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THE EUMENIDES

(THE FURIES)

OF AESCHYLUS

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(THE FURIES)

OF AESCHYLUS

TRANSLATED INTO RHYMING VERSE

BY

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INTRODUCTION

We have seen in the *Agamemnon* how the law that "The doer must suffer," or that Sin must bring Punishment, is mainly envisaged by the most primitive Greek tradition as a form of the blood-feud. It is blood calling for blood. At its simplest this takes the form of a straightforward vendetta, as when a man kills one of another tribe. There is no "sin" or "pollution" in this, though of course the kindred of the stranger will duly try to avenge him. Suppose, next, that a man kills, not a stranger, but his own kinsman. Then he has shed the "kindred blood," and committed a real sin. He is polluted, and pollutes all who associate with him. If the kinsman has left any children or male representatives, they are bound in honour to take up the blood-feud and do vengeance,

even though, if the relationship is very close, it may bring pollution on them. Thus Aegisthus, as son of Thyestes, acted quite correctly in killing Agamemnon, and Orestes in killing him. Similarly, when Clytemnestra killed Agamemnon the eternal law compelled Orestes to avenge him, however reluctantly.

But suppose there is no avenger left, what then? It is one of the fears that torment Orestes in Euripides' *Electra*, "Who will do justice on me, when she is dead?" In that case, though there is no visible human avenger, the Law nevertheless acts. The doer must suffer. That is *Dikē*, Justice. It is the law of Themis, of Moira, of the Erinyes, and ultimately of Mother Earth. Let us consider each of these conceptions separately.

Themis, as Dr. Jane Harrison has shown, is the correct tribal custom, the thing that is always done—always, that is, by the people who really know. When prodigies occur, or bewildering emergencies, and you do not know what to do, you consult the elders or other authorities on ritual and precedent. If they fail you, you go to an oracle and consult the great ancestors, the "Earthy" or "Underworld" people, called *Chthonioi*, lying in the bosom of the earth. They tell you what is Themis; and that is why Themis presides at Delphi.

Moira is commonly translated "Fate," but more strictly it is the "portion" allotted to every man, god, or city. Each of us must fulfil his portion; he cannot escape it: he must not exceed it nor trespass on the Moira of another. And the Moirai, when personified, are the Assigners or Apportioners of man's lot in life. One is reminded of the conception of Righteousness in Plato's Republic, where every man fulfils his "portion" of service to the community.

And the Erinyes. They are the wrath of the dead or the injured acting as a curse and pursuing the transgressor. Orestes, in the *Choëphoroe*, sees them as "his mother's wrathful hounds." In this play we see Clytemnestra waken them when they have fallen asleep. They are obedient to her wrath, for they are her wrath in personal form. And such wrath, though chiefly conceived as the blood-feud of the murdered, can be roused by any *Hubris* or overstepping of Moira. In the *Agamemnon* the Erinyes avenges the vulture whose nest has been robbed. And in the Iliad, at the great moment when Achilles' horse breaks into speech to warn his master of approaching death, the Erinyes "check his voice" (Il. xix. 418). The horse, however well-intentioned, was obviously transgressing his Moira.

So far we can follow the ancient ideas without much difficulty. But it is rather a surprise to the modern to find Mother Earth among the supreme authorities for executing this law. It is because Earth is the home of the dead, the Chthonian people, both the great ancestors who know what is Themis and "the wronged ones in the darkness" who cry for justice on their oppressors. Their wrath is her wrath. Besides that, whenever kindred blood is shed, the intolerable stain falls first and most directly on the face of Mother Earth. It pollutes her, and she sends up her punishments from below, blight and barrenness and plague, just as to the innocent in normal times she sends life and fruitfulness. Thus we see that blessing as well as cursing lies in the power of the Chthonian people, the dead, the Erinyes, and collectively of Mother Earth. They who send can also withhold.

The law that "The doer shall suffer" is a natural law like the maturing of seed, or the return of spring; most of all like the growth and diminishing every year of the power of the Sun. For that diminishing is really a punishment due to the *Hubris* which the Sun committed when at his height. There are suggestions occasionally that, since every living thing has its own Moira, one Moira might conceivably interfere with another, just as sometimes God may prevent the seed from maturing (*Agamemnon*, l. 1025). But in the main the rule that blood calls for blood, that *Hubris* goes before a fall, or that sin brings punishment, stands as an unbroken natural law, and the Erinyes are its especial guardians.

That being so, how can there be any forgiveness? Would not forgiveness be a sort of monstrosity, a wanton breach in the law of Cause and Effect? Aeschylus, in the *Agamemnon*,

gives his answer in unusually clear language (161-182). The prophet Calchas has been describing the ravenous feast of the two Eagles; the wrath of Artemis thereat and the vengeance exacted in the death of Iphigenia; the future vengeance to be exacted for that death; and beyond a yet further vista of vengeance re-avenged. Then Aeschylus asks how man can find escape from this endless chain and "cast off from his mind the burden of futility." "Only," he answers, "in the thought of Zeus, whatever Zeus may be." It is a Zeus sublimated by the mind of Aeschylus and very different from that glorified Achaean chieftain who was King of gods and men in the ordinary Homeric tradition. To Aeschylus Zeus, as the ruler of heaven, is the founder of a new world, much as Athena herself was the founder of a new civilization on earth. The old gods struck and were stricken; they fought and they passed away. One had no more meaning than another. But Zeus is "He who made a road to Thought, who established Learning by Suffering to be an abiding law." He himself in the distant past won his throne by violence, but now he has learned and his heart is changed.

This idea of a supreme Ruler who, though inscrutably wise, is not perfect but only working his way towards perfection, was developed by Aeschylus in the *Prometheus-trilogy*, where Zeus, beginning as a conqueror and a tyrant, seems at first like the villain of the piece. But he possesses this peculiar secret: he can learn by his own offences; so the end is reconciliation. Similarly in the *Supplices* we hear how Io, once the persecuted victim of his lust, is at last led to peace and blessedness and becomes the Virgin Mother of the Deliverer of Prometheus.^[1] The idea is not purely Aeschylean, for Pindar also tells us how Eternal Zeus set free his chained enemies, the Titans (*Pyth.* iv. 291). It is also he who instituted the law of the suppliant. He forgave the blood-stained Ixion because of his suffering and prayer. Nay, he is not only the protector of suppliants, he is himself the Eternal Suppliant, the God and Master of all things, who forgives because he also craves for forgiveness (*Supplices*, l. 1). There, however, we touch upon a mystery. . . . The essential point is that the Zeus who learns and understands is also the Zeus who can forgive the sinner. He can forgive just because he understands. The Law of the Moirai and the Erinyes neither understands nor forgives. It simply operates.

"All this," it may be said, "is possible enough, but it is not what Aeschylus represents as occurring. Zeus does not appear at all in the *Eumenides*." Of course he does not. The Greek convention, like our own, did not easily represent the Supreme Father in bodily form on the stage. Apart from satyr-plays and comedy, I only know of one play, *The Soul Weighing* of Aeschylus, in which Zeus was actually represented; and there he appears not on the stage but in the sky, holding the divine balance. In the *Eumenides* he is represented by his son and daughter, Apollo and Athena.

Apollo, we are told expressly, is "the *Prophêtês Dios*, the revealer of Zeus" (19). He says himself, "Never have I spoken on my throne of prophecy any word concerning man, woman or city, which was not commanded by Zeus the Father" (616). He warns the Court not to disregard the oracles "that are mine and the Father's" (713). Consequently we see that it was by the will of Zeus himself that Orestes slew his mother, it is Zeus who wills now that he be set free.

Athena likewise, we are told with emphasis, is the daughter of Zeus alone, with no mother. She is pure, undiluted Zeus (664 ff.). She is, so to speak, his Thought, not born by any bodily process, but sprung directly from his brain (665); and when she gives her vote it is not so much that she votes on the side of Zeus but that her judgement inevitably is the same as his, "for I am utterly the Father's" (738). When she asks the Furies to yield to the will of Zeus she says, "I also trust and obey him. I know his overwhelming strength, but He needs it not!" (826). And she explains that Zeus has given to her just that power of thinking and understanding (*τὸ φρονεῖν*) to which we were told in the *Agamemnon* that he was guiding mankind. Thus the mechanical and automatic operation of the Law is corrected by the will of the Father. It is not broken, but more truly and perfectly fulfilled.

One is reminded of a passage in Plato's *Statesman*: "The best of all is not that a law should rule,

but a man, if the man be wise and of royal nature. . . . A law can never comprehend exactly what is noblest and most just for all cases, and consequently cannot enjoin what is best. The infinite varieties of men and circumstances, and the fact that nothing human ever for a moment stands still, make it impossible for any art to lay down a simple rule to hold universally and for all time. . . . But that is what we see the law aiming at, like some stubborn and ignorant man who will allow nothing to be done against his orders and no further question to be asked . . ." (p. 294a).

Equally near to Aeschylus is Aristotle's famous discussion of the difference between legal justice and that higher justice which he calls *Epieikeia* (Equity). "It is the correction of the law where it fails owing to its generality" (*Ethics*, v. p. 1137 b, 26), and the correction has to be applied by the "wise man." In Aeschylus as in these two philosophers the ultimate justice is to be found in an appeal from a law to a person.

This appeal plays an important role in the history of Greek thought, and consequently in that of all modern Europe. The other philosophic schools of the Hellenistic Age, Cynic, Stoic, and Epicurean, made even greater use than Plato and Aristotle of the idea of the Wise Man, rather than the Law, as the judge and embodiment of right conduct. In a grosser form the idea invaded practical politics. We find the Hellenistic world escaping from the conflict of constitutions and systems of law by the deification of Alexander and his successors, and cutting its juridical knots by the legal fiction of the divine will. Nay, even before Aeschylus set to work upon it, the same conception was really implicit in the anthropomorphism of the classical Olympian religion. As I have tried to show elsewhere,^[2] the great advance made by that system as compared with the welter of primitive tabus and terrors which it tried, however artificially and inadequately, to supersede, lies in this same humanizing of the non-human. It brought to man the Good News that, as Plutarch expresses it, "the world is not ruled by fabulous Typhons and Giants"—nor, we may add, by blind mechanical laws—"but by One who is a wise Father to all." It sought to make religion humane at the expense of making it anthropomorphic.

It is more interesting still to realize that the Aeschylean doctrine is in essence an early and less elaborate stage of the theological system which we associate with St. Paul: the suppression of the Law by a personal relation to a divine person, and a consequent disregard for the crude coarse test of a man's "works" or "deeds" in comparison with the one unfailing test of the spirit, its "faith" or "faithfulness" towards God. Aeschylus would have understood Paul's exhortation to escape beyond the "beggary elements" to Him who made them, beyond the Creation to the Creator; and Paul would have understood Aeschylus' insistence on the forgiveness of the suppliant, that is, of him who believes and repents and prays. It is noteworthy, indeed, that Paul made one great concession to primitive thought which Aeschylus had entirely rejected. When Orestes is pardoned by the will of Zeus, the Furies yield; the Law is deemed to be satisfied; there is no talk of its demanding to be paid off with another victim. But in Paul, when man is to be forgiven, the sin still claims its punishment, the blood will still have blood; and the only way to appease it is for the Divine King, himself or his son, to "die for the people." Thus the pollution is cleansed and sin duly paid with blood, though it happens to be the blood of the innocent. Aeschylus, as a poet, was familiar with that conception. He knew how Codrus died, and Menoikeus and Macaria, how Agamemnon and Erechtheus and other kings had given their children to die. But for him such practices belonged to that primitive and barbaric world which Hellenic Zeus had swept away, so he hoped, for ever.

A modern reader is more likely to ask why, if Orestes only fulfilled the command of Zeus, he should be punished at all. Why is there any talk of suffering and forgiveness? The answer is quite straightforward. He has after all broken the Law; he has offended against Themis and Moira, and he must suffer. In modern language, a man who kills his mother, even if he is amply justified in doing so, is bound to suffer acute grief and distress; if he did not, he would really deserve to be punished. It is only in the end that Zeus can overrule and make good, just as he did with Io and with Prometheus. It is in the end, after suffering and struggle, after cleansing and

supplication, that union is achieved between the Law which acts like blind fate and the Father who understands.^[3]

Thus at last the offender who deserves pardon can be pardoned. But that is not all. The Law that can pardon and understand can itself be understood and loved. Its ministers are no longer alien and hostile beings, proud of the agonies which they righteously inflict and the hatred which they naturally inspire. They are accepted by Athena as fellow-citizens, and their Law recognized as an inward aspiration, a standard of right living which men consciously need and seek. The "Furies" have become "Eumenides."

See *Rise of the Greek Epic*, Edn. 3, p. 276 ff.

Five Stages of Greek Religion, Chapter II.

See the last verses of the play. On the political circumstances which gave point to the poet's doctrine of Reconciliation see note on vv. [682](#) and [864](#).

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

The PYTHIAN PROPHETESS.
ORESTES.
The God APOLLO.
The Goddess PALLAS ATHENA.
The Ghost of CLYTEMNESTRA.
CHORUS OF FURIES (*Eumenides*).
CHORUS OF ATHENIAN CITIZENS.

The play was first produced in the Archonship of Philocles (458 B.C.). The first prize was won by Aeschylus with the "Agamemnon," "Choëphoroe" and "Eumenides" and the Satyr-play "Proteus."

THE EUMENIDES

The Scene represents the front of the Temple of APOLLO at Delphi; great doors at the back lead to the inner shrine and the central Altar. The Pythian PROPHETESS is standing before the Doors.

PROPHETESS.

First of all Gods I worship in this prayer

Earth, the primeval prophet; after her
Themis, the Wise, who on her mother's throne—
So runs the tale—sat second; by whose own
Accepted will, with never strife nor stress,
Third reigned another earth-born Titaness,
Phoebê; from whom (for that he bears her name)
To Phoebus as a birthtide gift it came.

He left his isle, he left his Delian seas,
He passed Athena's wave-worn promontories,
In haste this great Parnassus to possess
And Delphi, thronèd in the wilderness.
And with him came, to escort him and revere,
A folk born of Hephaistos, pioneer
Of God's way, making sweet a bitter land.
And much this people and the King whose hand
Then steered them, Delphos, glorified his name,
Till Zeus into his heart put mystic flame
And prophet here enthroned him, fourth in use:
So Loxias' lips reveal the thought of Zeus.

These gods be foremost in all prayers of mine,
Who have held the Throne. Next, She before the shrine,
Pallas, is praised, and the Nymphs who keep
Yon old Corycian bird-belovèd steep,
Deep-caverned, where things blessèd come and go.
And Bromios walks the mountain, well I know,
Since first he led his Maenad host on high
And doomed King Pentheus like a hare to die.
And Pleistos' fountains and Poseidon's power
I call, and Him who brings the Perfect Hour,
Zeus, the Most Highest. With which prayers I go
To seat me, priestess, on the Throne. And, oh,
May God send blessing on mine entrance, more
And deeper than He e'er hath sent of yore!

If there be present men of Greece but not
Of Delphi, let them enter as the lot
Ordains; I speak but as God leadeth me.

*[She enters the Inner Shrine, and the stage is for a moment
empty. Then she returns, grasping at the wall for
support.]*

Ah! Horrors, horrors, dire to speak or see,
From Loxias' chamber drive me reeling back.
My knees are weak beneath me, and I lack
The strength to fly. . . . O hands, drag me from here
If feet fail! . . . An old woman, and in fear,
A thing of naught, a babe in helplessness!
I made my way into the Holy Place,
And there, at the inmost Altar of the world,
A man abhorred of God, his body hurled
Earthward in desperate prayer; blood on his hand
Yet reeking, and a naked new-drawn brand
Wreathed in beseeching wool, a suppliant's weed
Of snow-white fleece . . . so much mine eyes could read.

But out in front of him a rout unknown
Of women sleepeth, flung from throne to throne.
Women? Nay, never women! Gorgons more:
And yet not like the Gorgon shapes of yore. . . .
I saw a picture once of woman things
That ravished Phineus' banquet. But no wings
Have these; all shadows, black, abominable.
The voices of their slumber rise and swell,
Back-beating, and their eyes drop gout of gore.
Their garb, it is no garb to show before
God's altar nor the hearths of human kind.
I cannot read what lineage lies behind
These shapes, nor what land, having born such breed,
Hath trembled not before and shall not bleed
Hereafter. Let Apollo great in power
Take to his care the peril of this hour:
Being Helper, Prophet, Seer of things unseen,
The stained hearth he knoweth to make clean.

[*The PROPHETESS departs. The doors open and reveal the inner shrine, ORESTES at the Altar, the FURIES asleep about him, and APOLLO standing over them.*

APOLLO.

I fail thee not. For ever more I stay,
Or watching at thy side or far away,
Thy guard, and iron against thine enemies.
Even now my snares have closed upon these,
The ragers sleep: the Virgins without love,
So grey, so old, whom never god above
Hath kissed, nor man, nor from the wilderness
One wild beast. They were born for wickedness
And sorrow; for in evil night they dwell,
And feed on the great darkness that is Hell,
Most hated by the Gods and human thought.
But none the less, fly thou and falter not.
For these shall hunt thee, ever on through earth
Unwandered, through the vast lands of the North,
The sea-ways and the cities ringed with sea.
But faint not. Clasp thy travail unto thee;
On till thou come to Pallas' Rock, and fold
Thine arms in prayer about her image old.
In Athens there be hearts to judge, there be
Words that bring peace; and I shall set thee free
At last from all this woe.—If thou didst kill
Thy mother, was it not my word and will?

ORESTES.

Not to betray thou knowest. Oh, ponder yet
One other lesson, Lord—not to forget!
Thy strength in doing can be trusted well.

[ORESTES *departs*.

APOLLO.

Remember! Let no fear thy spirit quell!
Do thou, O Hermes, brother of my blood,
Watch over him. Thou guide of man, make good
The name thou bearest, shepherding again
My suppliant. Him who pitieth suffering men
Zeus pitieth, and his ways are sweet on earth.

[*Exit* APOLLO. *Presently enter the* GHOST *of* CLYTEMNESTRA. *She watches the sleeping* FURIES.

GHOST.

Ye sleep. O God, and what are sleepers worth?
'Tis you, have left me among all the dead
Dishonoured. Always, for that blood I shed,
Rebuke and hissing cease not, and I go
Wandering in shame. Oh, hear! . . . For that old blow
I struck still I am hated, but for his
Who smote me, being of my blood, there is
No wrath in all the darkness: there is none
Cares for a mother murdered by her son.

Open thine heart to see this gash!—(*She shows the wound in her throat.*) In sleep
The heart hath many eyes and can see deep:
'Tis daylight makes man's fate invisible.

Of my bounty ye have lapt your fill;
Of the sad peace of wineless cups to earth
I have poured, and midmurk feastings on your hearth
Burned, when no other god draws near to eat.

And all these things ye have cast beneath your feet,
And he is fled, fled lightly like a fawn
Out of your nets! With mocking he is gone
And twisting of the lips. . . . I charge you, hark!
This is my life, my death. Oh, shake the dark
From off you, Children of the Deep. 'Tis I,
Your dream, I, Clytemnestra, stand and cry.

[*Moaning among the* FURIES.

Moan on, but he is vanished and forgot.
So strong the prayers of them that love me not!

[*Moaning.*

Too sound ye sleep.—And have ye for the dead
No pity? . . . And my son, my murderer, fled!

[*Groaning.*

Ye groan; ye slumber. Wake! . . . What task have ye
To do on earth save to work misery?

[*Groaning.*

Can sleep and weariness so well conspire
To drain the fell she-dragon of her fire?

[*Sharp repeated muttering: then words "At him! At him! Catch, catch, catch! Ah, beware!"*]

Ah, hunting in your dreams, and clamorous yet,
Tired bloodhounds that can sleep but not forget!
How now? Awake! Be strong! And faithful keep
Thy lust of pain through all the drugs of sleep.
Thou feelst my scorn? Aye, feel and agonize
Within; such words are scourges to the wise.
Thy blood-mist fold about him, like a doom.
Waste him with vapour from thy burning womb.
A second chase is death! . . . Pursue! Pursue!

[*The GHOST vanishes as the FURIES gradually wake.*]

LEADER OF THE FURIES.

Awake! Quick, waken her as I wake you!
Thou sleepest? Rise; cast slumber from thy brain
And search. Is our first hunt so all in vain?

FURIES (*speaking severally*).

—O rage, rage and wrath! Friends, they have done me wrong!
— Many and many a wrong I have suffered, mockeries all!
—Evil and violent deeds, a shame that lingereth long
And bitter, bitter as gall!
—The beast is out of the toils, out of the toils and away!
— I slept, and I lost my prey.

—What art thou, O Child of Zeus? A thief and a cozener!
— Hast broken beneath thy wheels them that were holy and old?
—A godless man and an evil son, he but kneels in prayer,
And straight he is ta'en to thy fold.
—Thou hast chosen the man who spilt his mother's blood!
— Are these things just, thou God?

—As a raging charioteer mid-grippeth his goad to bite
Beneath the belly, beneath the flank, where the smart is hot,
There riseth out of my dreams Derision with hands to smite;
As a wretch at the block is scourged when the scourger hateth aright,
And the shuddering pain dies not.

—These be the deeds ye do, ye Gods of the younger race:
Ye break the Law at your will; your high throne drips with gore,
The foot is wet and the head. There is blood in the Holy Place!
The Heart of Earth uplifteth its foulness in all men's face,
Clean nevermore, nevermore!

—Blood, thou holy Seer, there is blood on thy burning hearth.
Thine inmost place is defiled, and thine was the will and the word.
Thou hast broken the Law of Heaven, exalted the things of Earth;

The hallowed Portions of old thine hand hath blurred.

—Thou knowest to hurt my soul; yea, but shalt save not him.

The earth may open and hide, but never shall he be freed.

Defiling all he goes, there where in exile dim

Many defilers more wait and bleed.

Enter APOLLO.

APOLLO.

Avaunt, I charge you! Get ye from my door!
Darken this visionary dome no more!
Quick, lest ye meet that snake of bitter wing
That leaps a-sudden from my golden string,
And in your agony spue forth again
The black froth ye have sucked from tortured men!

This floor shall be no harbour to your feet.
Are there not realms where Law upon her seat
Smites living head from trunk? Where prisoners bleed
From gouged eyes? Children with manhood's seed
Blasted are there; maimed foot and severed hand,
And stoning, and a moan through all the land
Of men impaled to die. There is the board
Whereat ye feast, and, feasting, are abhorred
Of heaven.—But all the shapes of you declare
Your souls within. Some reeking lion's lair
Were your fit dwelling, not this cloistered Hall
Of Mercy, which your foulness chokes withal.

Out, ye wild goats unherded! Out, ye drove
Accursed, that god nor devil dares to love!

*[During this speech the FURIES fly confusedly from the Temple
down into the Orchestra. The LEADER turns.]*

LEADER.

Phoebus Apollo, in thy turn give heed!
I hold thee not a partner in this deed;
Thou hast wrought it all. The guilt is thine alone.

APOLLO.

What sayst thou there?—One word, and then begone.

LEADER.

Thou spakest and this man his mother slew.

APOLLO.

I spoke, and he avenged his father. True.

LEADER.

Thou stoodest by, to accept the new-shed gore.

APOLLO.

I bade him turn for cleansing to my door.

LEADER.

Ha! And revilest us who guide his feet?

APOLLO.

Ye be not clean to approach this Mercy Seat.

LEADER.

We be by Law eternal what we be.

APOLLO.

And what is that? Reveal thy dignity.

LEADER.

We hunt from home his mother's murderer.

APOLLO.

A husband-murdering woman, what of her?

LEADER.

'Twas not one blood in slayer and in slain.

APOLLO.

How? Would ye count as a light thing and vain
The perfect bond of Hera and high Zeus?
Yea, and thy word dishonoured too the use
Of Cypris, whence love groweth to his best.
The fate-ordainèd meeting, breast to breast,
Of man and woman is a tie more sure
Than oath or pact, if Justice guards it pure.
If them so joined ye heed not when they slay,

Nor rise in wrath, nor smite them on their way,
Unrighteous is thine hunting of this man,
Orestes. Why on him is all thy ban
Unloosed? The other never broke thy rest . . .
But Pallas, child of Zeus, shall judge this quest.

LEADER.

I cleave to him. I leave him never more.

APOLLO.

Oh, hunt thy fill! Make sorrow doubly sore.

LEADER.

Abridge not thou the Portions of my lot.

APOLLO.

Keep thou thy portions. I will touch them not.

LEADER.

Thou hast thy greatness by the throne of God;
I . . . But the scent draws of that mother's blood.
I come! I come! I hunt him to the grave. . . .

[The FURIES go out on the track of ORESTES.]

APOLLO.

'Tis mine then to bring succour, and to save
My suppliant. Earth and Heaven are both afraid
For God's wrath, if one helpless is betrayed.

[APOLLO returns behind the shrine, and the doors close. When they open again, they reveal, in place of APOLLO'S Central Altar, the Statue of ATHENA PARTHENOS: the scene now represents the Temple of Athena in Athens.]

Enter ORESTES, worn with travel and suffering.

ORESTES.

Pallas Athena, from Apollo's wing
I come; receive in peace this hunted thing
My sin no more polluteth, nor with hand
Unpurified before thy throne I stand.

A blunted edge, grief-worn and sanctified
By pain, where'er men traffic or abide,
On, on, o'er land and sea I have made my way,
True-purposed Loxias' bidding to obey.
At last I have found thy House; thine image I
Clasp, and here wait thy judgement till I die.

*[He throws himself down at the feet of the Statue, but no
answer comes. Presently enter the FURIES, following him.]*

LEADER.

Ha! Here he has passed. Spot reeketh upon spot.
Blood is a spy that points and babbles not.
Like hounds that follow some sore-wounded fawn,
We smell the way that blood and tears are gone,
And follow.—Oh, my belly gaspeth sore
With toils man-wasting; I can chase no more.
Through all the ways of the world I have shepherded
My lost sheep, and above the salt sea sped,
Wingless pursuing, swift as any sail.
And now 'tis here, meseemeth, he doth quail
And cower.—Aye, surely it is here; the smell
Of man's blood laughs to meet me. All is well.

FURIES (*searching*).

Ha, search, search again!
Seek for him far and wide.
Shall this man fly or hide
And the unatonèd stain
Of his mother's blood be vain?
Haha! Lo where he lies!
And comfort is in his eyes!
He hath made his arms a wreath
For the knees of the Deathless One,
And her judgement challengeth
On the deed his hands have done.
In vain! All in vain!
When blood on the earth is shed,
Blood of a mother dead,
Ye shall gather it not again.
'Tis wet, 'tis vanishèd,
Down in the dust like rain.
Thyself shalt yield instead,
Living, from every vein,
Thine own blood, rich and red,
For our parchèd mouths to drain,
Till my righteous heart be fed
With thy blood and thy bitter pain;
Till I waste thee like the dead,
And cast thee among the slain,

Till her wrong be comforted
And her wound no longer stain.

The Law thou then shalt see;
That whoso of men hath trod
In sin against these three,
Parent or Guest or God,
That sin is unforgot,
And the payment faileth not.
There liveth, for every man,
Below, in the realm of Night,
A judge who straighteneth
The crooked; his name is Death.
All life his eye doth scan
And recordeth right.

ORESTES.

I have known much evil, and have learnt therein
What divers roads man goes to purge his sin,
And when to speak and when be dumb; and eke
In this thing a wise master bids me speak.
The blood upon this hand is fallen asleep
And fades. And though a sin be ne'er so deep
'Twill age with the aging years. When this of mine
Was fresh, on Phoebus' hearth with blood of swine
'Twas washed and blurred. 'Twere a long tale since then,
To tell how I have spoke with many men
In scatheless parle. And now, with lips of grace,
Once more I pray the Lady of this place,
Athena, to mine aid. Let her but come;
Myself, mine Argive people and my home
Shall without war be hers, hers true of heart
And changeless. Therefore, wheresoe'er thou art,
In some far wilderness of Libyan earth,
By those Tritonid waters of thy birth;
Upgirt for deeds or veiled on thy throne;
Or is it Phlegra's field thou brood'st upon,
Guiding the storm, like some bold Lord of War,
Oh, hear! A goddess heareth though afar:
Bring me deliverance in this mine hour!

[He waits expectant, but there is no answer.]

LEADER.

Not Lord Apollo's, not Athena's power
Shall reach thee any more. Forgot, forgot,
Thou reelest back to darkness, knowing not
Where in man's heart joy dwelleth; without blood,
A shadow, flung to devils for their food!
Wilt answer not my word? Wilt spurn thereat,
Thou that art mine, born, doomed, and consecrate

My living feast, at no high altar slain?
Hark thou this song to bind thee like a chain!

FURIES (*as they move into position for the Dance*).

Up, let us tread the dance, and wind—
The hour is come!—our shuddering spell.
Show how this Band apportions well
Their fated burdens to mankind.

Behold, we are righteous utterly.
The man whose hand is clean, no wrath
From us shall follow: down his path
He goeth from all evil free.

But whoso slays and hides withal
His red hand, swift before his eyes
True witness for the dead we rise:
We are with him to the end of all.

[*Being now in position they begin the
Binding Song.*]

SOME FURIES.

Mother, who didst bear a being
Dread to the eyeless and the seeing,
Night, my Mother!
Leto's Child would wrong me, tear
From my clutch this trembling hare,
My doomèd prey: he bore to slay,
And shall he not the cleansing bear,
He, none other?

CHORUS.

But our sacrifice to bind,
Lo, the music that we wind,
How it dazeth and amazeth
And the will it maketh blind,
As it moves without a lyre
To the throb of my desire;
'Tis a chain about the brain,
'Tis a wasting of mankind.

OTHER FURIES.

Thus hath Fate, through weal and woe,
For our Portion as we go
Spun the thread:

Whenso mortal man in sin
'Brueth hand against his kin,
Mine till death He wandereth,
And freedom never more shall win,
Not when dead.

CHORUS.

But our sacrifice to bind,
Lo, the music that we wind,
How it dazeth and amazeth
And the will it maketh blind,
As it moves without a lyre
To the throb of my desire;
'Tis a chain about the brain,
'Tis a wasting of mankind.

SOME FURIES.

Since the hour we were begot
Of this rite am I the priest;
Other gods may share it not;
Nor is any man nor beast
That dare eat the food we eat
Nor among us take his seat;
For no part have I nor lot
In the white robe and the feast.

CHORUS.

For the tale I make mine own
Is of houses overthrown,
When the Foe within the Dwelling
Slays a brother and is flown:
Up and after him, Io!
While the blood is still a-flow,
Though his strength be full and swelling,
We shall waste him, flesh from bone!

OTHER FURIES.

Would they take thee from the care
We have guarded thee withal?
Would the Gods disown our prayer
Till no Law be left at all?
Yea, because of blood that drips
As aforetime from our lips,
And the world's hate that we bear,
God hath cast us from His hall!

CHORUS.

I am on them as they fly,
With a voice out of the sky,
And my armèd heel is o'er them
 To fall crashing from on high.
There be fliers far and fast,
But I trip them at the last,
And my arms are there before them,
 And shall crush them ere they die!

Divers FURIES.

—The glories of Man that were proud where the sunlight came,
Below in the dark are wasted and cast to shame;
 For he trembles at the hearing
 Of the Black Garments nearing,
And the beating of the feet, like flame

—He falls and knows not; the blow hath made blind his eyes;
And above hangs Sin, as a darkening of the skies,
 And a great voice swelling
 Like a mist about his dwelling,
And sobbing in the mist and cries.

—For so it abideth: subtle are we to plan,
 Sure to fulfil, and forget not any Sin;
And Venerable they call us, but none can win
 Our pardon for child of man.
Unhonoured and undesired though our kingdom be,
 Where the sun is dead and no god in all the skies,
Great crags and trackless, alike for them that see,
 And them of the wasted eyes;

—What mortal man but quaketh before my power,
 And boweth in worship to hear my rule of doom,
God-given of old, fate-woven on the ageless loom
 And ripe to the perfect hour?
To the end of all abideth mine ancient Right,
 Whose word shall be never broke nor its deed undone,
Though my seat is below the Grave, in the place where sight
 Fails and there is no Sun.

Enter ATHENA.

ATHENA.

Far off I heard the calling of my name,
Beside Scamander, where I took in claim
The new land which the Achaean lords and kings,
In royal spoil for many warfarings,

Gave, root and fruit for ever, as mine own
Exempted prize, to Theseus' sons alone.
Thence came I speeding, while behind me rolled
My wingless aegis, floating fold on fold.

But these strange visitants . . . I tremble not
Beholding, yet I marvel. Who and what
Are ye? I speak to all. And who is he
Who round mine image clings so desperately?

But ye are like no earth-seed ever sown,
No goddess-shape that Heaven hath looked upon,
Nor any semblance borne of human kind . . .

Howbeit, ye have not wronged me. I were blind
To right and custom did I speak you ill.

LEADER.

Virgin of God most high, have all thy will.
Still-weeping Night knows us the brood she bears;
The wronged ones in the darkness call us Prayers.

ATHENA.

I know your lineage and the names ye hold.

LEADER.

Our office and our lot can soon be told.

ATHENA.

Make clear thy word, that all be understood.

LEADER.

We hunt from home the shedder of man's blood.

ATHENA.

What end appoint ye to that flight of his?

LEADER.

A land where none remembereth what joy is.

ATHENA.

And such a chase on this man thou wilt cry?

LEADER.

Who dared to be his mother's murderer, aye,

ATHENA.

What goaded him? Some fear, some unseen wrath?

LEADER.

What goad could drive a man on such a path?

ATHENA (*looking at ORESTES*).

Why speaketh one alone, when two are there?

LEADER.

He will not swear, nor challenge me to swear.

ATHENA.

Which wouldst thou, to seem righteous, or to be?

LEADER.

What meanst thou there? Speak out thy subtlety.

ATHENA.

Let no bare oath the deeper right subdue.

LEADER.

Try thou the cause, then, and give judgement true.

ATHENA.

Ye trust me this whole issue to decide?

LEADER.

Who would not trust thee? True thou art and tried.

ATHENA (*turning to ORESTES*).

Strange man, and what in turn hast thou to advance?
Thy land and lineage, and thy long mischance

Show first, then make thine answer to their laws.
If truly in the justice of thy cause
Trusting, thou clingest here in need so dire
To mine own shape, hard by my deathless fire,
In fearful prayer, as lost Ixïon prayed,
Make to all these thine answer unafraid.

ORESTES.

Most high Athena, let me from the last
Of these thy questionings one fear outcast.
Pollution is not in me, nor with hand
Blood-reeking cleave I to thine altar-strand;
In sign whereof, behold, I have cast away
That silence which the man of blood alway
Observeth, till some hand, that hath the power
To cleanse the sins of man, new blood shall shower
Of swine upon him, drowning the old stain.
I have been cleansed again and yet again
In others' dwellings, both by blood that fell
And running rivers that have washed me well.
Be that care then forgot. My name and birth
Are quickly told. I am sprung of Argive earth;
My father's name was known upon thy lips,
Agamemnon, marshal of a thousand ships,
With whom thou madest Troy, that city of pride,
No more a city. He returning died,
Not kingly. 'Twas my mother black of heart
Met him and murdered, snaring him with art
Of spangled webs. . . . Alas, that robe of wrath,
That cried to heaven the blood-stain of the bath!
Then came long exile; then, returning, I
Struck dead my mother. Nought will I deny;
So, for my sire beloved, death met death.

And Loxias in these doings meriteth
His portion, who foretold strange agonies
To spur me if I left unsmitten these
That slew him. . . . Take me thou, and judge if ill
I wrought or righteously. I will be still
And praise thy judgement, whatsoever betide.

ATHENA.

This is a mystery graver to decide
Than mortal dreameth. Nor for me 'twere good
To sift the passionate punishments of blood.
Since thou hast cast thee on my altar stair
Perfect by suffering, from thy stains that were
Made clean and harmless, suppliant at my knee,
I, in my City's name, must pity thee
And chide not. Yet these too, I may not slight:
They have their portion in the Orb of Right
Eternal. If they are baffled of their will,

The wrath of undone Justice shall distil
Through all the air a poison; yea, a pall
Intolerable about the land shall fall
And groaning sickness. Doubtful thus it lies:
To cast them out or keep them in mine eyes
Were equal peril, and I must ponder sore.
Yet, seeing fate lays this matter at my door,
Myself not judging, I will judges find
In mine own City, who will make no blind
Oath-challenge to pursuer and pursued,
But follow this new rule, by me indued
As law for ever. Proofs and witnesses
Call ye on either side, and set to these
Your oaths. Such oath helps Justice in her need.

I will go choose the noblest of the breed
Of Athens, and here bring them to decide
This bloody judgement even as truth is tried,
And then, their oath accomplished, to depart,
Right done, and no transgression in their heart.

[Exit ATHENA. *The Shrine is closed, ORESTES remaining inside at
the foot of the Image.*

FURIES.

—This day there is a new Order born.
If this long coil of judging and of strife
Shall uplift the mother-murderer to life,
Shall the World not mark it, and in scorn
Go forth to do evil with a smile?
Yea, for parents hereafter there is guile
That waiteth, and great anguish; by a knife
In a child's hand their bosom shall be torn.

—No wrath shall be stirred by any deed,
No doom from the Dark Watchers any more.
Lo, to all death I cast wide the door!
And men, while they whisper of the need
Of their neighbour, shall pray tremblingly within
For some rest and diminishing of sin.
They will praise the old medicine that of yore
Brought comfort, and marvel as they bleed.

—Vainly will they make their moan?
Vainly cry in sore despite,
"Help, ye Watchers on your throne,
Help, O Right!"
Many a father so shall cry,
Many a mother, new in pain;
Their vain sobbing floateth by:
"The great House is fallen again!
Law shall die!"

—Times there be when Fear is good,
And the Watcher in the breast
Needs must reign in masterhood.
Aye, tis best
Through much straitening to be wise.
Who that hath no fear at all
In the sunlight of his eyes,
Man or City, but shall fall
From Right somewise?

—The life that walketh without rule,
The life that is a tyrant's fool,
Thou shalt not praise.
O'er all man's striving variously
God looketh, but, where'er it be,
Gives to the Mean his victory.
And therefore know I and confess,
The doomèd child of Godlessness
Is Pride of Man, and Pride's excess;
Only from health of heart shall spring
What men desire, what poets sing,
Stormless days.

—Whate'er befall, the Throne of Right
Fear thou, and let no lucre bright
Seen suddenly,
To spurn that Altar make thee blind;
For chastisement is hid behind,
And the End waiteth, and shall bind.
Wherefore I charge thee, through all stress
Thy mother and thy father bless:
Herein, O Man, lies holiness.
And next, of all within thy fold,
The stranger and the friendless hold
In sanctity.

—He that is righteous uncompelled and free
His life's way taketh
Not without happiness; and utterly
Cast to destruction shall he never be.
But he who laugheth and is bold in sin,
From every port great gain he gathers in,
Rejoicing; but methinks shall cast away
All, with much haste and trembling, on the day
When sails are stript by the edge of wind and sea
And yard-arm breaketh.

He yearns, he strives, amid the whirling sea,
But none shall hear;
And loud his Daemon laughs, saying "This is he
Who vaunted him these things should never be!"
Who now is weeping, weak in the endless foam,

And sees the foreland where beyond is home,
But shall not pass it: on the rocks of Right
Wrecked is his life's long glory; and the night
Falls, and there lives from all his agony
No word nor tear.

*The scene is now set with seats for the Council of the Areopagus. Enter
ATHENA, the JUDGES, a HERALD, a crowd of CITIZENS, the FURIES, ORESTES.*

ATHENA.

Herald, thine office! See that yonder crowds
Hold back, and let this piercer of the clouds,
Filled with man's breath, the Tuscan trumpet, blow
His fiery summons to the host below.
Then all be silence, while the people fill
This Council Hall. Thus shall my sovran will
And ordinance to this people, great and small,
Be known for ever, and upheld by all
Within our gates; and thus my wardens do
Justice this day, discerning false from true.

Enter APOLLO.

LEADER.

Apollo, thou! Go, reign where thou art king!
What portion hast thou in this doom-saying?

APOLLO.

I come to bear my witness. This is one
Who in great anguish came to me alone
For refuge, and knelt suppliant at my shrine.
Therefore the cleansing of his stain is mine.
Likewise I share his plea, and on me take
What guilt he bears for that dead mother's sake.
Ope thou the court, O Pallas, and, as well
Thou canst, establish justice durable.

ATHENA.

Ho! Opened is the Court; and yours the speech.
(*To the FURIES*)
He who pursueth, speaking first, can teach
Best his whole grief, and how the evil grew.

LEADER.

Many are we, yet shall our words be few.

Make answer thou, point against point. And say
First this one thing: thy mother didst thou slay?

O_RESTES.

I slew her. . . . Aye. Denied it cannot be.

L_EA_DE_R.

Aha! The first of the three bouts to me!

O_RESTES.

Too soon ye vaunt. I am not yet outsped.

L_EA_DE_R.

How didst thou slay? That also must be said.

O_RESTES (*with an effort*).

I will say it. I drew sword and clave her throat.

L_EA_DE_R.

Who and what tempted thee? Who laid the plot?

O_RESTES.

He who is with me now, and witnesseth.

L_EA_DE_R.

God's prophet bade thee plot thy mother's death?

O_RESTES.

Yes: and hath never failed me to this day.

L_EA_DE_R.

And when the vote is cast, what wilt thou say?

O_RESTES.

I fear not. Helpers from my father's grave.

LEADER.

Go, mother-murderer! Call the dead to save!

ORESTES.

Two stains of death lay mingled on her hand.

LEADER.

How two? Let these who judge thee understand.

ORESTES.

A husband and a father, both, she slew.

LEADER.

And death hath purged her. Shalt not thou die too?

ORESTES.

Ye never hunted her, for all her stain.

LEADER.

'Twas not one blood in slayer and in slain.

ORESTES.

And are my mother's blood and my blood one?

LEADER.

How did she feed thee else beneath her zone?
Caitiff! Thy mother's blood wilt thou deny?

ORESTES (*overcome*).

I can no more. . . . Give witness, and reply,
Lord Phoebus, in my stead, if righteously
I slew. . . . I slew: denied it cannot be:
But rightly, or most foully—as thine own
Heart speaks, give judgement, and let all be known.

APOLLO.

Ye judges of Athena's Court most high,

I come to speak before you faithfully,
Being God's prophet: therefore truth is mine.
Nor ever spake I from my throne divine
Of man nor woman, land nor city wall,
Save by command of Him who ruleth all,
Zeus, the Olympian Father. Is there Right
Holier than this, I charge ye think, or Might
More mighty? Follow ye the All-father's will:
If oaths be strong, is Zeus not stronger still?

LEADER.

'Twas Zeus, thou tellest, laid this duty large
Upon thy lips? 'Twas Zeus who bade thee charge
This man to avenge his father and cast down,
As nothing worth, his mother's sacred crown?

APOLLO.

Are these the same? That a great man, raised high
By royal sceptre, given of God, should die,
And die by a woman's hand—and not in war
By Amazonian arrow, sped from far, . . .
But—Hear my tale, O Pallas, and ye too
Who sit enthronèd to sift false from true;
He came from battle after sufferings sore
But greater glories, and she stood before
The gate to greet and praise him, strewed his path
With crimson robes and led him to his bath—
A marble bed!—and o'er the end thereof
Laid the great web and curtained it above,
To ensnare him as he rose; then, in the wide
Unending folds, she smote him and he died!
So died a man, ye hear it from my lips,
All-honoured, War-Lord of a thousand ships;
And such a wife was she! Be stern, and smite
The guilty, ye who sit to establish right!

LEADER.

Doth Zeus count fatherhood so high a thing?
Who cast in bonds his father and his king,
Old Cronos? Are these things not contrary?
I charge ye, judges, hearken his reply.

APOLLO.

Ye worms of hate, O ye that Gods abhor,
Bonds can be loosened; there is cure therefor,
And many and many a plan in God's great mind
To free the prisoners whom he erst did bind.
But once the dust hath drunk the blood of men

Murdered, there is no gathering it again.
For that no magic doth my Father know,
Though all things else he changeth high and low
Or fixeth, and no toil is in his breath.

LEADER.

Is that thy pleading against this man's death?
The kindred blood, his mother's blood, the well
Of his own life, he hath spilt. How shall he dwell
In Argos? In his home? What altar-stair,
When Argos worships, will receive his prayer?
What love-bowl of the brethren cleanse his hand?

APOLLO.

That too I answer; mark and understand.
The mother to the child that men call hers
Is no true life-begetter, but a nurse
Of live seed. 'Tis the sower of the seed
Alone begetteth. Woman comes at need,
A stranger, to hold safe in trust and love
That bud of new life—save when God above
Wills that it die. And would ye proof of this,
There have been fathers where no mother is.
Whereof a perfect witness standeth nigh,
Athena Pallas, child of the Most High,
A thought-begotten unconceived bloom,
No nursling of the darkness of the womb,
But such a flower of life as goddess ne'er
Hath born in heaven nor ever more shall bear.

Pallas, in all things it is mine to swell
In power thy people and thy citadel;
And therefore to thine Altar did I send
This suppliant, that hereafter to the end
Of mortal time he may be true to thee,
And plant his spear by thine unfalteringly,
And on through generations yet unborn
Argos observe the pact her King hath sworn.

ATHENA.

Now shall I charge upon their faith these men
To cast true stones, or would ye speak again?

LEADER.

Shot is our every arrow: I but stay
To learn how ends the issue of the day.

ATHENA.

How shall I cast a judgement in this cause
Unblamed of you, and of the eternal laws?

APOLLO.

Ye have heard what ye have heard. Strangers, revere
Your oaths, and cast your judgement without fear.

ATHENA.

Hear now mine ordinance, ye who have striven
This day to give, what none before hath given,
True judgement o'er spilt blood. O Attic Folk,
Henceforth for ever, under Aigeus' yoke,
This Council and this Judgement Seat by me
Are stablisht. On this mountain shall it be,
Here in the Amazons' most virgin hold,
Who came in wrath for Theseus' wrongs of old
Embattled, and this fortress against ours,
Hill against hill, towers against soaring towers,
Built, and to Ares on the rock with flame
Gave sacrifice: whence comes its awful name,
The Rock, the Mount, of Ares. All things here
Being holy, Reverence and her sister, Fear,
In darkness as in daylight shall restrain
From all unrighteousness the sons of men,
While Athens' self corrupt not her own law.
With mire and evil influx ye can flaw
Fair water till no lips may drink thereof.
I charge you, citizens, enfold and love
That spirit that nor anarch is nor thrall;
And casting away Fear, yet cast not all;
For who that hath no fear is safe from sin?
That Fear which is both Ruth and Law within
Be yours, and round your city and your land
Shall be upraised a rampart, yea, a hand
Of strong deliverance, which no sons of men,
From the Isle of Pelops to the Scythian fen,
Possess nor know, this Council of the Right,
Untouched of lucre, terrible to smite,
And swift and merciful, a guard to keep
Vigil above my people while they sleep.
Which here I establish. Let these words advise
My city evermore.—I charge you, rise
And lift your stones of doom and judge, alway
Your oath remembering. I have said my say.

*[The JUDGES rise and go one by one past the two urns, casting
their stones as they pass.]*

LEADER.

Behold, an awful presence moveth yet
Within your land, which mock not nor forget!

APOLLO.

The will of Zeus, by my lips ministered,
I charge you make not fruitless nor unfeared!

LEADER.

And what wouldst thou with blood, having therein
No place? Henceforth thine altars are unclean!

APOLLO.

Did Zeus, then, sin, who bowed his head to spare
Blood-red Ixïon for his burning prayer?

LEADER.

Thou speakest: but my Law, if it be broke,
Shall come again in wrath to haunt this folk.

APOLLO.

Thou hast no honour more 'mid things divine,
Or old or new: the victory shall be mine.

LEADER.

So in Admêtus' House thou didst betray
The Fates, to make man deathless past his day.

APOLLO.

Shall not a god regard his worshipper
Then chiefliest, when in peril and in prayer?

LEADER.

The ancient boundaries thou didst desecrate,
Thou mad'st a drunkard of Eternal Fate!

APOLLO.

True Justice thou canst know not. Thou shalt spue
Thy venom forth, and none give heed thereto.

LEADER.

Women are we, and old; and thou dost ride
Above us, trampling, in thy youth and pride.
Howbeit, I wait to know the end, being still
In doubt to work this City good or ill.

ATHENA.

One judgement still remains. I, at the last,
To set Orestes free this stone will cast:
For, lo, no mother bare me: I approve
In all—save only that I know not love—
The man's way. Flesh and spirit I am His
Who gave me life. And in this coil it is
No dire deed that a woman, who had slain
Her mate and house-lord, should be quelled again.
Wherefore I judge that here, if equal be
The votes ye cast, Orestes shall go free.

Ye judges, haste: on you this office turns:
And cast the gathered sea-stones from the urns.

ORESTES.

Apollo, Lord, what shall the issue be?

LEADER.

O Night, O dark-eyed Mother, dost thou see?

ORESTES.

Is it the noose of death, or life and light?

LEADER.

My law down-trodden or enthroned in right?

APOLLO.

Divide the fallen sea-stones as is due,
Strangers, and in the count see all be true.
An absent voice hath made life ruinous,
And one cast pebble built a fallen house.

[The scrutineers bring their results to ATHENA

ATHENA.

This prisoner, since the stones for ill and good
Are equal, hath escaped the doom of blood.

ORESTES.

O Pallas, O deliverer of my race,
Thou hast led back the wanderer to his place,
The homeless to his home; and men shall say
"Once more he is an Argive, and this day
Dwells in his father's riches, by the word
Of Pallas, Loxias, and Zeus the Third,
Who saveth all and all accomplisheth."
'Twas He of old who saw my father's death,
And pitied; He who saw pursuing me
My mother's ministers, and set me free.

Pallas, to this thy people and thy clime
Through all the long years of ensuing Time
I swear, ere I depart to mine own land,
This oath. No captain of an Argive band
Shall ever against Athens raise his spear.
Yea, and if any break this law, I swear
Myself out of the grave bewilderment
Shall set before their host, and discontent,
Disheartened roads and rivers evil-starred,
Till back they turn, bowed down by toils too hard
For bearing. But if still with vow unbroke,
Through storm or shine, for Pallas and her folk
Their lance is lifted, then to Argos too
My love shall be the greater, and hold true.
And fare thee well, O Pallas; fare you well,
All that within her ancient rampart dwell;
Iron may your grasp against all evil be,
And strong to save, and big with victory!

[*Exit* ORESTES.]

FURIES.

Woe on you, woe, ye younger gods!
Ye have trampled the great Laws of old
Beneath your chariots! Ye have broke the rods
Of justice, yea and torn them from my hold!
Mine office gone, unhappy and angered sore,
I rage alone. What have I any more
To do? Or be? Shall not mine injury turn
And crush this people? Shall not poison rain
Upon them, even the poison of this pain
Wherewith my heart doth burn?
And up therefrom there shall a lichen creep,
A leafless, childless, blight,
A stain in the earth man-slaying. . . . O just
Throne of Right!
Have ye not suffered deep,
Deep, ye unhappy children of old Night,
Born to be scorned and weep!

ATHENA.

I pray you, nay! Make not this bitter moan;
Ye are not conquered. Equal, stone for stone,
The judgement fell, in honesty of thought,
Not scorn of thee. From Zeus on high was brought
A shining witness; and the god, who gave
The word to slay, himself was here to save,
Lest this man for obedience to his will
Should perish. . . . And for this ye fain would spill
Your poison? Ah, take thought! Nor on our heads
Rain the strange dew a spirit's anger sheds,
Seed-ravening blight and mildews merciless,
Till all the land lie waste in fruitlessness.
Spare us, and, lo, I promise: here shall be
A home your own, a caverned mystery,
Where always ye shall sit, enthroned in pride
And shining, by my people glorified.

FURIES.

Woe on you, woe, ye younger gods!
Ye have trampled the great Laws of old
Beneath your chariots! Ye have broke the rods
Of justice, yea and torn them from my hold!
Mine office gone, unhappy and angered sore,
I rage alone. What have I any more
To do? Or be? Shall not mine injury turn
And crush this people? Shall not poison rain
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And up therefrom there shall a lichen creep,
A leafless, childless, blight,
A stain in the earth man-slaying. . . . O just
Throne of Right!
Have ye not suffered deep,
Deep, ye unhappy children of old Night,
Born to be scorned and weep!

ATHENA.

Ah, rage not. No dishonour comes you nigh;
Nor, being immortal, blast for these who die
Their little life and land. I, even as you,
Obey the supreme Father, yea, I too.
What boots it to say more? To me alone
The keys of that great treasure-house are known
Where sleep the lightnings.—But He needs them not!
Accept my word, and cast not here the hot
Fruits of a passion that turns all to ill:
Bid the dark tempest's bitter surge be still,
Thou great in glory, partner of my home!

From many miles of land to thee shall come
First-fruits for maidens wed, for children born;
Then shall ye bless this peace that we have sworn.

FURIES.

That this should fall on me,
 Me of the ancient way,
The faithful of heart! To be
Unclean, abominable,
In the darkness where I dwell,
 And mine honour shorn away!
My breath is as a fire flung far and wide,
And a strange anguish stabbeth at my side.
Hear thou my wrath, O Mother, Night, mine own,
Hear what these young false-handed gods have wrought!
Mine immemorial honour is overthrown,
 And I am naught!

ATHENA.

Thine heaviness myself will help thee bear.
Older thou art than I, and surely ware
Of wisdom that I wot not: yet also
To me Zeus giveth both to think and know.
And if ye leave us for the stranger's shore,
This know I, that your heart shall still be sore
For Athens. Time's great river in its flow
From darkness shall but make her glory grow.
And here in honour at Erechtheus' side
Enthronèd, thou shalt garner gifts of pride
From men and women worshippers, in fair
Procession moving, richer and more rare
Than eye of man hath seen in other lands.
Such offering now awaits thee at my hands:
Blessing and blest, 'mid glories gladly given,
To share this land, the best beloved of Heaven.

FURIES.

That this should fall on me,
 Me of the ancient way,
The faithful of heart! To be
Unclean, abominable,
In the darkness where I dwell,
 And mine honour shorn away!
My breath is as a fire flung far and wide,
And a strange anguish stabbeth at my side.
Hear thou my wrath, O Mother, Night, mine own,
Hear what these young false-handed gods have wrought!
Mine immemorial honour is overthrown,
 And I am naught!

ATHENA.

I will not cease thine anger to assuage
With good words. None shall say that, in thine age,
By younger gods and city-building men
Thou and thy law were mocked, cast out again
To walk the wilderness, exiles from hence.
If thou canst hold that spirit in reverence
Which hears Persuasion and which thinks again,
Whose understanding and whose peace doth reign
By God's appointment in my word and thought,
Here thou wilt stay. Or, if that please thee not,
Thou shalt not justly lay upon this land
Or wrath, or vengeance, or afflicting hand.
Stay, if ye will. Let this soil be your own
With Right made perfect and an ageless throne.

LEADER.

Great Pallas, what abode shall be my lot?

ATHENA.

A throne unwashed by tears; reject it not.

LEADER.

Say I consent; what shall mine office be?

ATHENA.

No house shall prosper save by aid of thee.

LEADER.

Such greatness mine! Wilt thou thereof have care?

ATHENA.

Yea; and through life uphold thy worshipper.

LEADER.

For dateless time thou giv'st me warranty?

ATHENA.

How should I speak the thing that shall not be?

LEADER.

Thou wilt soften me. . . . Methinks mine anger bends.

ATHENA.

Stay, and that softened mood will find thee friends.

LEADER.

What spell upon the land wouldst have me lay?

ATHENA.

All that brings Victory and not Dismay.
From earth and dewy sea—be this thy prayer—
From moving winds and the still dome of air
Let breaths of gladness and sweet sunlight come;
The fruit of flocks and fields round every home
Abundant flow and, year by year, be true.
The seeds of human life make fruitful, too,
Save in the ungodly: them thy Rule of Right
Shall uproot, as of old. For I delight,
Like one that tends his garden, to uprear
These plants of righteousness, untouched by fear
Of evil. Cast not on this soil of mine
Thy whet-stones of the blood, like poisonous wine
In young men's hearts, till rage and death be stirred.
Oh, take not from the fierce mate-murdering bird
The heart to give my people, the blind war
Within, that burneth most where brethren are.
War with the stranger, yes; no stint thereof;
Terror is there, and glory, and great love;
But not the mad bird-rage that slays at home.
Such let thine office be. And if there come
True-hearted war, I will not fail to uphold
This land victorious where great deeds are told.

[At a sign from the LEADER, the FURIES take formation for a Song of Blessing.]

FURIES.

A home with Pallas shall be mine.
I will not give this City nay,
The Fort of Heaven, which Zeus divine
And faithful Ares hold in sway,
A shining loveliness to enfold
The altars of the gods of old.

For whom—so do I weave my prayer

And move with words of presage good—
All fortunes whereby life is fair,
Like springing fountains, up shall flood,
From Earth's deep-bosomed caverns won
By wooing of the enthronèd Sun.

ATHENA.

I love my City; and with plan
Aforethought here have welcomed these,
The Awarders great and hard to appease,
Whose realm is all the estate of man.

Justice is theirs: though many an one
May meet their wrath in innocence,
Not knowing why the wound nor whence,
That striketh. Some great evil done

Aforetime, with no payment just,
Casts him to These. Strange wrath and hate
Are round him, and he cries: but Fate,
Unanswering, grindeth him to dust.

FURIES.

No storm-wind—so I speak my prize—
Shall breathe the blight that poisoneth trees;
No burning things that blind the eyes
Of plants, shall pass her boundaries:
The groaning pest shall come not nigh,
Nor fruit upon the branches die.

The flocks shall browse in happy cheer,
And Pan, the Shepherd, guard them true,
With twofold increase, as the year
Repay her seeds in season due;
And deep-hid treasures of the ground
Shall be in God's due order found.

ATHENA.

Ye Guardians, hear the word she hath said,
And shall fulfill! Most potent hands
Hath great Erînyes, in the lands
Where dwell the deathless and the dead.

And all this world of men declares
Her visible act on right and wrong;
How one man's life she makes a song,
Another's a long mist of tears.

FURIES.

Let manhood's glory by no doom
Of death untimely be defiled;
Let life to maidens in their bloom
Bring each a lover and a child.
O whatsoever Gods have power,
And Fates eternal, grant this dower!

Ye Fates, our Mother's Sisterhood,
Assigners true to all that be,
To every house its ill and good,
To every hour its potency;
Righteous participants through all,
Of Gods the most majestic.

ATHENA.

With joy I hear their prescient song
Touching my land; and much in pride
I praise Persuasion gentle-eyed,
Who guarded well my lips and tongue,

When these were wrathful and denied;
But Zeus, whose Word is in the Mart,
Prevailed; and of our strife no part,
Save strife in blessing, shall abide.

FURIES.

Let her who hungereth still for wrong,
Faction, in Athens ne'er again
Lift on the air her ravening song;
Let not the dust of Pallas' Plain
Drink the dark blood of any son
By fury of revenge fordone.

Rage not to smite the smiter, lest
By rage the City's heart be torn:
Bless him that blesseth: in each breast
So shall a single love be born,
And 'gainst Her foes a single hate.
This also maketh firm a state.

ATHENA.

Wise are they and have found the way
Of peace. And in each awful face
I see for you, my People, grace:
If ye are gentle, even as they,

And do them worship, this shall be
Your work: to guide through ill, through good,
Both land and town in that pure mood
Of truth that shuns iniquity.

*[The JUDGES and the concourse of ATHENIANS have now formed
into procession, to escort the FURIES to their Cavern.]*

CHORUS OF ATHENIANS.

Rejoice, rejoice! And as ye go your ways
In rich apportionment of blissful days,
Farewell, farewell!

FURIES.

Ye folk within the wall, approved
To neighbour Jove's eternal eyes,
Ye lovers of the Well-beloved,
The Virgin Spirit, timely wise,
The wings of Pallas fold above you,
Therefore shall Zeus the Father love you.

ATHENA.

Fare ye well also. I must go
Before you, guiding, to make bright
Your secret chambers with the light,
The holy light, they dared not know.

Come, and when deep beneath the veil
Of earth ye pass, 'mid offering high,
Hold down the evil that shall die,
Send up the good that shall prevail.

Ye sons of Cranaos, guide them, till
These Wanderers rest within your doors:
With them one City now is yours;
Be one in working and in will!

CHORUS OF ATHENIANS.

Rejoice, rejoice! I raise my voice again,
To speak that bliss that overtowereth pain.
Farewell, farewell!

FURIES.

All things within the Wall that dwell,
All gods and men, that are or were;

All life from Pallas' citadel
Which draws its being, I am here:
These Dwellers in your gates adore,
And fear the tides of Life no more!

ATHENA.

The prayers they have uttered o'er my land I praise;
And speed them on, 'mid many a torch's blaze,
To that most deep and subterranean end
Of wandering. Let these ministers, who tend
Mine image, follow; righteous warders they.
Let all the fulness of the land this day,
Children, and wives and women bent with years,
Come forth: do worship to these Wanderers
Accepted in their robes of crimson dye.
Let leap the flash of fire. This great Ally
Shall be revealed and proven in the fate
Of Athens, if her men be true and great.

CHORUS OF ATHENIANS.

Gather ye home; are ye great, do ye crave adoration,
O childless Children of Night in the pride of your going?
(Give good words, O Folk of the Fold!)
Aeonian caverns of glory are yours, and oblation
Of worship, and sacrifice high, and praise overflowing.
(Give good words, O young men and old!)
Come with the Law that can pardon, the Judgement that knoweth,
O Sennai, Sennai, watchers o'er people and land;
And joy be a-stream in your ways, as the fire that bloweth
A-stream from beacon and brand.

[A cry of joy rises above the singing.]

Outpour ye the Chalice of Peace where the torches are blending:
In Pallas the place it is found and the task it is done.
The Law that is Fate and the Father the All-Comprehending
Are here met together as one.

[Again a cry of joy as the Procession passes out of sight.]

THE END

NOTES

The Scene is conceived as different in different parts of the play, but probably no actual change was made. A stage with the usual "House" background, representing a Temple or Castle, with a round orchestra (dancing floor) on a lower level in front, will suit all the needs of the action. A statue of Athena in place of the Omphalos Altar will turn the "House" from the Temple of Apollo at Delphi to that of Athena in Athens. A semi-circle of seats, or something similar, will symbolize the Areopagus. Compare the change of scene in the *Choëphoroe*, where Agamemnon's Grave seems to be in the centre of the orchestra while the "House" represents the palace of Aigisthos, and the action of the play is now at one, now at the other.

P. 1, l. 1. The priestess first praises the Holders of the Throne of prophecy at Delphi—Earth, Themis, Phoebe, Apollo; then the other divine beings in the neighbourhood, including the River Pleistos, and ending suitably with Zeus the Perfector or Accomplisher (*Teleios*). The ordinary legend told of Apollo's battle with a dragon, born of Earth, and the anger of Earth thereafter; Aeschylus insists that there was never any strife among the gods at Delphi.

P. 1, l. 9. Apollo was at Delos, his rocky isle with the "orbèd mere" in it, when he heard of the gift made to him, and set off to take possession of Delphi.

P. 2, l. 19. Literally: "Loxias is the forth-shower (*prophêtês*) of Zeus the Father": Loxias is the special title of Phoebus Apollo as prophet: the line is important for the understanding of the play.

P. 2, l. 24. Bromios and Pentheus: the story is given in the *Bacchae* of Euripides.

P. 3, l. 40. "Blood on his hand, etc.": as if he had come straight from the murder. To inquire why the blood is still wet, and to explain that it is only the blood of swine killed in purification (ll. 284, 450), is to treat the matter too realistically.

P. 3, ll. 47 ff. This account prepares the audience for the appearance of the Erînyes, who had apparently not been represented on the stage before. They are not exactly like the Gorgons, nor yet like the winged Harpies who swept away Phineus' food.

P. 3, l. 64. STAGE DIRECTION. We do not know how the inner shrine was shown, whether by wide doors or by the drawing of a curtain.

P. 4, l. 71. "Born for wickedness and sorrow": i.e. they exist for the punishment of sin, and nothing else. But see Introduction, p. [vi](#) f.

P. 4, l. 79. The City of Pallas is Athens, her Rock the Acropolis.

P. 4, l. 90. Hermes: he is not present, but is invoked as the regular Guide of the Wanderer. "Zeus pitieth, etc.": this is the essential doctrine of the play.

P. 5, ll. 94 ff. The Ghost. The Ghost is a Dream, and vanishes as the Furies wake. This does not mean that to an ancient poet the Ghost was unreal, but that a Dream was real. In the *Iliad* (Book II, 6 ff.) the Dream behaves like any other messenger of Zeus.

P. 6, l. 140. LEADER OF FURIES. Homer speaks indifferently of "the Erînyes" (singular) and "the Erînyes" (plural). Greek theology felt the difference between singular and plural far less than we do.

The Furies argue that Apollo has (1) broken the Law by stealing his favourite away from justice, and (2) defiled his own altar by bringing thither a man polluted with blood.

P. 8, l. 179. Apollo speaks here, not as "forth-shower of Zeus," but in his own person as a Hellenic God, hating this lust for punishment which the Furies show: if torture is what they want, let them go to Persia and the lands of the barbarians, where they can get it, but keep away from

Hellas and Delphi.

P. 10, l. 206. "And revilest us who guide his feet?" A quibble, which Apollo answers by another.

P. 10, l. 212. "'Twas not one blood": It is the Furies who first raise this sophism about the "common blood." In reality such a plea on behalf of a wife who had murdered her husband would no more be admitted in ancient law than in modern. But the Erinyes are supposed by the poet to represent (1) the primitive "matriarchal" society which preceded the introduction of marriage and civic life, and (2) a blind law based on purely physical considerations: hence Apollo's answer: "Your insistence on the physical blood-tie destroys all moral values. It is love and trust, not mere blood, that matter." He has also a physiological argument with which to meet their quibble in the trial scene (p. [33](#), l. 660).

P. 11, l. 229. "Thou hast thy greatness by the Throne of God": i.e. You have a Portion of your own, which you value as we value ours.

P. 12, ll. 235 ff. Orestes has been hunted over the face of the world for years and has at last made his way, bleeding, to Athena's Image in Athens. The Furies are only a short way behind, tracking him by the blood.

The question has been raised what Image of Athena this is, and whether the scene is on the Acropolis or the Areopagus, or elsewhere. To ask such a question is to press too hard the ideal geography of ancient poetry. The scene is Athens, though sometimes we may have to think of one part of Athens rather than another. Similarly, in the *Helena* the scene is Egypt, though we are sometimes on the banks of the Nile, sometimes on the sea-shore, sometimes at the Isle of Pharos; so in the *Agamemnon* the beacon from Troy to Argos starts from Mount Ida. The real Mount Ida was about thirty miles in the wrong direction, but the ideal Ida was simply the mountain of Troy.

P. 14, l. 270. "Parent or guest or god": These are the three classes of persons towards whom primitive man has duties: (1) the gods; (2) the kindred, in which the parents take the chief place; (3) those aliens to whom he had specially bound himself by the tie of hospitality.

P. 14, l. 276. Orestes calls Athena to come to his aid, and explains that his touch does not defile her Image, and that he is at liberty to speak.—The reasons are: first, it is so long ago and he has suffered so much. Even such a defilement as his does not last for ever. Secondly, he was fully purified at Delphi in the regular way, new blood (of swine) being poured upon him to cover the old blood, and then both washed off together. Thirdly, he has, as a matter of fact, spoken to many people with no bad results to them.—It looks as if there was some ceremonial difficulty which Aeschylus had to meet, in making the unacquitted murderer embrace the Image of Athena or the Altar at Delphi.

P. 15, ll. 293, 295. According to one legend, the epithet "Tritonia," traditionally applied to Athena, meant that she was born at Lake Tritonis in Libya. Phlegra was the scene of the Battle between the Gods and Giants; it is interesting that Aeschylus seems to conceive it as a continuous battle, not an incident in the past.

P. 15, l. 299. Orestes' prayer is followed by silence; a pause and no answer. Then the triumphant cry of the Fury, and the Binding Song to fix his despair. Then at l. 397, when hope had failed, Athena's entrance.

Pp. 16-19, ll. 321-396. This song falls into two parts: a solemn and even philosophical statement of the place of the Avengers in the Cosmos, and a magical chorus or "Binding Song," sinister and terrifying. "Binding charms" or *Defixiones* play a prominent part in ancient magic, and are sufficiently numerous to have a special volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum* to themselves.

The Furies here explain that their business is to punish sin: they have no other function, and

therefore are repugnant to the Gods—much as a hangman or a mediaeval torturer is, or was, repellent to ordinary society. Unjustly, since he was only doing his appointed duty.

P. 17, l. 356. The Foe within the Dwelling. A murderer is one who behaves like the enemy inside his own household.

P. 20, l. 400. Athena comes from Sigêum in the neighbourhood of Troy, which in the time of Aeschylus had long been part of the Athenian Empire. Tradition said that it had been given by the Greek army to the "Sons of Theseus" (the Athenians) for their services in the Trojan War.

P. 20, ll. 404 f. In the MS. two alternative lines are given, one to be used if Athena entered flying *ex machina* through the air, the other if it was more convenient for her to enter on a chariot. I have chosen the first. (The other may be translated:

Thence came I speeding, these young steeds of war
Impetuous yoked beneath my fiery car.)

Pp. 20-22, ll. 415-435. The dialogue between Athena and the Furies is significant. They state their position impressively: to ordinary gods and mortals they are abominable, but Night loves them and "the wronged ones in the darkness" see in them their prayers personified. On the other hand, Athena's question in l. 426, "What motive had he?" is just what they cannot answer or consider. "He has sinned; smite him," is the whole of their doctrine.

This explains the point about the oath. The Furies follow the old ordeal by oath: the only trial permitted to the accused man is that both parties can be made to swear. If the accused can swear that he did not commit the crime, well and good. If he cannot, he is guilty. This leaves out of account any inquiry into justification or extenuating circumstances or even intention. Hence Athena condemns it, and eventually substitutes a trial by free inquiry into the whole of the facts.

P. 23, ll. 470 ff. "A mystery graver to decide Than mortal dreameth." Because it involves the whole problem of forgiveness. To reject the suppliant who has tried his best to do right is an offence; yet to save a particular sinner from the due consequence of his sin is an offence too. If one guilty man is to go unpunished, what remains of the Law? Athena decides to found a tribunal to inquire into the whole case and decide as it may think just, and this is the origin of the famous Court of the Areopagus. The Furies, as soon as they hear of this new-fangled form of trial, are bewildered and begin to feel that they have been deceived. Their simple rule, that the doer shall suffer, is no longer holding good.

Pp. 24-27, ll. 490-565. The above leads on to the main argument of this fine lyric. "Spare the criminal, and the law is broken; and then there will be no protection for the helpless and innocent. Society cannot do without Fear, though of course it must be the Fear of Law. The righteous and law-fearing man may suffer, but is never utterly lost; the law-breaker may succeed for a time, but in the end he is destroyed."

Pp. 27 ff., ll. 566-777. The Trial Scene, though curious, is perhaps below the level of the rest of the play. For one thing, I think it is deliberately set, like the play scene in *Hamlet*, one remove further from reality. As the play in general is to real life, so is the Trial Scene to the play. Further, the acquittal of Orestes does not depend on the arguments used in the trial, but on the Will of Zeus, which is an ultimate fact not dependent on argument. The interest lies in the foundation of the Court of the Areopagus, as a tribunal superseding the blood-feud, the ordeal by oath, and all the rigid and unreasoning practices of primitive justice, by a justice which can understand and therefore sympathize.

The arguments run roughly as follows:—

PROSECUTION.

Did the prisoner kill his mother? He admits it. He must die.

DEFENCE.

Apollo ordered him to kill, because she had killed her husband.—Why did you not pursue her?

PROSECUTION.

A husband is not a blood relation. (A mere quibble, like Portia's pound of flesh without blood.)

DEFENCE.

If it comes to that, neither is a mother. The best physiologists say that the human mother is in function exactly like Mother Earth. She provides the soil for the seed, she does not provide the seed itself.

PROSECUTION.

A monstrous doctrine, to deny a mother's sacred blood!

DEFENCE.

No more monstrous than to deny the bond between husband and wife.

APOLLO'S EVIDENCE.

When I commanded the prisoner to kill his mother I merely revealed the Will of Zeus. That is the highest of all laws.

CROSS-EXAMINED.

"If Zeus thinks so much of the sanctity of the father, does he think nothing of the mother?"—"The two cases were not parallel." "Did not Zeus bind his own father?"—"You are trying to make mischief. Zeus knows how to repair any wrong he may have done in the past. He learns and heals."

"Are you not polluted by touching a murderer?"

"No: Zeus himself touched and forgave the first murderer, Ixïon, when he came to him in supplication."

ATHENA (*to the* JUDGES).

Decide according to your consciences; for me, I belong utterly to Zeus and my will is his will. Therefore my vote is for acquittal.

P. 27, l. 570. Apparently seats are placed on the Stage or round the Orchestra for the Judges. They are accompanied by a crowd of Athenian citizens, women and children among them, who form the Chorus in the final scene. See pp. [49](#) f.

P. 28, ll. 576 ff. Apollo appears both as a witness and as a patron or sympathizer: quite an important character in ancient justice.

P. 29, l. 589. The three bouts: of an ordinary wrestling match.

P. 31, l. 610. "I can no more": Orestes is at the end of his forces. He can speak no more, and merely longs to have his fate settled somehow. Cf. his words to Athena, p. [23](#), l. 468.

P. 32, l. 632. A marble bed, etc. The text seems defective here. The same kind of marble vessel served both as a bath and as a sarcophagus.

P. 32, l. 641. Did he not bind his father and his king: There is often an awkward clash between the Zeus of Aeschylus' exalted conception and the Zeus of accepted mythology. Still, it is quite in consonance with Aeschylus' conception that Zeus should have done violence; and then learned

better and made amends.

P. 33, l. 660. Cf. p. [30](#), l. 606 above. This theory of generation was largely held in antiquity, and has only been disproved in recent times. See Aristotle, *De Gen Anim.*, Book 4. Eur., *Orestes*, 552 ff.

P. 34, l. 682. What none before hath given: i.e. hitherto they have only gone by mechanical tests and ordeals; now they have tried to find the full truth. The Council of the Areopagus was a Council of Elders, of the type usual in ancient Indo-European Societies, reinforced, like the Roman Senate by the co-optation of all ex-magistrates ("Archontes"). It exercised a general supervision over the state, especially in matters of religious pollution. At the time of the Persian invasion it seems to have been the only organ of the constitution which held firm, and consequently for the next seventeen years it exercised a predominant influence over Athens. In the year 461-460, three years before this play, its political powers were severely cut down by the democratic party led by Ephialtes, but its jurisdiction in cases of blood-pollution was left. If we ask what the political bearing of the *Eumenides* was, in a time of fierce party feeling, the answer is not hard to find. Aeschylus preaches reconciliation (pp. [45](#), [48](#)) and magnifies the original function of the Areopagus, which it still retains.

P. 38, l. 751. One thrown pebble: A proverb referring to the pebble or stone of the sea-shore used for voting. (Cf. p. [37](#), l. 741).

P. 38, l. 754. An Argive alliance was traditional in Athens. However, after this one passionate speech we almost forget Orestes. His case has raised an issue so much greater than itself.

Pp. 39 ff., ll. 792-890. Athena's speeches. It is difficult to say what particular plea of Athena's won the Erinyes over, and transformed them to "*Eumenides (Kindly Ones)*." The effect of her patience and persuasion was cumulative. But l. 885 gives the essential test: "Do they believe in Persuasion, which is the gift of Zeus and the office of Athena?" That is, "Do they admit that there is a place in the Law for reason and understanding?" If so, they will accept their new position, expressing a truer law than the old.

P. 39, l. 897. The Younger Gods are the Gods of the new dispensation, the followers of Zeus.

P. 41, l. 834. Why should marriage and childbirth fall under the special charge of the Erinyes? Because the Chthonian (or underworld) Powers punish transgression by barrenness and similar curses, while they reward normal conduct by sending up the fruits of the Earth, including the young of animals and men. Also the old female goddesses, dating from matriarchal times, were naturally concerned with women's affairs.

P. 45, l. 864. "War with the stranger, yes . . . but not the mad bird-rage that slays at home": The dates here are significant: B.C. 461 Kimon, the aristocratic leader, banished: 460 the Areopagus attacked and reduced in power: in return Ephialtes, the democratic leader, murdered. 458: An inscription of this year has been found, which records the names of Athenian citizens killed in war on five different fronts—amazing energy for a single city: 457 Battle of Tanagra: Kimon asks to be allowed to fight in the Athenian ranks; the request is refused, but his friends take his armour into battle with them and place it at their head. After the battle, which ended in defeat, Kimon is recalled.—War, faction and reconciliation in abundance! Mr. R. W. Livingstone in *J.H.S.* xlv. pp. 120 ff. has emphasized the influence which this feud-torn atmosphere must have had in leading Aeschylus to his gospel of forgiveness.

P. 44, l. 910. The ungodly: The Erinyes carry on the same functions as before, but their "Moira" as punishers of the guilty falls into its due proportion.

P. 49, l. 997. To neighbour Jove's eternal eyes: The great Olympieum, or Temple of Zeus Olympios, was on the plain a little way from the Acropolis.

P. 49, l. 1002. Your secret chambers: Amid the limestone rocks of the Areopagus was a chasm

through which rose a spring of dark water. It was held to be a way to the Underworld. It also led to the seat of these goddesses, called generally Semnai (Venerable) or Eumenides (Kindly Ones) because their real name, Erînyes, was rather too awful for common use.

P. 50, l. 1028. Robes of crimson dye: The late Walter Headlam pointed out that a crimson robe was the mark of a *metoikos* or "resident alien" received in Athens. That is what the Erînyes became when they accepted their cavern.

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Transcriber's Notes:-

The line numbers (vv. = "versae") refer to the lines in the original Greek text, not the lines as translated.

Minor punctuation errors corrected.

[The end of *The Eumenides* by Gilbert Murray]