς νέρθεν περιθύμως τοῖς κτανοῦσί τ' ἐγκοτεῖν.	For Phoebus, the dream-prophet of this house, shrill, making the hair stand on end, breathing wrath out of sleep, sent up a cry in the dead of night, a cry of terror from the inner rooms, falling heavy on the women's quarters. And those who read these dreams, under the god's pledge, cried out that those beneath the earth are bitterly aggrieved and rage against their killers.
42	τοιάνδε χάριν ἀχάριτον ἀπότροπον κακῶν, ἰὼ γαῖα μαῖα, μωμένα μ' ἰάλλει δύσθεος γυνά. φοβοῦ- μαι δ' ἔπος τόδ' ἐκβαλεῖν. τί γὰρ λύτρον πεσόντος αἵματος πέδοι; ἰὼ πάνοιζυς ἑστία, ἰὼ κατασκαφαὶ δόμων. ἀνήλιοι βροτοστυγεῖς δνόφοι καλύπτουσι δόμους δεσποτῶν θανάτοισι.	Seeking such a graceless grace to turn evil away— oh Earth, our mother!— the godless woman sends me out. But I'm afraid to let these words fall. For what can ransom blood once it has fallen to the ground? Oh hearth of utter misery! Oh house torn down! Sunless darkness, hateful to mortals, shrouds the house through the deaths of its masters.
55	σέβας δ' ἄμαχον ἀδάματον ἀπόλεμον τὸ πρὶν δι' ὤτων φρενός τε δαμίας περαῖνον νῦν ἀφίσταται. φοβεῖ- ται δέ τις. τὸ δ' εὐτυχεῖν, τόδ' ἐν βροτοῖς θεός τε καὶ θεοῦ πλέον. ῥοπὴ δ' ἐπισκοπεῖ δίκας ταχεῖα τοὺς μὲν ἐν φάει, τὰ δ' ἐν μεταιχμίῳ σκότου μένει χρονίζοντας ἄχη, τοὺς δ' ἄκραντος ἔχει νύξ.	The awe that once was unconquered, unbroken, unassailable, passing through the people's ears and minds, now stands aside. And people are afraid. Success— among mortals that is a god, and more than a god. But the scale of Justice watches: swiftly it falls on some in the light; for others, who linger, troubles wait in the borderland of dark; and others are held by night, where nothing comes to pass.
66	δι' αἵματ' ἐκποθένθ' ὑπὸ χθονὸς τροφοῦ τίτας φόνος πέπηγεν οὐ διαρρύδαν. διαλγὴς δ' ἄτα διαφέρει τὸν αἴτιον παναρκέτας νόσου βρύειν.	Through blood drunk up by the nursing earth the gore of vengeance has set hard and will not drain away. Agonizing ruin tears the guilty one apart

	GREEK	ENGLISH
		until he teems with a sickness that overpowers all.
71	θιγόντι δ' οὔτι νυμφικῶν ἐδωλίων ἄκος, πόροι τε πάντες ἐκ μιᾶς ὁδοῦ προβαίνοντες τὸν χερομυσῆ φόνον καθαίροντες ἴθυσαν μάταν.	For one who violates a bridal chamber there is no cure; and though all streams ran together in a single course to wash the blood from a polluted hand, they would rush on in vain.
75	ἐμοὶ δ' —ἀνάγκαν γὰρ ἀμφίπτολιν θεοὶ προσήνεγκαν· ἐκ γὰρ οἴκων πατρῴων δούλιόν μ' ἐσᾶγον αἶσαν— δίκαια καὶ μὴ δίκαια ἀρχὰς πρέπον βίᾳ φρενῶν αἰνέσαι πικρὸν στύγος κρατούσῃ. δακρύω δ' ὑφ' εἱμάτων ματαίοισι δεσποτᾶν τύχαις, κρυφαίοις πένθεσιν παχνουμένη.	But as for me—since the gods brought the doom of siege upon my city, and led me from my father's house into a slave's lot— it is fitting that I approve my rulers' commands, just or unjust, forcing my mind to master my bitter hatred. Yet beneath my robes I weep for my masters' senseless fate, chilled by secret grief.

FIRST EPISODE

Electra prays over the tomb, finds the lock and footprints, and recognizes Orestes; he tells of Apollo's command.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
84	**ELECTRA** δμωαὶ γυναῖκες, δωμάτων εὐθήμονες, ἐπεὶ πάρεστε τῆσδε προστροπῆς ἐμοὶ πομποί, γένεσθε τῶνδε σύμβουλοι πέρι· τί φῶ χέουσα τάσδε κηδείους χοάς; πῶς εὔφρον' εἶπω, πῶς κατεύξομαι πατρί; πότερα λέγουσα παρὰ φίλης φίλῳ φέρειν γυναικὸς ἀνδρί, τῆς ἐμῆς μητρὸς πάρα; τῶνδ' οὐ πάρεστι θάρσος, οὐδ' ἔχω τί φῶ, χέουσα τόνδε πέλανον ἐν τύμβῳ πατρός. ἢ τοῦτο φάσκω τοὔπος, ὡς νόμος βροτοῖς, ἔσθλ' ἀντιδοῦναι τοῖσι πέμπουσιν τάδε στέφη, δόσιν γε τῶν κακῶν ἐπαξίαν;	**ELECTRA** Serving women, you who keep the house in order, since you're here to escort me in this rite of supplication, give me your advice about it. What should I say as I pour these funeral libations? How can I speak kindly? How am I to pray to my father? Should I say I bring them to a loving husband from a loving wife—from my own mother? I don't have the nerve for that, and I don't know what to say as I pour this offering on my father's tomb. Or should I say the words that are customary among mortals: that he should repay with good those who send these offerings—a gift, that is, worthy of their wickedness?
96	ἢ σῖγ' ἀτίμως, ὥσπερ οὖν ἀπώλετο πατήρ, τάδ' ἐκχέασα, γάποτον χύσιν, στείχω καθάρμαθ' ὥς τις ἐκπέμψας πάλιν δικοῦσα τεῦχος ἀστρόφοισιν ὄμμασιν;	Or should I pour these out in silence and dishonor, just as my father died, and let the earth drink them, then walk away, like someone who has thrown out the leavings of a purification, flinging the vessel behind me without looking back?
100	τῆσδ' ἐστὲ βουλῆς, ὦ φίλαι, μεταίτιαι· κοινὸν γὰρ ἔχθος ἐν δόμοις νομίζομεν. μὴ κεύθετ' ἔνδον καρδίας φόβῳ τινός. τὸ μόρσιμον γὰρ τόν τ' ἐλεύθερον μένει	Friends, share this decision with me; in this house we hold our hatred in common. Don't hide what's in your hearts for fear of anyone. What is fated waits for the free man and for the man ruled by

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	καὶ τὸν πρὸς ἄλλης δεσποτούμενον χερός. λέγοις ἄν, εἴ τι τῶνδ' ἔχοις ὑπέρτερον.	another's hand alike. Speak, if you have anything better to suggest than this.
106	**CHORUS** αἰδουμένη σοι βωμὸν ὡς τύμβον πατρὸς / λέξω, κελεύεις γάρ, τὸν ἐκ φρενὸς λόγον.	**CHORUS** I revere your father's tomb as if it were an altar, and since you ask, I'll tell you what is in my heart.
108	**ELECTRA** λέγοις ἄν, ὥσπερ ᾐδέσω τάφον πατρός.	**ELECTRA** Speak, then, as you revere my father's grave.
109	**CHORUS** φθέγγου χέουσα κεδνὰ τοῖσιν εὔφροσιν.	**CHORUS** As you pour, say words of blessing for those who wish him well.
110	**ELECTRA** τίνας δὲ τούτους τῶν φίλων προσεννέπω;	**ELECTRA** And which of his friends should I call by that name?
111	**CHORUS** πρῶτον μὲν αὐτὴν χὤστις Αἴγισθον στυγεῖ.	**CHORUS** First yourself, and anyone who hates Aegisthus.
112	**ELECTRA** ἐμοί τε καὶ σοί τἄρ' ἐπεύξομαι τάδε;	**ELECTRA** Then I'm to say this prayer for me and for you?
113	**CHORUS** αὐτὴ σὺ ταῦτα μανθάνουσ' ἤδη φράσαι.	**CHORUS** You understand that now; judge it for yourself.
114	**ELECTRA** τίν' οὖν ἔτ' ἄλλον τῇδε προστιθῶ στάσει;	**ELECTRA** Then who else should I add to our side?
115	**CHORUS** μέμνησ' Ὀρέστου, κεἰ θυραῖός ἐσθ' ὅμως.	**CHORUS** Remember Orestes, even though he's far from home.
116	**ELECTRA** εὖ τοῦτο, κἀφρένωσας οὐχ ἥκιστά με.	**ELECTRA** Well said. That's no small thing you've taught me.
117	**CHORUS** τοῖς αἰτίοις νῦν τοῦ φόνου μεμνημένη—	**CHORUS** And now remember those guilty of the murder—
118	**ELECTRA** τί φῶ; δίδασκ' ἄπειρον ἐξηγουμένη.	**ELECTRA** And say what? Explain it to me; I don't know how.
119	**CHORUS** ἐλθεῖν τιν' αὐτοῖς δαίμον' ἢ βροτῶν τινα—	**CHORUS** Pray that some god or some mortal may come to them—
120	**ELECTRA** πότερα δικαστὴν ἢ δικηφόρον λέγεις;	**ELECTRA** Do you mean as a judge, or as an avenger?
121	**CHORUS** ἁπλῶς τι φράζουσ', ὅστις ἀνταποκτενεῖ.	**CHORUS** Just say it plainly: someone who will kill them in return.
122	**ELECTRA** καὶ ταῦτά μοὐστὶν εὐσεβῆ θεῶν πάρα;	**ELECTRA** And is it pious for me to ask that of the gods?
123	**CHORUS** πῶς δ' οὐ τὸν ἐχθρὸν ἀνταμείβεσθαι κακοῖς;	**CHORUS** How could it not be, to pay back an enemy with harm?
124	**ELECTRA** κῆρυξ μέγιστε τῶν ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω, ἄρηξον, Ἑρμῆ χθόνιε, κηρύξας ἐμοὶ	**ELECTRA** Greatest herald of the world above and the world below, Hermes of the underworld, help

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	τοὺς γῆς ἔνερθε δαίμονας κλύειν ἐμὰς εὐχάς, πατρῴων δωμάτων ἐπισκόπους, καὶ Γαῖαν αὐτήν, ἣ τὰ πάντα τίκτεται, θρέψασά τ' αὖθις τῶνδε κῦμα λαμβάνει· κἀγὼ χέουσα τάσδε χέρνιβας βροτοῖς λέγω καλοῦσα πατέρ', "ἐποίκτιρόν τ' ἐμὲ φίλον τ' Ὀρέστην· πῶς ἀνάξομεν δόμοις; πεπραμένοι γὰρ νῦν γέ πως ἀλώμεθα πρὸς τῆς τεκούσης, ἄνδρα δ' ἀντηλλάξατο Αἴγισθον, ὅσπερ σοῦ φόνου μεταίτιος. κἀγὼ μὲν ἀντίδουλος· ἐκ δὲ χρημάτων φεύγων Ὀρέστης ἐστίν, οἱ δ' ὑπερκόπως ἐν τοῖσι σοῖς πόνοισι χλίουσιν μέγα.	me: proclaim to the spirits beneath the earth, who watch over my father's house, that they should hear my prayers—and to Earth herself, who gives birth to all things, nurtures them, and takes back their increase in turn. And as I pour these waters of cleansing for the dead, I call on my father and say: "Pity me, and your dear Orestes. How are we to rule in our own house? For now we are wanderers, sold, you might say, by the mother who bore us. She has traded us for a man, Aegisthus, who shared in your murder. I live no better than a slave, Orestes is an exile, shut out of his property, while they, in their arrogance, revel grandly in what you worked for.
138	ἐλθεῖν δ' Ὀρέστην δεῦρο σὺν τύχῃ τινὶ κατεύχομαί σοι, καὶ σὺ κλῦθί μου, πάτερ· αὐτῇ τέ μοι δὸς σωφρονεστέραν πολὺ μητρὸς γενέσθαι χεῖρά τ' εὐσεβεστέραν.	I pray to you that Orestes may come here with some good fortune—hear me, father. And grant that I myself may be far more self-controlled than my mother, and my hand more pious.
142	ἡμῖν μὲν εὐχὰς τάσδε, τοῖς δ' ἐναντίοις λέγω φανῆναί σου, πάτερ, τιμάορον, καὶ τοὺς κτανόντας ἀντικατθανεῖν δίκῃ. ταῦτ' ἐν μέσῳ τίθημι τῆς καλῆς ἀρᾶς, κείνοις λέγουσα τήνδε τὴν κακὴν ἀράν· ἡμῖν δὲ πομπὸς ἴσθι τῶν ἐσθλῶν ἄνω, σὺν θεοῖσι καὶ γῇ καὶ δίκῃ νικηφόρῳ."	Those are my prayers for us. For our enemies, father, I pray that your avenger may appear, and that your killers may be killed in return, as justice demands. In the middle of my prayer for good I set this, speaking this evil curse against them. But for us, be the one who sends blessings up to the world above, with the gods, and Earth, and Justice who brings victory."
149	τοιαῖσδ' ἐπ' εὐχαῖς τάσδ' ἐπισπένδω χοάς. ὑμᾶς δὲ κωκυτοῖς ἐπανθίζειν νόμος, παιᾶνα τοῦ θανόντος ἐξαυδωμένας.	With these prayers I pour out these libations. It's your custom to crown them with the flowers of lament, raising aloud the paean for the dead.
152	**CHORUS** ἵετε δάκρυ καναχὲς ὀλόμενον ὀλομένῳ δεσπότᾳ πρὸς ἔρυμα τόδε κακῶν, κεδνῶν τ' ἀπότροπον ἄγος ἀπεύχετον κεχυμένων χοᾶν. κλύε δέ μοι, κλύε, σέ- βας ὦ δέσποτ', ἐξ ἀμαυρᾶς φρενός. ὀτοτοτοτοτοτοῖ, ἴτω τις δορυ- σθενὴς ἀνήρ, ἀναλυτὴρ δόμων, Σκυθικά τ' ἐν χεροῖν παλίντον' ἐν ἔργῳ βέλη ἱππάλλων Ἄρης σχέδιά τ' αὐτόκωπα νωμῶν ξίφη.	**CHORUS** Let your tears fall, splashing, dying for our master who has died, on this bulwark that wards off evil and guards the good, now that the libations are poured to turn away the hateful pollution. Hear me, hear me, revered master, from the darkness of your mind. *Ototototototoi!* Let some man come, mighty with the spear, to set the house free— an Ares in the thick of battle, bending in his hands the Scythian bow, wielding the sword of a single piece for fighting hand to hand.
164	**ELECTRA** ἔχει μὲν ἤδη γαπότους χοὰς πατήρ· / νέου δὲ μύθου τοῦδε κοινωνήσατε·	**ELECTRA** My father has his libations now; the earth has drunk them. But share in this news with me—

	GREEK	ENGLISH
166	**CHORUS** λέγοις ἄν· ὀρχεῖται δὲ καρδία φόβῳ.	**CHORUS** Tell me; my heart is dancing with fear.
167	**ELECTRA** ὁρῶ τομαῖον τόνδε βόστρυχον τάφῳ.	**ELECTRA** I see this lock of hair, cut off, lying on the tomb.
168	**CHORUS** τίνος ποτ' ἀνδρός, ἢ βαθυζώνου κόρης;	**CHORUS** Whose could it be? A man's, or a deep-girdled girl's?
170	**ELECTRA** εὐξύμβολον τόδ' ἐστὶ παντὶ δοξάσαι.	**ELECTRA** That's easy enough for anyone to guess.
171	**CHORUS** πῶς οὖν; παλαιὰ παρὰ νεωτέρας μάθω.	**CHORUS** How so? Let the old learn from the young.
172	**ELECTRA** οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις πλὴν ἐμοῦ κείραιτό νιν.	**ELECTRA** There's no one but me who would have cut it.
173	**CHORUS** ἐχθροὶ γὰρ οἷς προσῆκε πενθῆσαι τριχί.	**CHORUS** No—those who ought to mourn him with a lock of hair are his enemies.
174	**ELECTRA** καὶ μὴν ὅδ' ἐστὶ κάρτ' ἰδεῖν ὁμόπτερος—	**ELECTRA** And look, it seems very much of a feather with—
175	**CHORUS** ποίαις ἐθείραις; τοῦτο γὰρ θέλω μαθεῖν.	**CHORUS** With whose hair? That's what I want to know.
176	**ELECTRA** αὐτοῖσιν ἡμῖν κάρτα προσφερὴς ἰδεῖν.	**ELECTRA** With my own. It looks very much like it.
177	**CHORUS** μῶν οὖν Ὀρέστου κρύβδα δῶρον ἦν τόδε;	**CHORUS** Then could it be that this was a secret gift from Orestes?
178	**ELECTRA** μάλιστ' ἐκείνου βοστρύχοις προσείδεται.	**ELECTRA** It looks most like his hair.
179	**CHORUS** καὶ πῶς ἐκεῖνος δεῦρ' ἐτόλμησεν μολεῖν;	**CHORUS** And how could he have dared to come here?
180	**ELECTRA** ἔπεμψε χαίτην κουρίμην χάριν πατρός.	**ELECTRA** He sent it—a lock cut off as a tribute to his father.
181	**CHORUS** οὐχ ἧσσον εὐδάκρυτά μοι λέγεις τάδε, / εἰ τῆσδε χώρας μήποτε ψαύσει ποδί.	**CHORUS** What you say is no less a cause for tears, if he is never going to set foot in this land.
183	**ELECTRA** κἀμοὶ προσέστη καρδίας κλυδώνιον χολῆς, ἐπαίσθην δ' ὡς διανταίῳ βέλει· ἐξ ὀμμάτων δὲ δίψιοι πίπτουσί μοι σταγόνες ἄφρακτοι δυσχίμου πλημμυρίδος, πλόκαμον ἰδούσῃ τόνδε· πῶς γὰρ ἐλπίσω ἀστῶν τιν' ἄλλον τῆσδε δεσπόζειν φόβης; ἀλλ' οὐδὲ μήν νιν ἡ κτανοῦσ' ἐκείρατο, ἐμὴ δὲ μήτηρ, οὐδαμῶς ἐπώνυμον φρόνημα παισὶ δύσθεον πεπαμένη. ἐγὼ δ' ὅπως μὲν ἄντικρυς τάδ' αἰνέσω, εἶναι τόδ' ἀγλάισμά μοι τοῦ φιλτάτου βροτῶν Ὀρέστου—σαίνομαι δ' ὑπ' ἐλπίδος.	**ELECTRA** For me too a wave of bitterness has surged against my heart, and I'm struck as if by an arrow driven right through me. From my eyes, as I look at this lock, thirsty drops fall unchecked, the flood of a winter storm. How can I suppose that anyone else in the city owns this hair? And surely it wasn't cut by the woman who killed him—my mother, whose godless heart toward her children is nothing like her name. And yet how can I accept outright that this offering comes from Orestes, the dearest of all mortals to me? Still, hope fawns on me.
195		

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	φεῦ. εἴθ' εἶχε φωνὴν εὔφρον' ἀγγέλου δίκην, ὅπως δίφροντις οὖσα μὴ 'κινυσσόμην, ἀλλ' εὖ 'σαφήνει τόνδ' ἀποπτύσαι πλόκον, εἴπερ γ' ἀπ' ἐχθροῦ κρατὸς ἦν τετμημένος, ἢ ξυγγενὴς ὢν εἶχε συμπενθεῖν ἐμοὶ ἄγαλμα τύμβου τοῦδε καὶ τιμὴν πατρός.	Ah. If only it had a kind voice, like a messenger, so I wouldn't be tossed this way and that, torn in two. It would tell me plainly either to spit this lock away in disgust, if it was cut from an enemy's head, or else, as my kin, it could mourn with me, an ornament for this tomb and an honor to my father.
201	ἀλλ' εἰδότας μὲν τοὺς θεοὺς καλούμεθα, οἵοισιν ἐν χειμῶσι ναυτίλων δίκην στροβούμεθ'· εἰ δὲ χρὴ τυχεῖν σωτηρίας, σμικροῦ γένοιτ' ἂν σπέρματος μέγας πυθμήν.	But the gods we call on know the kind of storms we're spun around in, like sailors. And if we're meant to find safety, a great trunk may grow from a small seed.
205	καὶ μὴν στίβοι γε, δεύτερον τεκμήριον, ποδῶν ὅμοιοι τοῖς τ' ἐμοῖσιν ἐμφερεῖς— καὶ γὰρ δύ' ἐστὸν τώδε περιγραφὰ ποδοῖν, αὐτοῦ τ' ἐκείνου καὶ συνεμπόρου τινός. πτέρναι τενόντων θ' ὑπογραφαὶ μετρούμεναι εἰς ταὐτὸ συμβαίνουσι τοῖς ἐμοῖς στίβοις. πάρεστι δ' ὠδὶς καὶ φρενῶν καταφθορά.	And look—footprints, a second sign, like mine and matching them. Yes, here are two outlines of feet, his own and some companion's. The heels and the lines of the tendons, when I measure them, come out the same as my own prints. I feel a pang like labor, and my wits are going.
212	**ORESTES** εὔχου τὰ λοιπά, τοῖς θεοῖς τελεσφόρους / εὐχὰς ἐπαγγέλλουσα, τυγχάνειν καλῶς.	**ORESTES** Tell the gods that your prayers have been answered, and pray that what follows will go well.
214	**ELECTRA** ἐπεὶ τί νῦν ἔκατι δαιμόνων κυρῶ;	**ELECTRA** Why? What have I won now from the gods?
215	**ORESTES** εἰς ὄψιν ἥκεις ὧνπερ ἐξηύχου πάλαι.	**ORESTES** You've come face to face with what you've been praying for so long.
216	**ELECTRA** καὶ τίνα σύνοισθά μοι καλουμένη βροτῶν;	**ELECTRA** And who do you know I've been calling on?
217	**ORESTES** σύνοιδ' Ὀρέστην πολλά σ' ἐκπαγλουμένην.	**ORESTES** I know you've been longing desperately for Orestes.
218	**ELECTRA** καὶ πρὸς τί δῆτα τυγχάνω κατευγμάτων;	**ELECTRA** And how have my prayers been answered, then?
219	**ORESTES** ὅδ' εἰμί· μὴ μάτευ' ἐμοῦ μᾶλλον φίλον.	**ORESTES** I'm here. Don't look for anyone dearer to you than me.
220	**ELECTRA** ἀλλ' ἦ δόλον τιν', ὦ ξέν', ἀμφί μοι πλέκεις;	**ELECTRA** Stranger, are you weaving some trap around me?
221	**ORESTES** αὐτὸς καθ' αὑτοῦ τἄρα μηχανορραφῶ.	**ORESTES** Then I'd be plotting against myself.
222	**ELECTRA** ἀλλ' ἐν κακοῖσι τοῖς ἐμοῖς γελᾶν θέλεις.	**ELECTRA** You want to laugh at my troubles.
223	**ORESTES** κἀν τοῖς ἐμοῖς ἄρ', εἴπερ ἔν γε τοῖσι σοῖς	**ORESTES** Then I'd be laughing at my own, if I laughed at yours.
224	**ELECTRA** ὡς ὄντ' Ὀρέστην τάδε σ' ἐγὼ προσεννέπω;	**ELECTRA** Am I really to speak to you as Orestes?

GREEK

ENGLISH

225 **ORESTES** αὐτὸν μὲν οὖν ὁρῶσα δυσμαθεῖς ἐμέ·
κουρὰν δ' ἰδοῦσα τήνδε κηδείου τριχὸς
ἰχνοσκοποῦσά τ' ἐν στίβοισι τοῖς ἐμοῖς
ἀνεπτερώθης κἀδόκεις ὁρᾶν ἐμέ.
σκέψαι τομῇ προσθεῖσα βόστρυχον τριχὸς
σαυτῆς ἀδελφοῦ σύμμετρον τὠμῷ κάρᾳ.
ἰδοῦ δ' ὕφασμα τοῦτο, σῆς ἔργον χερός,
σπάθης τε πληγὰς ἠδὲ θήρειον γραφήν.
ἔνδον γενοῦ, χαρᾷ δὲ μὴ 'κπλαγῇς φρένας·
τοὺς φιλτάτους γὰρ οἶδα νῷν ὄντας πικρούς.

ORESTES Now, when you see me in person, you're slow to know me. Yet when you saw this lock cut in mourning and tracked my footprints, your hopes took wing and you thought you saw me. Look: hold the lock up where it was cut. It's your brother's hair, and it matches my head. And see this weaving, the work of your own hands—the strokes of the batten, the pattern of animals. Get hold of yourself; don't let joy drive you out of your mind. I know that our nearest and dearest are bitter enemies to us both.

235 **ELECTRA** ὦ φίλτατον μέλημα δώμασιν πατρός,
δακρυτὸς ἐλπὶς σπέρματος σωτηρίου,
ἀλκῇ πεποιθὼς δῶμ' ἀνακτήσῃ πατρός.
ὦ τερπνὸν ὄμμα τέσσαρας μοίρας ἔχον
ἐμοί· προσαυδᾶν δ' ἐστ' ἀναγκαίως ἔχον
πατέρα τε, καὶ τὸ μητρὸς ἐς σέ μοι ῥέπει
στέργηθρον· ἡ δὲ πανδίκως ἐχθαίρεται·
καὶ τῆς τυθείσης νηλεῶς ὁμοσπόρου·
πιστὸς δ' ἀδελφὸς ἦσθ', ἐμοὶ σέβας φέρων
μόνος· Κράτος τε καὶ Δίκη σὺν τῷ τρίτῳ
πάντων μεγίστῳ Ζηνὶ συγγένοιτό σοι.

ELECTRA You darling of your father's house, hope of a saving seed, wept for—trust in your strength and you'll win back your father's house. Oh, face I love to see, you hold four places in my heart. I must call you father; and the love I owed my mother turns to you—she is hated, with every justice—and the love I owed my sister, cruelly sacrificed. And you were a faithful brother, the only one who showed me respect. May Power and Justice stand by you, and with them, third, Zeus, the greatest of all.[2]

246 **ORESTES** Ζεῦ Ζεῦ, θεωρὸς τῶνδε πραγμάτων γενοῦ·
ἰδοῦ δὲ γένναν εὖνιν αἰετοῦ πατρός,
θανόντος ἐν πλεκταῖσι καὶ σπειράμασιν
δεινῆς ἐχίδνης. τοὺς δ' ἀπωρφανισμένους
νῆστις πιέζει λιμός· οὐ γὰρ ἐντελεῖς
θήραν πατρῴαν προσφέρειν σκηνήμασιν.
οὕτω δὲ κἀμὲ τήνδε τ', Ἠλέκτραν λέγω,
ἰδεῖν πάρεστί σοι, πατροστερῆ γόνον,
ἄμφω φυγὴν ἔχοντε τὴν αὐτὴν δόμων.
καὶ τοῦ θυτῆρος καί σε τιμῶντος μέγα
πατρὸς νεοσσοὺς τούσδ' ἀποφθείρας πόθεν
ἕξεις ὁμοίας χειρὸς εὔθοινον γέρας;

ORESTES Zeus, Zeus, look on what is happening here. See the orphaned brood of an eagle father who died in the twisting coils of a dreadful viper. The orphans are crushed by gnawing hunger, for they're not yet grown enough to bring their father's prey to the nest. So you can see me, and her too—Electra, I mean—children robbed of a father, both cast out of our home alike. If you destroy these nestlings of a father who sacrificed to you and honored you greatly, where will you find a hand like his to give you the rich feasts that are your due?

258 οὔτ' αἰετοῦ γένεθλ' ἀποφθείρας, πάλιν
πέμπειν ἔχοις ἂν σήματ' εὐπιθῆ βροτοῖς·
οὔτ' ἀρχικός σοι πᾶς ὅδ' αὐανθεὶς πυθμὴν
βωμοῖς ἀρήξει βουθύτοις ἐν ἤμασιν.
κόμιζ', ἀπὸ σμικροῦ δ' ἂν ἄρειας μέγαν
δόμον, δοκοῦντα κάρτα νῦν πεπτωκέναι.

If you destroy the eagle's brood, you'll never again be able to send signs that mortals trust. And if this royal stock withers away entirely, it won't serve your altars on the days when oxen are sacrificed. Tend it, and you could raise a great house from small beginnings, though it seems now to have fallen utterly.

264 **CHORUS** ὦ παῖδες, ὦ σωτῆρες ἑστίας πατρός,
σιγᾶθ', ὅπως μὴ πεύσεταί τις, ὦ τέκνα,
γλώσσης χάριν δὲ πάντ' ἀπαγγείλῃ τάδε

CHORUS Children, saviors of your father's hearth, keep quiet, children, so no one hears and, just for the sake of talk, reports all this to those in power.

2 Electra's sister Iphigenia was sacrificed by Agamemnon at Aulis to win a wind for the fleet sailing to Troy.

GREEK

πρὸς τοὺς κρατοῦντας· οὓς ἴδοιμ' ἐγώ ποτε
θανόντας ἐν κηκῖδι πισσήρει φλογός.

269 **ORESTES** οὕτοι προδώσει Λοξίου μεγασθενὴς
χρησμὸς κελεύων τόνδε κίνδυνον περᾶν,
κἀξορθιάζων πολλὰ καὶ δυσχειμέρους
ἄτας ὑφ' ἧπαρ θερμὸν ἐξαυδώμενος,
εἰ μὴ μέτειμι τοῦ πατρὸς τοὺς αἰτίους·
τρόπον τὸν αὐτὸν ἀνταποκτεῖναι λέγων,
ἀποχρημάτοισι ζημίαις ταυρούμενον·
αὐτὸν δ' ἔφασκε τῇ φίλῃ ψυχῇ τάδε
τείσειν μ' ἔχοντα πολλὰ δυστερπῆ κακά.
τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἐκ γῆς δυσφρόνων μηνίματα
βροτοῖς πιφαύσκων εἶπε, τὰς δ' αἰνῶν νόσους,
σαρκῶν ἐπαμβατῆρας ἀγρίαις γνάθοις
λειχῆνας ἐξέσθοντας ἀρχαίαν φύσιν·
λευκὰς δὲ κόρσας τῇδ' ἐπαντέλλειν νόσῳ·
ἄλλας τ' ἐφώνει προσβολὰς Ἐρινύων
ἐκ τῶν πατρῴων αἱμάτων τελουμένας·

285 τὸ γὰρ σκοτεινὸν τῶν ἐνερτέρων βέλος
ἐκ προστροπαίων ἐν γένει πεπτωκότων,
καὶ λύσσα καὶ μάταιος ἐκ νυκτῶν φόβος
ὁρῶντα λαμπρὸν ἐν σκότῳ νωμῶντ' ὀφρὺν
κινεῖ, ταράσσει, καὶ διώκεσθαι πόλεως
χαλκηλάτῳ πλάστιγγι λυμανθὲν δέμας.
καὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις οὔτε κρατῆρος μέρος
εἶναι μετασχεῖν, οὐ φιλοσπόνδου λιβός,
βωμῶν τ' ἀπείργειν οὐχ ὁρωμένην πατρὸς
μῆνιν· δέχεσθαι δ' οὔτε συλλύειν τινά.
πάντων δ' ἄτιμον κἄφιλον θνῄσκειν χρόνῳ
κακῶς ταριχευθέντα παμφθάρτῳ μόρῳ.

297 τοιοῖσδε χρησμοῖς ἆρα χρὴ πεποιθέναι;
κεἰ μὴ πέποιθα, τοὔργον ἔστ' ἐργαστέον.
πολλοὶ γὰρ εἰς ἓν συμπίτνουσιν ἵμεροι,
θεοῦ τ' ἐφετμαὶ καὶ πατρὸς πένθος μέγα,
καὶ πρὸς πιέζει χρημάτων ἀχηνία,
τὸ μὴ πολίτας εὐκλεεστάτους βροτῶν,
Τροίας ἀναστατῆρας εὐδόξῳ φρενί,
δυοῖν γυναικοῖν ὦδ' ὑπηκόους πέλειν.
θήλεια γὰρ φρήν· εἰ δὲ μή, τάχ' εἴσεται.

ENGLISH

How I'd love to see them dead one day, in the oozing pitch of the flames!

ORESTES Loxias' mighty oracle won't betray me. It ordered me to go through with this danger, and cried out its warnings again and again, threatening ruin, cold as winter, to my warm heart if I don't go after those guilty of my father's death. It told me to kill them in return, the same way they killed, maddened like a bull by the loss of my property. Otherwise, it said, I would pay for it myself with my own dear life, suffering many grim evils. For it revealed to mortals the wrath of malevolent powers from beneath the earth, and it spoke of diseases: sores that mount the flesh and with savage jaws eat away what it was before, and white hair sprouting on the temples from this disease. And it spoke of other attacks of the Furies, brought to pass from a father's blood.[3]

For the dark weapon of the powers below, launched by kin who have fallen and cry out for vengeance, and madness, and empty terror in the night, harass and torment a man who sees them clearly, though his eyes move in the dark, and he is hounded from the city, his body defiled, with the bronze-weighted lash. A man like that, it said, may have no share in the mixing bowl or in the friendly libation; his father's unseen wrath bars him from the altars; no one takes him in or shares a roof with him; and at last, dishonored by all and friendless, he dies, shriveled like an embalmed corpse by a death that wastes him through and through.

Should I trust oracles like these? Even if I don't, the deed has to be done. Many desires converge on one thing: the god's commands, my great grief for my father, and besides, the loss of my property presses on me. I can't let my fellow citizens, the most famous of mortals, who overthrew Troy so gloriously, go on being subjects this way of a pair of women. For the man has a woman's heart; if he doesn't, he'll soon find out.

3 Loxias is Apollo's name as the god who speaks through his oracle at Delphi.

KOMMOS

Brother, sister and chorus mourn Agamemnon and call on him and the powers below to help their revenge.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
306	**CHORUS** ἀλλ᾽ ὦ μεγάλαι Μοῖραι, Διόθεν τῇδε τελευτᾶν, τὸ δίκαιον μεταβαίνει. ἀντὶ μὲν ἐχθρᾶς γλώσσης ἐχθρὰ γλῶσσα τελείσθω· τοὐφειλόμενον πράσσουσα Δίκη μέγ᾽ ἀυτεῖ· ἀντὶ δὲ πληγῆς φονίας φονίαν πληγὴν τινέτω. δράσαντι παθεῖν, τριγέρων μῦθος τάδε φωνεῖ.	**CHORUS** Great Fates, by the will of Zeus may it end this way, as justice shifts its course. Let hateful tongue be paid with hateful tongue: Justice cries it aloud as she exacts the debt. Let murderous stroke be paid with murderous stroke. The doer suffers: so says a saying three times old.
315	**ORESTES** ὦ πάτερ αἰνόπατερ, τί σοι φάμενος ἢ τί ῥέξας τύχοιμ᾽ ἂν ἔκαθεν οὐρίσας, ἔνθα σ᾽ ἔχουσιν εὐναί, σκότῳ φάος ἀντίμοι- ρον; χάριτες δ᾽ ὁμοίως κέκληνται γόος εὐκλεὴς προσθοδόμοις Ἀτρείδαις.	**ORESTES** Father, father of sorrow, what can I say or what can I do to send on a fair wind from far away to where your resting place holds you a light to match your darkness? Yet a lament that brings glory is a grace all the same to the sons of Atreus, who once held this house.
323	**CHORUS** τέκνον, φρόνημα τοῦ θανόντος οὐ δαμάζει πυρὸς μαλερὰ γνάθος, φαίνει δ᾽ ὕστερον ὀργάς· ὀτοτύζεται δ᾽ ὁ θνῄσκων, ἀναφαίνεται δ᾽ ὁ βλάπτων. πατέρων τε καὶ τεκόντων γόος ἔνδικος ματεύει τὸ πᾶν ἀμφιλαφής ταραχθείς.	**CHORUS** My child, the spirit of the dead is not tamed by the ravening jaw of fire; later he shows his anger. The dead man is mourned, the one who harmed him is revealed. Rightful lament for fathers and parents, raised loud and full, hunts its quarry everywhere.
332	**ELECTRA** κλῦθὶ νυν, ὦ πάτερ, ἐν μέρει πολυδάκρυτα πένθη. δίπαις τοί σ᾽ ἐπιτύμβιος θρῆνος ἀναστενάζει. τάφος δ᾽ ἱκέτας δέδεκται φυγάδας θ᾽ ὁμοίως. τί τῶνδ᾽ εὖ, τί δ᾽ ἄτερ κακῶν; οὐκ ἀτρίακτος ἄτα;	**ELECTRA** Hear, then, father, in your turn our sorrows full of tears. The dirge of two children laments you at your tomb. Your grave has taken us in, suppliants and exiles alike. What here is good? What is free of evil? Isn't ruin a wrestler no one can throw?
340	**CHORUS** ἀλλ᾽ ἔτ᾽ ἂν ἐκ τῶνδε θεὸς χρῄζων θείη κελάδους εὐφθογγοτέρους· ἀντὶ δὲ θρήνων ἐπιτυμβιδίων παιὰν μελάθροις ἐν βασιλείοις νεοκρᾶτα φίλον κομίσειεν.	**CHORUS** Yet even from this a god, if he wished, could bring forth sweeter sounds. Instead of dirges over a tomb a paean in the royal hall might bring in the loving cup, freshly mixed.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
345	**ORESTES** εἰ γὰρ ὑπ' Ἰλίῳ πρός τινος Λυκίων, πάτερ, δορίτμητος κατηναρίσθης· λιπὼν ἂν εὔκλειαν ἐν δόμοισι τέκνων τ' ἐν κελεύθοις ἐπιστρεπτὸν αἰῶ κτίσας πολύχωστον ἂν εἶχες τάφον διαποντίου γᾶς δώμασιν εὐφόρητον,	**ORESTES** If only beneath Ilium, at the hands of some Lycian, father, you had been cut down by the spear! You would have left glory in your house, and in your children's paths founded a life that makes men turn and look; you would have a high-heaped tomb in a land across the sea, a grief your house could bear—
354	**CHORUS** φίλος φίλοισι τοῖς ἐκεῖ καλῶς θανοῦσιν κατὰ χθονὸς ἐμπρέπων σεμνότιμος ἀνάκτωρ, πρόπολός τε τῶν μεγίστων χθονίων ἐκεῖ τυράννων· βασιλεὺς γὰρ ἦσθ', ὄφρ' ἔζης, μόριμον λάχος πιπλάντων χεροῖν πεισίβροτόν τε βάκτρον.	**CHORUS** dear to the dear ones who died nobly there, and beneath the earth a lord standing out in majesty and honor, minister to the greatest rulers of the world below. For while you lived you were a king over those whose hands hold their destined portion and the staff that men obey.
363	**ELECTRA** μηδ' ὑπὸ Τρωίας τείχεσι φθίμενος, πάτερ, μετ' ἄλλῳ δουρικμῆτι λαῷ παρὰ Σκαμάνδρου πόρον τεθάφθαι. πάρος δ' οἱ κτανόντες νιν οὕτως δαμῆναι φίλοις, θανατηφόρον αἶσαν πρόσω τινὰ πυνθάνεσθαι τῶνδε πόνων ἄπειρον.	**ELECTRA** No—not even beneath the walls of Troy would I have you perish, father, and lie buried by the stream of Scamander among the rest of the spear-slain host. Rather, I wish his killers had been struck down by their own, as he was, so that someone far away, who knows nothing of these troubles, would hear of their deadly fate.
372	**CHORUS** ταῦτα μέν, ὦ παῖ, κρείσσονα χρυσοῦ, μεγάλης δὲ τύχης καὶ ὑπερβορέου μείζονα φωνεῖς· δύνασαι γάρ. ἀλλὰ διπλῆς γὰρ τῆσδε μαράγνης δοῦπος ἱκνεῖται· τῶν μὲν ἀρωγοὶ κατὰ γῆς ἤδη, τῶν δὲ κρατούντων χέρες οὐχ ὅσιαι στυγερῶν τούτων· παισὶ δὲ μᾶλλον γεγένηται.	**CHORUS** What you speak of, child, is better than gold, greater than great good fortune, greater than the bliss of the Hyperboreans— and you're free to wish it. But now the thud of this double lash is coming home. On one side, the helpers are already beneath the earth; on the other, the hands of those in power, these hateful ones, are unholy; and the children have the better of it.[4]
380	**ORESTES** τοῦτο διαμπερὲς οὖς ἵκεθ' ἅπερ τι βέλος. Ζεῦ Ζεῦ, κάτωθεν ἀμπέμπων ὑστερόποινον ἄταν βροτῶν τλάμονι καὶ πανούργῳ χειρὶ—τοκεῦσι δ' ὅμως τελεῖται.	**ORESTES** That has gone right through my ear like an arrow. Zeus, Zeus, who send up from below ruin that avenges late

4 The Hyperboreans were a legendary people living "beyond the North Wind" in perfect happiness.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
		on the reckless and wicked hand of mortals— still, for parents, it will be done.
386	**CHORUS** ἐφυμνῆσαι γένοιτό μοι πυκά- εντ' ὀλολυγμὸν ἀνδρὸς θεινομένου, γυναικός τ' ὀλλυμένας· τί γὰρ κεύθω φρενὸς οἷον ἔμπας ποτᾶται; πάροιθεν δὲ πρῴρας δριμὺς ἄηται κραδίας θυμὸς ἔγκοτον στύγος.	**CHORUS** May it be mine to raise the full cry of triumph over a man struck down and a woman destroyed! Why should I hide what flutters, in spite of everything, in my mind? Before the prow of my heart blows a fierce wind of rage, of resentful hatred.
394	**ELECTRA** καί πότ' ἂν ἀμφιθαλὴς Ζεὺς ἐπὶ χεῖρα βάλοι, φεῦ φεῦ, κάρανα δαΐξας; πιστὰ γένοιτο χώρᾳ. δίκαν δ' ἐξ ἀδίκων ἀπαιτῶ. κλῦτε δὲ Γᾶ χθονίων τε τιμαί.	**ELECTRA** And when will Zeus in his abundant might lay his hand on them— ah, ah!—and split their heads? Let the land have its pledge. I demand justice from the unjust. Hear me, Earth, and you honored powers below.
400	**CHORUS** ἀλλὰ νόμος μὲν φονίας σταγόνας χυμένας ἐς πέδον ἄλλο προσαιτεῖν αἷμα. βοᾷ γὰρ λοιγὸς Ἐρινὺν παρὰ τῶν πρότερον φθιμένων ἄτην ἑτέραν ἐπάγουσαν ἐπ' ἄτῃ.	**CHORUS** But it is the law that drops of blood spilled on the ground demand more blood. For slaughter cries out for a Fury, who brings, from those who died before, fresh ruin on top of ruin.
405	**ORESTES** πόποι δὴ νερτέρων τυραννίδες, ἴδετε πολυκρατεῖς Ἀραὶ φθινομένων, ἴδεσθ' Ἀτρειδᾶν τὰ λοίπ' ἀμηχάνως ἔχοντα καὶ δωμάτων ἄτιμα. πᾷ τις τράποιτ' ἄν, ὦ Ζεῦ;	**ORESTES** Ah, you powers who rule the world below, look, you mighty Curses of the dead, look at what is left of the sons of Atreus, helpless, cast out from their home in dishonor. Where can a man turn, Zeus?
410	**CHORUS** πέπαλται δαὖτὲ μοι φίλον κέαρ τόνδε κλύουσαν οἶκτον καὶ τότε μὲν δύσελπις, σπλάγχνα δέ μοι κελαινοῦ- ται πρὸς ἔπος κλυούσᾳ. ὅταν δ' αὖτ' ἐπ' ἀλκῆς ἐπάρῃ μ' ἐλπὶς, ἀπέστασεν ἄχος προσφανεῖσά μοι καλῶς.	**CHORUS** Again my heart quivers as I hear this lament. At times I lose hope, and my heart goes dark within me at the words I hear. But when hope lifts me up again and makes me strong, it drives my grief away and shines out kindly on me.
418	**ELECTRA** τί δ' ἂν φάντες τύχοιμεν ἢ τά περ πάθομεν ἄχεα πρός γε τῶν τεκομένων; πάρεστι σαίνειν, τὰ δ' οὔτι θέλγεται. λύκος γὰρ ὥστ' ὠμόφρων ἄσαντος ἐκ ματρός ἐστι θυμός.	**ELECTRA** What could we say to hit the mark but the griefs we have suffered at the hands of the one who bore us? She may fawn, but they won't be charmed away. For like a savage-hearted wolf,

	GREEK	ENGLISH
		the temper we have from our mother cannot be soothed.
423	**CHORUS** ἔκοψα κομμὸν Ἄριον ἔν τε Κισσίας νόμοις ἰηλεμιστρίας, ἀπριγδόπληκτα πολυπλάνητα δ' ἦν ἰδεῖν ἐπασσυτεροτριβῆ τὰ χερὸς ὀρέγματα ἄνωθεν ἀνέκαθεν, κτύπῳ δ' ἐπερρόθει κροτητὸν ἀμὸν καὶ πανάθλιον κάρα.	**CHORUS** I beat my breast in an Arian dirge, in the ways of a Cissian wailing woman. You could see my fists clenched tight, my hands reaching out in every direction, raining blow after blow from above, from high above, and my wretched, battered head rang with the strokes.[5]
429	**ELECTRA** ἰὼ δαΐα πάντολμε μᾶτερ, δαΐαις ἐν ἐκφοραῖς ἄνευ πολιτᾶν ἄνακτ', ἄνευ δὲ πενθημάτων ἔτλας ἀνοίμωκτον ἄνδρα θάψαι.	**ELECTRA** Oh, cruel, all-daring mother, in a cruel burial, without his citizens, without mourning, you dared to bury your king, your husband, unlamented.
434	**ORESTES** τὸ πᾶν ἀτίμως ἔλεξας, οἴμοι. πατρὸς δ' ἀτίμωσιν ἆρα τείσει ἕκατι μὲν δαιμόνων, ἕκατι δ' ἀμᾶν χερῶν; ἔπειτ' ἐγὼ νοσφίσας ὀλοίμαν.	**ORESTES** It was all dishonor, as you tell it. Oh! Then will she pay for dishonoring my father, by the will of the gods, by the work of my hands? Let me die, then, once I have taken her life.
439	**CHORUS** ἐμασχαλίσθη δέ γ', ὡς τόδ' εἰδῇς· ἔπρασσε δ', ᾗπέρ νιν ὧδε θάπτει, μόρον κτίσαι μωμένα ἄφερτον αἰῶνι σῷ. κλύεις πατρῴους δύας ἀτίμους.	**CHORUS** And he was mutilated, too—so you know it. She did it, the one who buries him this way, seeking to make his death a weight beyond bearing for your life. You hear of your father's sufferings and his dishonor.[6]
445	**ELECTRA** λέγεις πατρῷον μόρον· ἐγὼ δ' ἀπεστάτουν ἄτιμος, οὐδὲν ἀξία· μυχῷ δ' ἄφερκτος πολυσινοῦς κυνὸς δίκαν ἑτοιμότερα γέλωτος ἀνέφερον λίβη, χέουσα πολύδακρυν γόον κεκρυμμένα. τοιαῦτ' ἀκούων ἐν φρεσὶν γράφου	**ELECTRA** You tell of my father's death. But I was kept away, dishonored, worth nothing; shut up in an inner room like a vicious dog, I let fall tears more readily than laughter, pouring out in secret my lament of many tears. Hear this, and write it in your mind ...
451	**CHORUS** δι' ὤτων δὲ συν- τέτραινε μῦθον ἡσύχῳ φρενῶν βάσει. τὰ μὲν γὰρ οὕτως ἔχει, τὰ δ' αὐτὸς ὄργα μαθεῖν. πρέπει δ' ἀκάμπτῳ μένει καθήκειν.	**CHORUS** Let the story pierce through your ears to the quiet depths of your mind. So things stand; the rest, be eager to learn for yourself. You must enter the fight with unbending fury.
456	**ORESTES** σὲ τοι λέγω, ξυγγενοῦ, πάτερ, φίλοις.	

5 Aria and Cissia were regions of the Persian empire, whose mourners were famous for violent lamentation.
6 Killers sometimes cut off a victim's extremities and tied them under the armpits, a practice believed to stop the dead from taking revenge.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
		ORESTES It's you I mean, father: stand with those you love.
457	**ELECTRA** ἐγὼ δ' ἐπιφθέγγομαι κεκλαυμένα.	**ELECTRA** And I join my voice to his, in tears.
458	**CHORUS** στάσις δὲ πάγκοινος ἅδ' ἐπιρροθεῖ· ἄκουσον ἐς φάος μολών, ξὺν δὲ γενοῦ πρὸς ἐχθρούς.	**CHORUS** And this whole company echoes the cry together: hear us, come into the light, and be with us against our enemies.
461	**ORESTES** Ἄρης Ἄρει ξυμβαλεῖ, Δίκᾳ Δίκα.	**ORESTES** Ares will clash with Ares, Justice with Justice.
462	**ELECTRA** ἰὼ θεοί, κραίνετ' ἐνδίκως δίκας.	**ELECTRA** Oh gods, bring justice to pass with justice.
463	**CHORUS** τρόμος μ' ὑφέρπει κλύουσαν εὐγμάτων. τὸ μόρσιμον μένει πάλαι, εὐχομένοις δ' ἂν ἔλθοι.	**CHORUS** A trembling creeps over me as I hear these prayers. What is fated has waited long; it may come to those who pray.
466	ὦ πόνος ἐγγενὴς καὶ παράμουσος Ἄτας αἱματόεσσα πλαγά. ἰὼ δύστον' ἄφερτα κήδη· ἰὼ δυσκατάπαυστον ἄλγος.	Oh, pain born in the family, and the bloody stroke of Ruin, jarring the music! Oh, grievous, unbearable sorrows! Oh, pain that cannot be stilled!
471	δώμασιν ἔμμοτον τῶνδ' ἄκος, οὐδ' ἀπ' ἄλλων ἔκτοθεν, ἀλλ' ἀπ' αὐτῶν, δι' ὠμὰν ἔριν αἱματηράν. θεῶν τῶν κατὰ γᾶς ὅδ' ὕμνος.	The house has a dressing to plug its wound, not from others, from outside, but from its own, through savage, bloody strife. This is the hymn of the gods beneath the earth.
476	ἀλλὰ κλύοντες, μάκαρες χθόνιοι, τῆσδε κατευχῆς πέμπετ' ἀρωγὴν παισὶν προφρόνως ἐπὶ νίκῃ.	Hear, you blessed powers below, hear this prayer, and send help to the children gladly, for victory.

SECOND EPISODE

They rouse the dead king; Orestes hears of the snake dream and lays out his plan of deceit.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
479	**ORESTES** πάτερ, τρόποισιν οὐ τυραννικοῖς θανών, / αἰτουμένῳ μοι δὸς κράτος τῶν σῶν δόμων.	**ORESTES** Father, you who died in a way unworthy of a king, grant what I ask: give me mastery of your house.
481	**ELECTRA** κἀγώ, πάτερ, τοιάνδε σου χρείαν ἔχω, / φυγεῖν μέγαν προσθεῖσαν Αἰγίσθῳ φθόρον.	**ELECTRA** And I, father, need this of you: to escape my fate, once I have brought great destruction on Aegisthus.
483	**ORESTES** οὕτω γὰρ ἄν σοι δαῖτες ἔννομοι βροτῶν κτιζοίατ'· εἰ δὲ μή, παρ' εὐδείπνοις ἕσῃ ἄτιμος ἐμπύροισι κνισωτοῖς χθονός.	**ORESTES** Then men would establish for you the feasts the law requires. Otherwise, at the rich

	GREEK	ENGLISH
		feasts, when savory offerings are burned in this land, you'll have no honor.
486	**ELECTRA** κἀγὼ χοάς σοι τῆς ἐμῆς παγκληρίας οἴσω πατρῴων ἐκ δόμων γαμηλίους· πάντων δὲ πρῶτον τόνδε πρεσβεύσω τάφον.	**ELECTRA** And I will bring you libations from my full inheritance, from my father's house, on my wedding day; and before all else I will honor this tomb.
489	**ORESTES** ὦ Γαῖ', ἄνες μοι πατέρ' ἐποπτεῦσαι μάχην.	**ORESTES** Earth, send my father up to watch me fight.
490	**ELECTRA** ὦ Περσέφασσα, δὸς δ' ἔτ' εὔμορφον κράτος.	**ELECTRA** Persephone, grant us a glorious victory still.
491	**ORESTES** μέμνησο λουτρῶν οἷς ἐνοσφίσθης, πάτερ.	**ORESTES** Remember the bath where they took your life, father.[7]
492	**ELECTRA** μέμνησο δ' ἀμφίβληστρον ὡς ἐκαίνισαν.	**ELECTRA** Remember the net they tried out on you, their new device.
493	**ORESTES** πέδαις δ' ἀχαλκεύτοις ἐθηρεύθης, πάτερ.	**ORESTES** You were trapped in fetters no smith had forged, father.
494	**ELECTRA** αἰσχρῶς τε βουλευτοῖσιν ἐν καλύμμασιν.	**ELECTRA** And in a robe, shamefully devised.
495	**ORESTES** ἆρ' ἐξεγείρῃ τοῖσδ' ὀνείδεσιν, πάτερ;	**ORESTES** Are you roused by these insults, father?
496	**ELECTRA** ἆρ' ὀρθὸν αἴρεις φίλτατον τὸ σὸν κάρα;	**ELECTRA** Are you lifting your dear head upright?
497	**ORESTES** ἤτοι δίκην ἴαλλε σύμμαχον φίλοις, ἢ τὰς ὁμοίας ἀντίδος λαβὰς λαβεῖν, εἴπερ κρατηθείς γ' ἀντινικῆσαι θέλεις.	**ORESTES** Either send Justice as an ally to those you love, or give us in turn the same grip on them they had on you, if, after being thrown, you mean to win the bout.
500	**ELECTRA** καὶ τῆσδ' ἄκουσον λοισθίου βοῆς, πάτερ, ἰδὼν νεοσσοὺς τούσδ' ἐφημένους τάφῳ· οἴκτιρε θῆλυν ἄρσενός θ' ὁμοῦ γόνον, καὶ μὴ 'ξαλείψῃς σπέρμα Πελοπιδῶν τόδε οὕτω γὰρ οὐ τέθνηκας οὐδὲ περ θανών· παῖδες γὰρ ἀνδρὶ κληδόνες σωτήριοι θανόντι· φελλοὶ δ' ὡς ἄγουσι δίκτυον, τὸν ἐκ βυθοῦ κλωστῆρα σῴζοντες λίνου. ἄκου', ὑπὲρ σοῦ τοιάδ' ἔστ' ὀδύρματα. αὐτὸς δὲ σῴζῃ τόνδε τιμήσας λόγον.	**ELECTRA** And hear this last cry, father, as you see your nestlings sitting at your tomb. Pity your offspring, the female and the male alike, and don't wipe out this seed of the line of Pelops. For then you are not dead, even though you have died. Children keep a man's name alive after his death; like corks they hold up the net, keeping the flaxen line from sinking into the deep. Listen: these laments are for your sake. You save yourself if you honor what we say.
510	**CHORUS** καὶ μὴν ἀμεμφῆ τόνδ' ἐτείνατον λόγον, τίμημα τύμβου τῆς ἀνοιμώκτου τύχης. τὰ δ' ἄλλ', ἐπειδὴ δρᾶν κατώρθωσαι φρενί, ἔρδοις ἂν ἤδη δαίμονος πειρώμενος.	**CHORUS** Well, you've both drawn out this speech, and no one could fault it—a tribute to the tomb for his unlamented fate. As for the rest, since your mind is set on action, you should get to work now and put your fortune to the test.
514	**ORESTES** ἔσται· πυθέσθαι δ' οὐδέν ἐστ' ἔξω δρόμου, πόθεν χοὰς ἔπεμψεν, ἐκ τίνος λόγου	**ORESTES** It will be done. But it isn't straying from our course to ask why she sent libations. What

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	μεθύστερον τιμῶσ' ἀνήκεστον πάθος; θανόντι δ' οὐ φρονοῦντι δειλαία χάρις ἐπέμπετ'· οὐκ ἔχοιμ' ἂν εἰκάσαι τόδε. τὰ δῶρα μείω δ' ἐστὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας. τὰ πάντα γάρ τις ἐκχέας ἀνθ' αἵματος ἑνός, μάτην ὁ μόχθος· ὧδ' ἔχει λόγος. θέλοντι δ', εἴπερ οἶσθ', ἐμοὶ φράσον τάδε.	made her honor, so late, a wrong that can't be cured? A pitiful gift to send to a dead man who knows nothing! I can't make sense of it. The gifts are too small for the crime. For though a man pour out everything he has to pay for one man's blood, the effort is wasted: so the saying goes. Tell me, if you know; I want to hear it.
523	**CHORUS** οἶδ', ὦ τέκνον, παρῆ γάρ· ἔκ τ' ὀνειράτων καὶ νυκτιπλάγκτων δειμάτων πεπαλμένη χοὰς ἔπεμψε τάσδε δύσθεος γυνή.	**CHORUS** I know, child; I was there. She was shaken by dreams and terrors that wandered in the night, and so the godless woman sent these libations.
526	**ORESTES** ἦ καὶ πέπυσθε τοὔναρ, ὥστ' ὀρθῶς φράσαι;	**ORESTES** And did you hear the dream, so you can tell it properly?
527	**CHORUS** τεκεῖν δράκοντ' ἔδοξεν, ὡς αὐτὴ λέγει.	**CHORUS** She dreamed she gave birth to a snake—so she says herself.
528	**ORESTES** καὶ ποῖ τελευτᾷ καὶ καρανοῦται λόγος;	**ORESTES** And how does the story end? What's the point of it?
529	**CHORUS** ἐν σπαργάνοισι παιδὸς ὁρμίσαι δίκην.	**CHORUS** She laid it to rest in swaddling clothes, like a baby.
530	**ORESTES** τίνος βορᾶς χρῄζοντα, νεογενὲς δάκος;	**ORESTES** What food did it want, this newborn biting beast?
531	**CHORUS** αὐτὴ προσέσχε μαζὸν ἐν τώνείρατι.	**CHORUS** In her dream she gave it her own breast.
532	**ORESTES** καὶ πῶς ἄτρωτον οὖθαρ ἦν ὑπὸ στύγους;	**ORESTES** And wasn't her nipple wounded by the hateful thing?
533	**CHORUS** ὥστ' ἐν γάλακτι θρόμβον αἵματος σπάσαι.	**CHORUS** Yes—it drew in a clot of blood with the milk.
534	**ORESTES** οὗτοι μάταιον· ἀνδρὸς ὄψανον πέλει.	**ORESTES** This is no empty dream. It means a man.
535	**CHORUS** ἡ δ' ἐξ ὕπνου κέκλαγγεν ἐπτοημένη. πολλοὶ δ' ἀνῆθον, ἐκτυφλωθέντες σκότῳ, λαμπτῆρες ἐν δόμοισι δεσποίνης χάριν· πέμπει τ' ἔπειτα τάσδε κηδείους χοάς, ἄκος τομαῖον ἐλπίσασα πημάτων.	**CHORUS** She woke from sleep screaming in terror, and many lamps that the darkness had blinded blazed up in the house for our mistress. Then she sent these funeral libations, hoping they would be a cure to cut out her troubles.
540	**ORESTES** ἀλλ' εὔχομαι γῇ τῇδε καὶ πατρὸς τάφῳ τοὔνειρον εἶναι τοῦτ' ἐμοὶ τελεσφόρον. κρίνω δέ τοί νιν ὥστε συγκόλλως ἔχειν. εἰ γὰρ τὸν αὐτὸν χῶρον ἐκλιπὼν ἐμοὶ οὔφις ἐμοῖσι σπαργάνοις ὡπλίζετο, καὶ μαστὸν ἀμφέχασκ' ἐμὸν θρεπτήριον, θρόμβῳ δ' ἔμειξεν αἵματος φίλον γάλα,	**ORESTES** Well, I pray to this earth and to my father's tomb that this dream will find its fulfillment in me. I read it, I tell you, so that every part fits. If the snake came out of the same place I did, and was wrapped in my swaddling clothes, and opened its jaws around the breast that nursed me, and mixed the dear milk with a clot of blood, and

7 Agamemnon was killed in his bath, after Clytemnestra threw a robe over him like a net.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	ἡ δ' ἀμφὶ τάρβει τῷδ' ἐπῴμωξεν πάθει, δεῖ τοί νιν, ὡς ἔθρεψεν ἔκπαγλον τέρας, θανεῖν βιαίως· ἐκδρακοντωθεὶς δ' ἐγὼ κτείνω νιν, ὡς τοὔνειρον ἐννέπει τόδε.	she cried out in terror at what was done to her— then, since she nursed a monstrous portent, she must die by violence. And I, turned snake, am the one who kills her, as this dream declares.
551	**CHORUS** τερασκόπον δὴ τῶνδέ σ' αἱροῦμαι πέρι. γένοιτο δ' οὕτως. τἄλλα δ' ἐξηγοῦ φίλοις, τοὺς μέν τι ποιεῖν, τοὺς δὲ μή τι δρᾶν λέγων.	**CHORUS** Then I choose you to interpret these portents. May it turn out that way! Now explain the rest to your friends: tell some of us what to do, and others what not to do.
554	**ORESTES** ἁπλοῦς ὁ μῦθος· τήνδε μὲν στείχειν ἔσω, αἰνῶ δὲ κρύπτειν τάσδε συνθήκας ἐμάς, ὡς ἂν δόλῳ κτείναντες ἄνδρα τίμιον δόλοισι καὶ ληφθῶσιν ἐν ταὐτῷ βρόχῳ θανόντες, καὶ Λοξίας ἐφήμισεν, ἄναξ Ἀπόλλων, μάντις ἀψευδὴς τὸ πρίν.	**ORESTES** The plan is simple. She is to go inside, and I tell you women to keep this agreement of ours hidden. They killed an honored man by cun- ning, so by cunning they must be caught and die in the same noose. That is what Loxias pro- claimed, lord Apollo, a prophet who has never lied before.
560	ξένῳ γὰρ εἰκώς, παντελῆ σαγὴν ἔχων, ἥξω σὺν ἀνδρὶ τῷδ' ἐφ' ἑρκείους πύλας Πυλάδῃ, ξένος τε καὶ δορύξενος δόμων. ἄμφω δὲ φωνὴν ἥσομεν Παρνησσίδα, γλώσσης ἀυτὴν Φωκίδος μιμουμένω. καὶ δὴ θυρωρῶν οὔτις ἂν φαιδρᾷ φρενὶ δέξαιτ', ἐπειδὴ δαιμονᾷ δόμος κακοῖς· μενοῦμεν οὕτως ὥστ' ἐπεικάζειν τινὰ δόμους παραστείχοντα καὶ τάδ' ἐννέπειν· "τί δὴ πύλαισι τὸν ἱκέτην ἀπείργεται Αἴγισθος, εἴπερ οἶδεν ἔνδημος παρών;"	I'll come to the courtyard gate dressed as a stranger, with a traveler's full pack, together with this man here, Pylades, as a guest and an ally of the house. We'll both speak the dialect of Parnas- sus and imitate the sound of a Phocian accent. Suppose none of the doorkeepers lets us in gladly, since the house is haunted by troubles. Then we'll wait there, so that anyone walking past the house will wonder and say: "Why does Aegisthus shut a suppliant out of his gates, if he's at home and knows?"
571	εἰ δ' οὖν ἀμείψω βαλὸν ἑρκείων πυλῶν κἀκεῖνον ἐν θρόνοισιν εὑρήσω πατρός, ἢ καὶ μολὼν ἔπειτά μοι κατὰ στόμα ἀρεῖ, σάφ' ἴσθι, καὶ κατ' ὀφθαλμοὺς βαλεῖ, πρὶν αὐτὸν εἰπεῖν "ποδαπὸς ὁ ξένος;" νεκρὸν θήσω, ποδώκει περιβαλὼν χαλκεύματι. φόνου δ' Ἐρινὺς οὐχ ὑπεσπανισμένη ἄκρατον αἷμα πίεται τρίτην πόσιν.	But if I do get across the threshold of the courtyard gates and find him on my father's throne, or if he comes in later and confronts me face to face, rais- ing his eyes to mine and then lowering them, mark my words, before he can even say "Where's the stranger from?" I'll lay him dead, caught in the sweep of my swift bronze. And the Fury, never starved of slaughter, will drink unmixed blood for her third draught.
579	νῦν οὖν σὺ μὲν φύλασσε τἀν οἴκῳ καλῶς, ὅπως ἂν ἀρτίκολλα συμβαίνῃ τάδε· ὑμῖν δ' ἐπαινῶ γλῶσσαν εὔφημον φέρειν, σιγᾶν θ' ὅπου δεῖ καὶ λέγειν τὰ καίρια. τὰ δ' ἄλλα τούτῳ δεῦρ' ἐποπτεῦσαι λέγω, ξιφηφόρους ἀγῶνας ὀρθώσαντί μοι.	So now, you keep a careful watch on what goes on in the house, so that all this fits neatly together. You women, I advise you to keep your tongues guarded. Stay silent where you must, and say what the moment calls for. As for the rest, I call on him here to watch over it, the one who has set me on this contest of swords.

FIRST STASIMON

The chorus sings of monstrous women who destroyed their own, and of Justice forging her sword.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
585	**CHORUS** πολλὰ μὲν γᾶ τρέφει δεινὰ δειμάτων ἄχη, πόντιαί τ' ἀγκάλαι κνωδάλων ἀνταίων βρύουσι· πλάθουσι καὶ πεδαίχμιοι λαμπάδες πεδάοροι, πτανά τε καὶ πεδοβά- μονα κἀνεμοέντ' ἂν αἰγίδων φράσαι κότον.	**CHORUS** Many are the terrors, the dreadful griefs that earth breeds, and the arms of the sea teem with hostile monsters. Between earth and sky lights hung high in the air draw near, and things that fly and things that walk the ground could tell of the fury of the stormy whirlwinds.
594	ἀλλ' ὑπέρτολμον ἀν- δρὸς φρόνημα τίς λέγοι καὶ γυναικῶν φρεσὶν τλαμόνων παντόλμους ἔρωτας ἄταισι συννόμους βροτῶν; ξυζύγους δ' ὁμαυλίας θηλυκρατὴς ἀπέρω- τος ἔρως παρανικᾷ κνωδάλων τε καὶ βροτῶν.	But who could tell of man's overweening pride, and the reckless passions of women with daring hearts, partners in mortals' ruin? Love that has lost all love, the passion that masters the female, perverts the yoked unions of beasts and mortals alike.
602	ἴστω δ', ὅστις οὐχ ὑπόπτερος φροντίσιν, δαεὶς τὰν ἁ παιδολυ- μὰς τάλαινα Θεστιὰς μήσατο πυρδαῆτιν πρόνοιαν, καταίθουσα παιδὸς δαφοινὸν δαλὸν ἥλικ', ἐπεὶ μολὼν ματρόθεν κελάδησε, ξύμμετρόν τε διαὶ βίου μοιρόκραντον ἐς ἆμαρ.	Let him know this, whoever does not let his thoughts fly off on wings, once he has learned of the scheme of fire that Thestius' wretched daughter devised, destroyer of her own child. She burned the blood-red brand that was the same age as her son from the moment he came from his mother's womb and cried, and kept pace with him through his life to the day that fate had fixed.[8]
612	ἄλλαν δεῖ τιν' ἐν λόγοις στυγεῖν φοινίαν κόραν, ἅτ' ἐχθρῶν ὑπαὶ φῶτ' ἀπώλεσεν φίλον Κρητικοῖς χρυσοκμήτοισιν ὅρμοις πιθήσασα δώροισι Μίνω, Νῖσον ἀθανάτας τριχὸς νοσφίσασ' ἀπροβούλως πνέονθ' ἁ κυνόφρων ὕπνῳ. κιγχάνει δέ μιν Ἑρμῆς.	There is another we must loathe in story, the murderous girl who, for the sake of enemies, destroyed a man she loved. Won over by the Cretan necklace of hammered gold, the gift of Minos, the dog-hearted girl robbed Nisus of his immortal lock of hair while he slept, breathing, unsuspecting. And Hermes overtakes her.[9]

8 Althaea, daughter of Thestius, was told that her son Meleager would live as long as a certain log stayed unburned. When he killed her brothers, she threw it on the fire.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
623	ἐπεὶ δ' ἐπεμνασάμαν ἀμειλίχων πόνων, ὁ καιρὸς δὲ δυσφιλὲς γαμή- λευμ' ἀπεύχετον δόμοις γυναικοβούλους τε μήτιδας φρενῶν ἐπ' ἀνδρὶ τευχεσφόρῳ, ἐπ' ἀνδρὶ δᾴοις ἐπεικότως σέβαι. τίω δ' ἀθέρμαντον ἑστίαν δόμων γυναικείαν τ' ἄτολμον αἰχμάν.	Since I have called to mind these pitiless sufferings, now is the moment to tell of a loveless marriage, a curse upon the house, and the schemes a woman's mind devised against her husband, the armored warrior, a man his enemies rightly held in awe. But I honor the hearth of a home not inflamed, a woman's spear that does not dare.
631	κακῶν δὲ πρεσβεύεται τὸ Λήμνιον λόγῳ· γοᾶται δὲ δὴ πάθος κατά- πτυστον· ᾔκασεν δέ τις τὸ δεινὸν αὖ Λημνίοισι πήμασιν. θεοστυγήτῳ δ' ἄχει βροτῶν ἀτιμωθὲν οἴχεται γένος. σέβει γὰρ οὔτις τὸ δυσφιλὲς θεοῖς. τί τῶνδ' οὐκ ἐνδίκως ἀγείρω;	Of all evils, the Lemnian ranks first in story. It is mourned as a thing to spit upon, and men liken each new horror to the woes of Lemnos. Through a sorrow the gods detest, a race of mortals is gone, cast down in dishonor, for no one reveres what the gods hate. Which of these tales am I wrong to gather?[10]
639	τὸ δ' ἄγχι πλευμόνων ξίφος διανταίαν ὀξυπευκὲς οὐτᾷ διαὶ Δίκας. τὸ μὴ θέμις γὰρ οὖν λὰξ πέδοι πατούμενον, τὸ πᾶν Διὸς σέβας παρεκβάντος οὐ θεμιστῶς.	The sword is close to the lungs. Sharp and piercing, it drives clean through at the hand of Justice. For wrong lies trampled underfoot in the dust, the wrong of one who has unrighteously over- stepped all reverence owed to Zeus.
646	Δίκας δ' ἐρείδεται πυθμήν· προχαλκεύει δ' Αἶσα φασγανουργός· τέκνον δ' ἐπεισφέρει δόμοισιν αἱμάτων παλαιτέρων τίνειν μύσος χρόνῳ κλυτὰ βυσσόφρων Ἐρινύς.	The anvil of Justice is planted firm, and Destiny the swordsmith forges the blade be- forehand. The famous Fury, deep in thought, brings into the house a child to pay back at last the pollution of blood shed long ago.

THIRD EPISODE

Disguised as a stranger, Orestes reports his own death to Clytemnestra; the Nurse mourns him.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
653	**ORESTES** παῖ παῖ, θύρας ἄκουσον ἑρκείας κτύπον. τίς ἔνδον, ὦ παῖ, παῖ, μάλ' αὖθις, ἐν δόμοις; τρίτον τόδ' ἐκπέραμα δωμάτων καλῶ, εἴπερ φιλόξεν' ἐστὶν Αἰγίσθου διαί.	**ORESTES** Boy! Boy! Listen, someone's knocking at the courtyard door! Who's inside? Boy, boy, once again, who's in the house? This is the third time I've called for someone to come out of the palace, if Aegisthus keeps a house that welcomes guests.

9 Scylla of Megara cut from her father, King Nisus, the purple lock on which his life depended, and so betrayed the city to Minos of Crete.

10 The women of the island of Lemnos murdered all the men, their own husbands among them.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
657	**SERVANT** εἶεν, ἀκούω· ποδαπὸς ὁ ξένος; πόθεν;	**SERVANT** All right, I hear you. What country is the stranger from? Where from?
658	**ORESTES** ἄγγελλε τοῖσι κυρίοισι δωμάτων, πρὸς οὕσπερ ἥκω καὶ φέρω καινοὺς λόγους. τάχυνε δ', ὡς καὶ νυκτὸς ἅρμ' ἐπείγεται σκοτεινόν, ὥρα δ' ἐμπόρους καθιέναι ἄγκυραν ἐν δόμοισι πανδόκοις ξένων. ἐξελθέτω τις δωμάτων τελεσφόρος γυνὴ τόπαρχος, ἄνδρα δ' εὐπρεπέστερον· αἰδὼς γὰρ ἐν λεχθεῖσιν οὐκ ἐπαργέμους λόγους τίθησιν· εἶπε θαρσήσας ἀνὴρ πρὸς ἄνδρα κἀσήμηνεν ἐμφανὲς τέκμαρ.	**ORESTES** Announce me to the masters of the house. They're the ones I've come to see, and I bring news. Be quick, because night's dark chariot is hurrying on, and it's time for travelers to drop anchor in houses that welcome all strangers. Have someone with authority come out of the house. The lady in charge will do, but a man would be better, because awkwardness in conversation keeps words from coming out clearly. A man can speak boldly to a man and make his meaning plain.
668	**CLYTEMNESTRA** ξένοι, λέγοιτ' ἂν εἴ τι δεῖ· πάρεστι γὰρ ὁποῖά περ δόμοισι τοῖσδ' ἐπεικότα, καὶ θερμὰ λουτρὰ καὶ πόνων θελκτηρία στρωμνή, δικαίων τ' ὀμμάτων παρουσία. εἰ δ' ἄλλο πρᾶξαι δεῖ τι βουλιώτερον, ἀνδρῶν τόδ' ἐστὶν ἔργον, οἷς κοινώσομεν	**CLYTEMNESTRA** Strangers, tell me if you need anything. We have everything a house like this should have: warm baths, beds to charm away weariness, and the presence of honest eyes. But if something else must be done that calls for counsel, that is men's business, and we will share it with them.
674	**ORESTES** ξένος μέν εἰμι Δαυλιεὺς ἐκ Φωκέων· στείχοντα δ' αὐτόφορτον οἰκείᾳ σαγῇ εἰς Ἄργος, ὥσπερ δεῦρ' ἀπεζύγην πόδα, ἀγνὼς πρὸς ἀγνῶτ' εἶπε συμβαλὼν ἀνήρ, ἐξιστορήσας καὶ σαφηνίσας ὁδόν, Στροφίος ὁ Φωκεύς· πεύθομαι γὰρ ἐν λόγῳ "ἐπείπερ ἄλλως, ὦ ξέν', εἰς Ἄργος κίεις, πρὸς τοὺς τεκόντας πανδίκως μεμνημένος τεθνεῶτ' Ὀρέστην εἰπέ, μηδαμῶς λάθῃ. εἴτ' οὖν κομίζειν δόξα νικήσει φίλων, εἴτ' οὖν μέτοικον, εἰς τὸ πᾶν ἀεὶ ξένον, θάπτειν, ἐφετμὰς τάσδε πόρθμευσον πάλιν. νῦν γὰρ λέβητος χαλκέου πλευρώματα σποδὸν κέκευθεν ἀνδρὸς εὖ κεκλαυμένου." τοσαῦτ' ἀκούσας εἶπον. εἰ δὲ τυγχάνω τοῖς κυρίοισι καὶ προσήκουσιν λέγων οὐκ οἶδα, τὸν τεκόντα δ' εἰκὸς εἰδέναι.	**ORESTES** I'm a stranger, a Daulian from Phocis. I was on my way to Argos, carrying my own pack, on the same journey that has brought me here on foot, when a man fell in with me. He didn't know me and I didn't know him. He asked where I was going and told me his own road. It was Strophius of Phocis; I learned his name as we talked. He said: "Since you're going to Argos anyway, stranger, be sure to remember to tell his parents that Orestes is dead. Don't let it slip your mind. Whether his family decides to bring him home, or to bury him as a settler abroad, a stranger forever, bring their instructions back to me. For as it is, the sides of a bronze urn hold the ashes of a man who has been well mourned." That's what I heard, and I've told it. Whether I happen to be speaking to people with authority here, his kin, I don't know. But his parent ought to know.[11]
691	**CLYTEMNESTRA** οἲ 'γώ, κατ' ἄκρας εἶπας ὡς πορθούμεθα. ὦ δυσπάλαιστε τῶνδε δωμάτων Ἀρά, ὡς πόλλ' ἐπωπᾷς, κἀκποδὼν εὖ κείμενα τόξοις πρόσωθεν εὐσκόποις χειρουμένη, φίλων ἀποψιλοῖς με τὴν παναθλίαν. καὶ νῦν Ὀρέστης—ἦν γὰρ εὐβούλως ἔχων,	**CLYTEMNESTRA** Oh, no! What you've told us means we're utterly destroyed. Curse of this house, so hard to wrestle down, how much you spy out! Even what was laid safely out of the way you bring down with well-aimed arrows from far off, and you strip me, wretched as I am, of those I

11 Strophius, king of Phocis, had raised Orestes after he was sent away from Argos.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	ἔξω κομίζων ὀλεθρίου πηλοῦ πόδα,— νῦν δ' ἥπερ ἐν δόμοισι βακχείας καλῆς ἰατρὸς ἐλπὶς ἦν, προδοῦσαν ἔγγραφε.	love. And now Orestes! He was so sensible, keeping his foot clear of the deadly mire. And now the one hope this house had, the healer of its fine bacchic revels—write it down as having deserted us.
700	**ORESTES** ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ξένοισιν ὧδ' εὐδαίμοσιν κεδνῶν ἕκατι πραγμάτων ἂν ἤθελον γνωστὸς γενέσθαι καὶ ξενωθῆναι· τί γὰρ ξένου ξένοισίν ἐστιν εὐμενέστερον; πρὸς δυσσεβείας δ' ἦν ἐμοὶ τόδ' ἐν φρεσίν, τοιόνδε πρᾶγμα μὴ καρανῶσαι φίλοις, καταινέσαντα καὶ κατεξενωμένον.	**ORESTES** For my part, with hosts as prosperous as you, I'd have liked to be made known and welcomed because of good news. What is kinder than a guest's goodwill toward his hosts? But it seemed to me it would be impious not to carry such a matter through for friends, since I had promised and been taken in as a guest.
707	**CLYTEMNESTRA** οὗτοι κυρήσεις μεῖον ἀξίως σέθεν, οὐδ' ἧσσον ἂν γένοιο δώμασιν φίλος. ἄλλος δ' ὁμοίως ἦλθεν ἂν τάδ' ἀγγελῶν. ἀλλ' ἔσθ' ὁ καιρὸς ἡμερεύοντας ξένους μακρᾶς κελεύθου τυγχάνειν τὰ πρόσφορα. ἄγ' αὐτὸν εἰς ἀνδρῶνας εὐξένους δόμων, ὀπισθόπους τε τούσδε καὶ ξυνέμπορον· κἀκεῖ κυρούντων δώμασιν τὰ πρόσφορα. αἰνῶ δὲ πράσσειν ὡς ὑπευθύνῳ τάδε. ἡμεῖς δὲ ταῦτα τοῖς κρατοῦσι δωμάτων κοινώσομέν τε κοὐ σπανίζοντες φίλων βουλευσόμεσθα τῆσδε συμφορᾶς πέρι.	**CLYTEMNESTRA** You'll get no less than you deserve, and you'll be no less a friend to this house. Someone else would have come with the same news anyway. But it's time for strangers who have spent the day on a long road to get what they need. Take him to the guest rooms of the house, and these attendants of his and his traveling companion too, and see that they find there what is fitting for this house. I tell you to do this as one who will answer for it. We will share this news with those who rule the house, and since we're not short of friends, we'll take counsel about this calamity.
719	**CHORUS** εἶεν, φίλιαι δμωίδες οἴκων, πότε δὴ στομάτων δείξομεν ἰσχὺν ἐπ' Ὀρέστῃ; ὦ πότνια χθὼν καὶ πότνι' ἀκτὴ χώματος, ἣ νῦν ἐπὶ ναυάρχῳ σώματι κεῖσαι τῷ βασιλείῳ, νῦν ἐπάκουσον, νῦν ἐπάρηξον· νῦν γὰρ ἀκμάζει Πειθὼ δολίαν ξυγκαταβῆναι, χθόνιον δ' Ἑρμῆν καὶ τὸν νύχιον τοῖσδ' ἐφοδεῦσαι ξιφοδηλήτοισιν ἀγῶσιν.	**CHORUS** Now, dear fellow servants of the house, when shall we show the strength of our voices for Orestes? Holy Earth, and holy mound that now lies heaped over the royal body of the fleet's commander, hear us now, help us now! Now is the moment for cunning Persuasion to go down with him into the fight, and for Hermes of the underworld, the god of night, to watch over these contests of the deadly sword.
730	ἔοικεν ἀνὴρ ὁ ξένος τεύχειν κακόν· τροφὸν δ' Ὀρέστου τήνδ' ὁρῶ κεκλαυμένην. ποῖ δὴ πατεῖς, Κίλισσα, δωμάτων πύλας; λύπη δ' ἄμισθός ἐστί σοι ξυνέμπορος;	It looks as if our stranger is working mischief. But here I see Orestes' nurse, in tears. Where are you going, Cilissa, out through the palace gates? Is grief keeping you company without pay?
734	**NURSE** Αἴγισθον ἡ κρατοῦσα τοῖς ξένοις καλεῖν ὅπως τάχιστ' ἄνωγεν, ὡς σαφέστερον ἀνὴρ ἀπ' ἀνδρὸς τὴν νεάγγελτον φάτιν ἐλθὼν πύθηται τήνδε, πρὸς μὲν οἰκέτας θετοσκυθρωπῶν ἐντὸς ὀμμάτων γέλων κεύθουσ' ἐπ' ἔργοις διαπεπραγμένοις καλῶς κείνῃ, δόμοις δὲ τοῖσδε παγκάκως ἔχειν, φήμης ὕφ' ἧς ἤγγειλαν οἱ ξένοι τορῶς.	**NURSE** The mistress has told me to call Aegisthus to the strangers as fast as I can, so he can come and hear this new report more clearly, man from man. In front of the servants she put on a gloomy face, but behind her eyes she was hiding a laugh over how well things have turned out for her. For this house, though, it's as bad as can be, from the

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	ἦ δὴ κλύων ἐκεῖνος εὐφρανεῖ νόον, εὖτ' ἂν πύθηται μῦθον. ὦ τάλαιν' ἐγώ· ὡς μοι τὰ μὲν παλαιὰ συγκεκραμένα ἄλγη δύσοιστα τοῖσδ' ἐν Ἀτρέως δόμοις τυχόντ' ἐμὴν ἤλγυνεν ἐν στέρνοις φρένα. ἀλλ' οὔτι πω τοιόνδε πῆμ' ἀνεσχόμην· τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλα τλημόνως ἤντλουν κακά· φίλον δ' Ὀρέστην, τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς τριβήν, ὃν ἐξέθρεψα μητρόθεν δεδεγμένη,—	news the strangers brought so plainly. He'll be delighted, sure enough, when he hears the story. Oh, poor me! All the old griefs of this house of Atreus, all mixed together and so hard to bear, used to pain the heart in my breast. But I've never had to bear a blow like this. All the other troubles I bailed out patiently. But dear Orestes, who wore my soul out, whom I took from his mother and nursed—
751	κἀκ' νυκτιπλάγκτων ὀρθίων κελευμάτων καὶ πολλὰ καὶ μοχθήρ' ἀνωφέλητ' ἐμοὶ τλάσῃ·—τὸ μὴ φρονοῦν γὰρ ὡσπερεὶ βοτὸν τρέφειν ἀνάγκη, πῶς γὰρ οὔ; τρόπῳ φρενός· οὐ γάρ τι φωνεῖ παῖς ἔτ' ὢν ἐν σπαργάνοις, εἰ λιμός, ἢ δίψη τις, ἢ λιψουρία ἔχει· νέα δὲ νηδὺς αὐτάρκης τέκνων. τούτων πρόμαντις οὖσα, πολλὰ δ', οἶομαι, ψευσθεῖσα παιδὸς σπαργάνων φαιδρύντρια, γναφεὺς τροφεύς τε ταὐτὸν εἰχέτην τέλος. ἐγὼ διπλᾶς δὲ τάσδε χειρωναξίας ἔχουσ' Ὀρέστην ἐξεδεξάμην πατρί· τεθνηκότος δὲ νῦν τάλαινα πεύθομαι. στείχω δ' ἐπ' ἄνδρα τῶνδε λυμαντήριον οἴκων, θέλων δὲ τόνδε πεύσεται λόγον.	and the shrill cries that kept me up and about all night, and all the troubles I put up with, so many, so hard, and no use to me! A baby has no sense, so you have to raise it like a little animal—of course you do—by guessing what it's thinking. A child still in swaddling clothes doesn't say anything, whether it's hungry or thirsty or needs to pass water, and a baby's insides do as they please. I tried to foresee all that, but many a time, I think, I guessed wrong, and then I was the one washing the baby's clothes. Laundress and nurse had the same job. I had both these trades when I took charge of Orestes for his father. And now, poor me, I hear he's dead. And here I am on my way to the man who's been the ruin of this house, and he'll be glad to hear this news.
766	**CHORUS** πῶς οὖν κελεύει νιν μολεῖν ἐσταλμένον;	**CHORUS** Then how does she tell him to come? With what escort?
767	**NURSE** ἦ πῶς; λέγ' αὖθις, ὡς μάθω σαφέστερον.	**NURSE** What do you mean, how? Say it again, so I understand you better.
768	**CHORUS** εἰ ξὺν λοχίταις εἴτε καὶ μονοστιβῆ.	**CHORUS** With his guardsmen, or on his own?
769	**NURSE** ἄγειν κελεύει δορυφόρους ὀπάονας.	**NURSE** She tells him to bring his spearmen with him.
770	**CHORUS** μή νυν σὺ ταῦτ' ἄγγελλε δεσπότου στύγει· ἀλλ' αὐτὸν ἐλθεῖν, ὡς ἀδειμάντως κλύῃ, ἄνωχθ' ὅσον τάχιστα γηθούσῃ φρενί. ἐν ἀγγέλῳ γὰρ κυπτὸς ὀρθοῦται λόγος.	**CHORUS** Then don't give that message to our hated master. Tell him to come by himself, as fast as he can, with a glad heart, so he can hear the news without alarm. It's the messenger who can straighten a crooked message.
774	**NURSE** ἀλλ' ἦ φρονεῖς εὖ τοῖσι νῦν ἠγγελμένοις;	**NURSE** What? Are you pleased at the news we've had?
775	**CHORUS** ἀλλ' εἰ τροπαίαν Ζεὺς κακῶν θήσει ποτέ.	**CHORUS** Yes, if Zeus will someday bring a turn in our troubles.
776	**NURSE** καὶ πῶς; Ὀρέστης ἐλπὶς οἴχεται δόμων.	**NURSE** How could he? Orestes, the hope of the house, is gone.
777	**CHORUS** οὔπω· κακός γε μάντις ἂν γνοίη τάδε.	

	GREEK	ENGLISH
		CHORUS Not yet. Only a poor prophet would read it that way.
778	**NURSE** τί φής; ἔχεις τι τῶν λελεγμένων δίχα;	**NURSE** What are you saying? Do you know something besides what we've been told?
779	**CHORUS** ἄγγελλ' ἰοῦσα, πρᾶσσε τἀπεσταλμένα. / μέλει θεοῖσιν ὥνπερ ἂν μέλῃ πέρι.	**CHORUS** Go and deliver your message, and do what you've been told. The gods look after what they care about.
781	**NURSE** ἀλλ' εἶμι καὶ σοῖς ταῦτα πείσομαι λόγοις. / γένοιτο δ' ὡς ἄριστα σὺν θεῶν δόσει.	**NURSE** Well, I'll go and do as you say. May it all turn out for the best, with the gods' help.

SECOND STASIMON

The chorus prays to Zeus, the house gods, Apollo and Hermes for Orestes' success.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
783	**CHORUS** νῦν παραιτουμένᾳ μοι, πάτερ Ζεῦ θεῶν Ὀλυμπίων, δὸς τύχας τυχεῖν δόμου κυρίως τὰ σώφρον' εὖ μαιομένοις ἰδεῖν. διὰ δίκας πᾶν ἔπος ἔλακον· ὦ Ζεῦ, σύ νιν φυλάσσοις.	**CHORUS** Now, as I pray to you, Father Zeus, god of the Olympian gods, grant that those who rightly long to see good order in this house may truly have their fortune. Every word I have spoken I have spoken in justice. Zeus, may you guard him!
789	ἔ ἔ, πρὸ δὲ δὴ 'χθρῶν τὸν ἔσωθεν μελάθρων, Ζεῦ, θές, ἐπεί νιν μέγαν ἄρας, δίδυμα καὶ τριπλᾶ παλίμποινα θέλων ἀμείψει.	Ah, ah! Set him who is inside the halls, Zeus, above his enemies! For if you raise him high, he will gladly repay you twofold and threefold.
794	ἴσθι δ' ἀνδρὸς φίλου πῶλον εὖ- νιν ζυγέντ' ἐν ἅρμασιν πημάτων. σὺ δ' ἐν δρόμῳ προστιθεὶς μέτρον κτίσον σῳζόμενον ῥυθμὸν τοῦτ' ἰδεῖν διὰ πέδον ἀνομένων βημάτων ὄρεγμα;	Know that the orphaned colt of a man you loved is yoked to a chariot of sorrows. And you, set a measure on his race: grant that we see him keep a steady pace, this stretch of striding feet pressing across the ground to the end!
800	οἵ τ' ἔσω δωμάτων πλουτογαθῆ μυχὸν νομίζετε, κλῦτε, σύμφρονες θεοί· τῶν πάλαι πεπραγμένων λύσασθ' αἷμα προσφάτοις δίκαις. γέρων φόνος μηκέτ' ἐν δόμοις τέκοι.	And you who dwell within the house, in the inner chamber that delights in wealth, hear us, gods who are of one mind with us! Wash away with fresh justice the blood of deeds done long ago. Let old murder breed no more in the house!
806	τὸ δὲ καλῶς κτίμενον ὦ μέγα ναίων στόμιον, εὖ δὸς ἀνιδεῖν δόμον ἀνδρός, καί νιν ἐλευθερίας φῶς λαμπρὸν ἰδεῖν φιλίοις ὄμμασιν ἐκ δνοφερᾶς καλύπτρας.	

	GREEK	ENGLISH
		And you who dwell in the great mouth of the beautifully built cave, grant that the man's house may lift its eyes again, and see with loving eyes the bright light of freedom from beneath its dark veil.[12]
811	ξυλλάβοι δ' ἐνδίκως παῖς ὁ Μαίας, ἐπεὶ φορώτατος πρᾶξιν οὐρίαν θέλων· ἄσκοπον δ' ἔπος λέγων νύκτα πρό τ' ὀμμάτων σκότον φέρει, καθ' ἡμέραν δ' οὐδὲν ἐμφανέστερος.	And may the son of Maia rightly lend a hand, for no one is readier to send a deed on a fair wind, when he wills. But when he speaks a word no one can make out, he brings night and darkness before the eyes, and by day he is no plainer at all.[13]
819	καὶ τότ' ἤδη κλυτὸν δωμάτων λυτήριον, θῆλυν οὐριοστάταν οὐδ' ὀξύκρεκτον γοα- τᾶν νόμον θήσομεν· "πλεῖ τάδ' εὖ· ἐμὸν ἐμὸν κέρδος αὔξεται τόδ'· ἄ- τα δ' ἀποστατεῖ φίλων."	And then at last we will raise the glorious song of the house's deliverance, the women's song that calls a fair wind, not the shrill strain of mourners: "All is sailing well! My gain, my gain is growing here, and Ruin keeps away from those I love."
827	σὺ δὲ θαρσῶν, ὅταν ἥκῃ μέρος ἔργων, ἐπαΰσας πατρὸς αὐδὰν θροούσᾳ τέκνον πέραιν' ἀνεπίμομφον ἄταν.	And you, when the moment for action comes, be bold. When she cries out "My child!" answer with your father's name, and go through with a ruin no one can blame.
831	Περσέως τ' ἐν φρεσὶν καρδίαν ἀνασχεθών, τοῖς θ' ὑπὸ χθονὸς φίλοισιν, τοῖς τ' ἄνωθεν πρόπρασ- σε χάριν ὀργᾶς λυγρᾶς, ἔνδοθεν φόνιον ἄταν τιθείς, τὸν αἴτιον δ' ἐξαπολλύων μόρου.	Raise up in your breast the heart of Perseus, and for those you love beneath the earth and those above, do the favor their bitter anger asks. Bring bloody ruin within the house, and wipe out the one guilty of the murder.[14]

FOURTH EPISODE

Aegisthus enters the palace and is killed; Orestes confronts his mother and drives her inside to die.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
838	**AEGISTHUS** ἥκω μὲν οὐκ ἄκλητος, ἀλλ' ὑπάγγελος· νέαν φάτιν δὲ πεύθομαι λέγειν τινὰς ξένους μολόντας οὐδαμῶς ἐφίμερον, μόρον δ' Ὀρέστου. καὶ τόδ' ἀμφέρειν δόμοις γένοιτ' ἂν ἄχθος δειματοσταγὲς φόνῳ τῷ πρόσθεν ἑλκαίνουσι καὶ δεδηγμένοις. πῶς ταῦτ' ἀληθῆ καὶ βλέποντα δοξάσω;	**AEGISTHUS** I haven't come unbidden. A messenger summoned me. I hear that some strangers who have arrived are telling news that's far from welcome: the death of Orestes. Laying this on the house too would be a burden dripping with fear, for a house that is still festering and stung from the earlier murder. How am I to judge this? Is it

12 The great cave is Apollo's shrine at Delphi, where the oracle spoke from deep within.
13 The son of Maia is Hermes, god of trickery and luck as well as guide of the dead.
14 Perseus beheaded the Gorgon Medusa, a monster whose gaze turned anyone who looked at her to stone, by averting his eyes from her face.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	ἢ πρὸς γυναικῶν δειματούμενοι λόγοι πεδάρσιοι θρῴσκουσι, θνῄσκοντες μάτην; τί τῶνδ' ἂν εἴποις ὥστε δηλῶσαι φρενί;	true and real? Or are these frightened stories from women, which leap up into the air and die for nothing? What can you tell me about it that would make it clear to my mind?
848	**CHORUS** ἠκούσαμεν μέν, πυνθάνου δὲ τῶν ξένων ἔσω παρελθών. οὐδὲν ἀγγέλων σθένος ὡς αὐτὸν αὐτῶν ἄνδρα πεύθεσθαι πάρα.	**CHORUS** We heard it, yes. But go inside and ask the strangers. A messenger's report is nothing compared with asking for yourself, man to man.
851	**AEGISTHUS** ἰδεῖν ἐλέγξαι τ' αὖ θέλω τὸν ἄγγελον, εἴτ' αὐτὸς ἦν θνῄσκοντος ἐγγύθεν παρών, εἴτ' ἐξ ἀμαυρᾶς κληδόνος λέγει μαθών. οὗτοι φρέν' ἂν κλέψειεν ὠμματωμένην.	**AEGISTHUS** I want to see this messenger and question him, to find out whether he was there himself, close by when the man died, or is repeating something he picked up from vague rumor. He won't fool a mind that has its eyes open.
855	**CHORUS** Ζεῦ Ζεῦ, τί λέγω, πόθεν ἄρξωμαι τάδ' ἐπευχομένη κἀπιθεάζουσ', ὑπὸ δ' εὐνοίας πῶς ἴσον εἰποῦσ' ἀνύσωμαι; νῦν γὰρ μέλλουσι μιανθεῖσαι πειραὶ κοπάνων ἀνδροδαΐκτων ἢ πάνυ θήσειν Ἀγαμεμνονίων οἴκων ὄλεθρον διὰ παντός, ἢ πῦρ καὶ φῶς ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ δαίων ἀρχάς τε πολισσονόμους πατέρων θ' ἕξει μέγαν ὄλβον. τοιάνδε πάλην μόνος ὢν ἔφεδρος δισσοῖς μέλλει θεῖος Ὀρέστης ἄψειν. εἴη δ' ἐπὶ νίκῃ.	**CHORUS** Zeus, Zeus, what shall I say? Where shall I begin this prayer, this appeal to the gods? How, loyal as I am, shall I find words to match the moment? For now the bloodstained edges of man-slaughtering blades will either destroy the house of Agamemnon's line utterly and forever, or he will kindle fire and light for freedom, and hold the rule of the city and the great wealth of his fathers. Such is the wrestling match godlike Orestes is about to join, alone, the fresh challenger against two. May it be for victory!
869	**AEGISTHUS** ἒ ἔ, ὀτοτοτοῖ.	**AEGISTHUS** Ah, ah! *Ototoi!*
870	**CHORUS** ἔα ἔα μάλα· πῶς ἔχει; πῶς κέκρανται δόμοις; ἀποσταθῶμεν πράγματος τελουμένου, ὅπως δοκῶμεν τῶνδ' ἀναίτιαι κακῶν εἶναι· μάχης γὰρ δὴ κεκύρωται τέλος.	**CHORUS** Listen, listen! What's happening? How has it ended for the house? Let's stand aside while the thing is finished, so that we seem to have no part in these evils. The outcome of the fight is settled.
875	**SERVANT** οἴμοι, πανοίμοι δεσπότου πεπληγμένου· οἴμοι μάλ' αὖθις ἐν τρίτοις προσφθέγμασιν. Αἴγισθος οὐκέτ' ἔστιν. ἀλλ' ἀνοίξατε ὅπως τάχιστα, καὶ γυναικείους πύλας μοχλοῖς χαλᾶτε· καὶ μάλ' ἡβῶντος δὲ δεῖ, οὐχ ὡς δ' ἀρῆξαι διαπεπραγμένῳ· τί γάρ; ἰοὺ ἰού. κωφοῖς ἀυτῶ καὶ καθεύδουσιν μάτην ἄκραντα βάζω; ποῖ Κλυταιμήστρα; τί δρᾷ; ἔοικε νῦν αὐτῆς ἐπὶ ξυροῦ πέλας αὐχὴν πεσεῖσθαι πρὸς δίκην πεπληγμένος.	**SERVANT** Oh no, oh no, no, my master's struck down! Oh no, again, I cry it a third time! Aegisthus is no more. Come on, open up, as fast as you can, and unbolt the doors to the women's quarters! It needs a strong young man, though not to help one who's already finished. What good would that do? Hey! Hey! Am I shouting to the deaf, babbling uselessly to people asleep? Where's Clytemnestra? What is she doing? It looks as if her own neck is on the razor's edge now, about to fall under the stroke of justice.
885		

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	CLYTEMNESTRA τί δ' ἐστὶ χρῆμα; τίνα βοὴν ἵστης δόμοις;	**CLYTEMNESTRA** What's the matter? What's this shouting you're raising in the house?
886	**SERVANT** τὸν ζῶντα καίνειν τοὺς τεθνηκότας λέγω.	**SERVANT** I tell you, the dead are killing the living.
887	**CLYTEMNESTRA** οἲ 'γώ. ξυνῆκα τοὔπος ἐξ αἰνιγμάτων. δόλοις ὀλούμεθ', ὥσπερ οὖν ἐκτείναμεν. δοίη τις ἀνδροκμῆτα πέλεκυν ὡς τάχος· εἰδῶμεν εἰ νικῶμεν, ἢ νικώμεθα· ἐνταῦθα γὰρ δὴ τοῦδ' ἀφικόμην κακοῦ.	**CLYTEMNESTRA** Oh no. I understand the riddle. We'll die by treachery, just as we killed. Someone give me a man-killing axe, quickly! Let's see whether we win or lose. That's how far I've come in this evil.
892	**ORESTES** σὲ καὶ ματεύω· τῷδε δ' ἀρκούντως ἔχει.	**ORESTES** You're the one I'm looking for. He's had enough.
893	**CLYTEMNESTRA** οἲ 'γώ. τέθνηκας, φίλτατ' Αἰγίσθου βία.	**CLYTEMNESTRA** Oh no. You're dead, my dearest, my strong Aegisthus.
894	**ORESTES** φιλεῖς τὸν ἄνδρα; τοιγὰρ ἐν ταὐτῷ τάφῳ / κείσῃ· θανόντα δ' οὔτι μὴ προδῷς ποτε.	**ORESTES** You love the man? Then you'll lie in the same grave, and you'll never betray him now that he's dead.
896	**CLYTEMNESTRA** ἐπίσχες, ὦ παῖ, τόνδε δ' αἴδεσαι, τέκνον, μαστόν, πρὸς ᾧ σὺ πολλὰ δὴ βρίζων ἅμα οὔλοισιν ἐξήμελξας εὐτραφὲς γάλα.	**CLYTEMNESTRA** Stop, my son! Have respect, child, for this breast, where you so often dozed while your gums sucked out the milk that made you grow.
899	**ORESTES** Πυλάδη τί δράσω; μητέρ' αἰδεσθῶ κτανεῖν;	**ORESTES** Pylades, what shall I do? Should I shrink from killing my mother?
900	**PYLADES** ποῦ δὴ τὰ λοιπὰ Λοξίου μαντεύματα τὰ πυθόχρηστα, πιστὰ δ' εὐορκώματα; ἅπαντας ἐχθροὺς τῶν θεῶν ἡγοῦ πλέον.	**PYLADES** Then what becomes of Loxias' oracles from now on, the ones given at Pytho, and the pledges we swore in good faith? Make all men your enemies rather than the gods.
903	**ORESTES** κρίνω σὲ νικᾶν, καὶ παραινεῖς μοι καλῶς. ἕπου, πρὸς αὐτὸν τόνδε σὲ σφάξαι θέλω. καὶ ζῶντα γάρ νιν κρείσσον' ἡγήσω πατρός· τούτῳ θανοῦσα ξυγκάθευδ', ἐπεὶ φιλεῖς τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦτον, ὃν δ' ἐχρῆν φιλεῖν στυγεῖς.	**ORESTES** You win, I judge, and your advice is good. Follow me. I mean to slaughter you right beside him. While he was alive you thought him better than my father. Sleep with him, then, in death, since you love this man and hate the one you should have loved.
908	**CLYTEMNESTRA** ἐγώ σ' ἔθρεψα, σὺν δὲ γηράναι θέλω.	**CLYTEMNESTRA** I raised you, and I want to grow old with you.
909	**ORESTES** πατροκτονοῦσα γὰρ ξυνοικήσεις ἐμοί;	**ORESTES** What, you killed my father and you'll live with me?
910	**CLYTEMNESTRA** ἡ Μοῖρα τούτων, ὦ τέκνον, παραιτία.	**CLYTEMNESTRA** Fate had a share in this, my child.
911	**ORESTES** καὶ τόνδε τοίνυν Μοῖρ' ἐπόρσυνεν μόρον.	**ORESTES** Then Fate has also brought about this death.
912		

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	CLYTEMNESTRA οὐδὲν σεβίζῃ γενεθλίους ἀράς, τέκνον;	**CLYTEMNESTRA** Have you no fear of a parent's curses, child?
913	**ORESTES** τεκοῦσα γάρ μ' ἔρριψας ἐς τὸ δυστυχές.	**ORESTES** You gave birth to me, and then threw me out into misery.
914	**CLYTEMNESTRA** οὔτοι σ' ἀπέρριψ' εἰς δόμους δορυξένους.	**CLYTEMNESTRA** No, I didn't throw you out. I sent you to the house of an ally.
915	**ORESTES** αἰκῶς ἐπράθην ὢν ἐλευθέρου πατρός.	**ORESTES** I was shamefully sold, though I was the son of a free father.
916	**CLYTEMNESTRA** ποῦ δῆθ' ὁ τῖμος, ὅντιν' ἀντεδεξάμην;	**CLYTEMNESTRA** Then where's the price I got for you?
917	**ORESTES** αἰσχύνομαί σοι τοῦτ' ὀνειδίσαι σαφῶς.	**ORESTES** I'm ashamed to throw that in your face openly.
918	**CLYTEMNESTRA** μὴ ἀλλ' εἶφ' ὁμοίως καὶ πατρὸς τοῦ σοῦ μάτας.	**CLYTEMNESTRA** No, but tell your father's follies too, just as freely.
919	**ORESTES** μὴ 'λεγχε τὸν πονοῦντ' ἔσω καθημένη.	**ORESTES** Don't blame the man who toils while you sit at home.
920	**CLYTEMNESTRA** ἄλγος γυναιξὶν ἀνδρὸς εἴργεσθαι, τέκνον.	**CLYTEMNESTRA** It's painful for women to be kept from their man, child.
921	**ORESTES** τρέφει δέ γ' ἀνδρὸς μόχθος ἡμένας ἔσω.	**ORESTES** Yes, but it's the man's toil that feeds them while they sit at home.
922	**CLYTEMNESTRA** κτενεῖν ἔοικας, ὦ τέκνον, τὴν μητέρα.	**CLYTEMNESTRA** It seems you mean to kill your mother, child.
923	**ORESTES** σύ τοι σεαυτήν, οὐκ ἐγώ, κατακτενεῖς.	**ORESTES** You're the one who'll kill yourself, not I.
924	**CLYTEMNESTRA** ὅρα, φύλαξαι μητρὸς ἐγκότους κύνας.	**CLYTEMNESTRA** Watch out! Beware your mother's raging hounds.
925	**ORESTES** τὰς τοῦ πατρὸς δὲ πῶς φύγω, παρεὶς τάδε;	**ORESTES** And how will I escape my father's, if I let this go?
926	**CLYTEMNESTRA** ἔοικα θρηνεῖν ζῶσα πρὸς τύμβον μάτην.	**CLYTEMNESTRA** It seems I'm alive and wailing in vain to a tomb.
927	**ORESTES** πατρὸς γὰρ αἶσα τόνδε σοὐρίζει μόρον.	**ORESTES** Yes, my father's fate blows this death your way.
928	**CLYTEMNESTRA** οἳ 'γὼ τεκοῦσα τόνδ' ὄφιν ἐθρεψάμην.	**CLYTEMNESTRA** Oh no, this is the snake I gave birth to and nursed!
929	**ORESTES** ἦ κάρτα μάντις οὐξ ὀνειράτων φόβος. / ἔκανες ὃν οὐ χρῆν, καὶ τὸ μὴ χρεὼν πάθε.	**ORESTES** Yes, the terror in your dreams was a true prophet. You killed the one you shouldn't have; now suffer what you shouldn't.
931	**CHORUS** στένω μὲν οὖν καὶ τῶνδε συμφορὰν διπλῆν. ἐπεὶ δὲ πολλῶν αἱμάτων ἐπήκρισε	**CHORUS** I grieve even for these two, for their double downfall. But since long-suffering Orestes

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	τλήμων Ὀρέστης, τοῦθ' ὅμως αἱρούμεθα, ὀφθαλμὸν οἴκων μὴ πανώλεθρον πεσεῖν.	has climbed to the peak of so much bloodshed, still, this is what we would choose: that the eye of the house should not fall in utter ruin.

THIRD STASIMON

The chorus rejoices that Justice has come to the house and its long darkness is lifted.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
935	**CHORUS** ἔμολε μὲν δίκα Πριαμίδαις χρόνῳ, βαρύδικος ποινά· ἔμολε δ' ἐς δόμον τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονος διπλοῦς λέων, διπλοῦς Ἄρης. ἔλασε δ' ἐς τὸ πᾶν ὁ πυθόχρηστος φυγὰς θεόθεν εὖ φραδαῖσιν ὡρμημένος.	**CHORUS** Justice came at last to the sons of Priam, heavy, punishing vengeance. To the house of Agamemnon came a double lion, a double Ares. The exile sent by Pytho's oracle has driven his course to the finish, urged on rightly by the god's counsel.
942	ἐπολολύξατ' ὦ δεσποσύνων δόμων ἀναφυγᾶς κακῶν καὶ κτεάνων τριβᾶς ὑπαὶ δυοῖν μιαστόροιν, δυσοίμου τύχας.	Raise the women's cry of triumph for our masters' house, for its escape from evils, from the wasting of its wealth by two defilers, from its grim fortune![15]
946	ἔμολε δ' ᾧ μέλει κρυπταδίου μάχας δολιόφρων ποινά· ἔθιγε δ' ἐν μάχᾳ χερὸς ἐτήτυμος Διὸς κόρα—Δίκαν δέ νιν προσαγορεύομεν βροτοὶ τυχόντες καλῶς— ὀλέθριον πνέουσ' ἐν ἐχθροῖς κότον.	And she came whose care is the hidden fight, Vengeance, cunning-minded. In the battle the true daughter of Zeus guided his hand, Justice, as we mortals call her, and we name her well, breathing deadly wrath upon her enemies.
942a	ἐπολολύξατ' ὦ δεσποσύνων δόμων ἀναφυγᾶς κακῶν καὶ κτεάνων τριβᾶς ὑπαὶ δυοῖν μιαστόροιν, δυσοίμου τύχας.	Raise the women's cry of triumph for our masters' house, for its escape from evils, from the wasting of its wealth by two defilers, from its grim fortune!
953	τά περ ὁ Λοξίας ὁ Παρνασσίας μέγαν ἔχων μυχὸν χθονὸς ἐπωρθία- ξεν ἀδόλως δόλοις βλάβαν ἐγχρονισθεῖσαν ἐποίχεται. κρατεῖταί πως τὸ θεῖον παρὰ τὸ μὴ ὑπουργεῖν κακοῖς. ἄξια δ' οὐρανοῦχον ἀρχὰν σέβειν.	The very things that Loxias of Parnassus, who holds the great cavern of the earth, proclaimed aloud, guileless in his guile, now come down upon the harm that has lingered long. Somehow the divine holds firm and will not serve the wicked. It is right to revere the power that rules the sky.
961	πάρα τε φῶς ἰδεῖν μέγα τ' ἀφῃρέθην ψάλιον οἰκέων.	The light is here to see, and the great curb has been lifted from the house-

15 The *ololygmos* was the high, ritual cry raised by women at a sacrifice or a moment of triumph.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	ἄναγε μὰν δόμοι· πολὺν ἄγαν χρόνον χαμαιπετεῖς ἔκεισθ' ἀεί.	hold. Rise up, house! For far too long you have lain fallen on the ground.
965	τάχα δὲ παντελὴς χρόνος ἀμείψεται πρόθυρα δωμάτων, ὅταν ἀφ' ἑστίας πᾶν ἐλαθῇ μύσος καθαρμοῖσιν ἀτᾶν ἐλατηρίοις. τύχαι δ' εὐπροσωποκοῖται τὸ πᾶν ἰδεῖν πρευμενεῖς μετοίκοις δόμων πεσοῦνται πάλιν.	Soon Time, who brings all things to pass, will cross the threshold of the house, when all pollution is driven from the hearth by cleansing rites that drive out ruin. And fortune's throws, landing fair-faced, gracious to behold in every way, will fall again for those who dwell in the house.
972	πάρα τε φῶς ἰδεῖν μέγα τ' ἀφῃρέθην ψάλιον οἰκέων. ἄναγε μὰν δόμοι· πολὺν ἄγαν χρόνον χαμαιπετεῖς ἔκεισθ' ἀεί.	The light is here to see, and the great curb has been lifted from the household. Rise up, house! For far too long you have lain fallen on the ground.

EXODOS

Orestes displays the bodies and the robe, defends the killing, and flees as the Furies appear to him.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
973	**ORESTES** ἴδεσθε χώρας τὴν διπλῆν τυραννίδα πατροκτόνους τε δωμάτων πορθήτορας. σεμνοὶ μὲν ἦσαν ἐν θρόνοις τόθ' ἥμενοι, φίλοι δὲ καὶ νῦν, ὡς ἐπεικάσαι πάθη πάρεστιν, ὅρκος τ' ἐμμένει πιστώμασι. ξυνώμοσαν μὲν θάνατον ἀθλίῳ πατρὶ καὶ ξυνθανεῖσθαι· καὶ τάδ' εὐόρκως ἔχει.	**ORESTES** Look at this pair who ruled the land as tyrants, who murdered my father and plundered the house! How grand they were, sitting on their thrones, and they're lovers still, as you can judge from what has happened to them. Their oath holds true to its pledges. They swore together to bring death to my poor father, and to die together, and they've kept that oath faithfully too.
980	ἴδεσθε δ' αὖτε, τῶνδ' ἐπήκοοι κακῶν, τὸ μηχάνημα, δεσμὸν ἀθλίῳ πατρί, πέδας τε χειροῖν καὶ ποδοῖν ξυνωρίδα. ἐκτείνατ' αὐτὸ καὶ κύκλῳ παρασταδὸν στέγαστρον ἀνδρὸς δείξαθ', ὡς ἴδῃ πατήρ, οὐχ οὑμός, ἀλλ' ὁ πάντ' ἐποπτεύων τάδε Ἥλιος, ἄναγνα μητρὸς ἔργα τῆς ἐμῆς, ὡς ἂν παρῇ μοι μάρτυς ἐν δίκῃ ποτέ, ὡς τόνδ' ἐγὼ μετῆλθον ἐνδίκως μόρον τὸν μητρός· Αἰγίσθου γὰρ οὐ λέγω μόρον· ἔχει γὰρ αἰσχυντῆρος, ὡς νόμος, δίκην·	And look again, you who have heard of these evils, at the device they used, the bonds for my poor father, shackles for his hands and a yoke for his two feet. Spread it out, stand around it in a circle, and show this covering for a man, so that the Father may see it—not mine, but the one who watches over all this, the Sun—may see my mother's unholy work, so that he may stand by me as a witness when I'm tried one day, that I was just in pursuing this death, my mother's death. I say nothing of Aegisthus' death. He has the punishment of an adulterer, as the law allows.
991	ἥτις δ' ἐπ' ἀνδρὶ τοῦτ' ἐμήσατο στύγος, ἐξ οὗ τέκνων ἤνεγχ' ὑπὸ ζώνην βάρος, φίλον τέως, νῦν δ' ἐχθρόν, ὡς φαίνει, κακόν, τί σοι δοκεῖ; μύραινά γ' εἴτ' ἔχιδν' ἔφυ σήπειν θιγοῦσ' ἂν ἄλλον οὐ δεδηγμένον τόλμης ἔκατι κἀκδίκου φρονήματος.	But she who devised this horror against her husband, whose children she carried under her girdle, a weight once dear to her and now hateful, as she has shown—what do you think of her? If she had been born a moray eel or a viper, she'd rot another just by touching him, without even a bite, so great is her daring and her lawless mind.

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997	τί νιν προσείπω, κἂν τύχω μάλ' εὐστομῶν; ἄγρευμα θηρός, ἢ νεκροῦ ποδένδυτον δροίτης κατασκήνωμα; δίκτυον μὲν οὖν, ἄρκυν τ' ἂν εἴποις καὶ ποδιστῆρας πέπλους. τοιοῦτον ἂν κτήσαιτο φηλήτης ἀνήρ, ξένων ἀπαιόλημα κἀργυροστερῆ βίον νομίζων, τῷδέ τ' ἂν δολώματι πολλοὺς ἀναιρῶν πολλὰ θερμαίνοι φρένα.	What shall I call it, even if I find the fairest words? A trap for a wild beast? Or a bathtub's drapery, shrouding a corpse down to its feet? No, you'd call it a net, rather, a hunting snare, robes to shackle the feet. A highwayman might own such a thing, a man who makes his living cheating travelers and robbing them of their silver. With a trick like this he could kill many and warm his heart a great deal.
1005	τοιάδ' ἐμοὶ ξύνοικος ἐν δόμοισι μὴ / γένοιτ'· ὀλοίμην πρόσθεν ἐκ θεῶν ἄπαις.	May I never have a woman like this sharing my house! Sooner may the gods destroy me childless.
1007	CHORUS αἰαῖ αἰαῖ μελέων ἔργων· στυγερῷ θανάτῳ διεπράχθης. ἔ ἔ, μίμνοντι δὲ καὶ πάθος ἀνθεῖ.	CHORUS Oh, oh, for these wretched deeds! You were done to death by a hateful death. Ah, ah! And for the one who remains, suffering too comes into flower.
1010	ORESTES ἔδρασεν ἢ οὐκ ἔδρασε; μαρτυρεῖ δέ μοι φᾶρος τόδ', ὡς ἔβαψεν Αἰγίσθου ξίφος. φόνου δὲ κηκὶς ξὺν χρόνῳ ξυμβάλλεται, πολλὰς βαφὰς φθείρουσα τοῦ ποικίλματος.	ORESTES Did she do it, or didn't she? This robe is my witness, how Aegisthus' sword dyed it. The gush of blood, together with time, has spoiled many of the dyes in its embroidery.
1014	νῦν αὐτὸν αἰνῶ, νῦν ἀποιμώζω παρών, πατροκτόνον θ' ὕφασμα προσφωνῶν τόδε. ἀλγῶ μὲν ἔργα καὶ πάθος γένος τε πᾶν, ἄζηλα νίκης τῆσδ' ἔχων μιάσματα.	Now I can praise him, now I can mourn him, standing here and speaking to this web that killed my father. I grieve for what was done and what was suffered, and for my whole family, since this victory has left me with a pollution no one would envy.
1018	CHORUS οὔτις μερόπων ἀσινὴς βίοτον διὰ παντὸς ἀπήμον' ἀμείψει. ἔ ἔ, μόχθος δ' ὁ μὲν αὐτίχ', ὁ δ' ἥξει.	CHORUS No mortal passes through his life unharmed, free of pain to the end. Ah, ah! One trouble is here now; another will come.
1021	ORESTES ἀλλ', ὡς ἂν εἰδῆτ', οὐ γὰρ οἶδ' ὅπη τελεῖ, ὥσπερ ξὺν ἵπποις ἡνιοστροφῶ δρόμου ἐξωτέρω· φέρουσι γὰρ νικώμενον φρένες δύσαρκτοι· πρὸς δὲ καρδίᾳ φόβος ᾄδειν ἕτοιμος ἠδ' ὑπορχεῖσθαι κότῳ. ἕως δ' ἔτ' ἔμφρων εἰμί, κηρύσσω φίλοις κτανεῖν τέ φημι μητέρ' οὐκ ἄνευ δίκης, πατροκτόνον μίασμα καὶ θεῶν στύγος. καὶ φίλτρα τόλμης τῆσδε πλειστηρίζομαι	ORESTES But I want you to know, because I don't know where this will end: it's as if I were driving a team of horses off the track. My wits, hard to control, are carrying me away, beaten. Fear stands at my heart, ready to strike up a song, and my heart to dance to its angry tune. While I still have my senses, I proclaim to my friends and declare that I killed my mother not without justice, she who was the pollution of my father's murder, a thing the gods hate. And as the spell that drove me to this daring, I name above all
1030	τὸν πυθόμαντιν Λοξίαν, χρήσαντ' ἐμοὶ πράξαντι μὲν ταῦτ' ἐκτὸς αἰτίας κακῆς εἶναι, παρέντα δ'—οὐκ ἐρῶ τὴν ζημίαν· τόξῳ γὰρ οὔτις πημάτων ἐφίξεται.	Loxias, the prophet of Pytho, who declared to me that if I did this I would be free of guilt, but if I

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		failed to—I won't say what the penalty was. No archer could reach the height of those sufferings.
1034	καὶ νῦν ὁρᾶτέ μ', ὡς παρεσκευασμένος ξὺν τῷδε θαλλῷ καὶ στέφει προσίξομαι μεσόμφαλόν θ' ἵδρυμα, Λοξίου πέδον, πυρός τε φέγγος ἄφθιτον κεκλημένον, φεύγων τόδ' αἷμα κοινόν· οὐδ' ἐφ' ἑστίαν ἄλλην τραπέσθαι Λοξίας ἐφίετο. καὶ μαρτυρεῖν μὲν ὡς ἐπορσύνθη κακὰ τάδ' ἐν χρόνῳ μοι πάντας Ἀργείους λέγω· ἐγὼ δ' ἀλήτης τῆσδε γῆς ἀπόξενος, ζῶν καὶ τεθνηκὼς τάσδε κληδόνας λιπών.	And now look at me. See how, armed with this branch and wreath, I will go as a suppliant to the shrine at the earth's navel, Loxias' ground, and to the light of the fire that is called undying, fleeing this blood that is my own kin's. Loxias told me to turn to no other hearth. And I ask all the Argives to bear witness in time to come how these evils were brought about. As for me, I go a wanderer, an exile from this land, and in life and in death I leave behind this name.[16]
1044	CHORUS ἀλλ' εὖ γ' ἔπραξας, μηδ' ἐπιζευχθῇς στόμα φήμῃ πονηρᾷ μηδ' ἐπιγλωσσῶ κακά, ἐλευθερώσας πᾶσαν Ἀργείων πόλιν, δυοῖν δρακόντοιν εὐπετῶς τεμὼν κάρα.	CHORUS But you've done well. Don't yoke your mouth to ill-omened words or let your tongue speak evil of yourself, when you've freed the whole city of Argos by lopping off the heads of two serpents with one clean stroke.
1048	ORESTES ἆ, ἆ. δμωαὶ γυναῖκες, αἵδε Γοργόνων δίκην φαιοχίτωνες καὶ πεπλεκτανημέναι πυκνοῖς δράκουσιν· οὐκέτ' ἂν μείναιμ' ἐγώ.	ORESTES Ah! Ah! Women of the house, look at them, like Gorgons, in dark robes, their hair twined thick with snakes! I can't stay here any longer.
1051	CHORUS τίνες σε δόξαι, φίλτατ' ἀνθρώπων πατρί, / στροβοῦσιν; ἴσχε, μὴ φόβου νικῶ πολύ.	CHORUS What visions are whirling you around, you whom your father loved more than any man? Stop, don't let fear overwhelm you.
1053	ORESTES οὐκ εἰσὶ δόξαι τῶνδε πημάτων ἐμοί· / σαφῶς γὰρ αἵδε μητρὸς ἔγκοτοι κύνες.	ORESTES These torments of mine are not visions. They're clearly my mother's raging hounds.
1055	CHORUS ποταίνιον γὰρ αἷμά σοι χεροῖν ἔτι· / ἐκ τῶνδέ τοι ταραγμὸς ἐς φρένας πίτνει.	CHORUS It's the fresh blood still on your hands. That's why this turmoil is falling on your mind.
1057	ORESTES ἄναξ Ἄπολλον, αἵδε πληθύουσι δή, / κἀξ ὀμμάτων στάζουσιν αἷμα δυσφιλές.	ORESTES Lord Apollo! Now there are more and more of them, and their eyes are dripping loathsome blood.
1059	CHORUS εἷς σοὶ καθαρμός· Λοξίας δὲ προσθιγὼν / ἐλεύθερόν σε τῶνδε πημάτων κτίσει.	CHORUS There is one way to cleanse yourself: Loxias' touch will set you free of these torments.
1061	ORESTES ὑμεῖς μὲν οὐχ ὁρᾶτε τάσδ', ἐγὼ δ' ὁρῶ· / ἐλαύνομαι δὲ κοὐκέτ' ἂν μείναιμ' ἐγώ.	ORESTES You can't see them, but I can. I'm being driven away. I can't stay any longer.
1063	CHORUS ἀλλ' εὐτυχοίης, καί σ' ἐποπτεύων πρόφρων / θεὸς φυλάσσοι καιρίοισι συμφοραῖς.	CHORUS Then good fortune go with you, and may the god look on you with kindness and guard you with timely chances.
1065	ὅδε τοι μελάθροις τοῖς βασιλείοις τρίτος αὖ χειμὼν πνεύσας γονίας ἐτελέσθη.	So now upon the royal palace a third storm has blown, born of the family, and run its course.

16 Apollo's oracle at Delphi was held to stand at the navel, the center, of the earth; a fire burned there perpetually.

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παιδοβόροι μὲν πρῶτον ὑπῆρξαν μόχθοι τάλανές· δεύτερον ἀνδρὸς βασίλεια πάθη· λουτροδάικτος δ’ ὤλετ’ Ἀχαιῶν πολέμαρχος ἀνήρ· νῦν δ’ αὖ τρίτος ἦλθέ ποθεν σωτήρ, ἢ μόρον εἴπω; ποῖ δῆτα κρανεῖ, ποῖ καταλήξει μετακοιμισθὲν μένος ἄτης;	First came the miserable sufferings of children devoured. Second, the sufferings of a king: the warlord of the Achaeans perished, slaughtered in his bath. And now a third has come from somewhere: a savior, or shall I call it doom? Where will it end? Where will it cease, the fury of ruin, lulled at last to sleep?[17]

17 Atreus, Agamemnon’s father, killed his brother Thyestes’ children and served them to him at a banquet.