

# The Elektra of Sophokles.

## Brief Notes.

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Figure 1. Elektra at the Tomb of Agamemnon - Frederic Leighton, c. 1869.

### References:

Elektra, R. Jebb, 1924 edition and 1867 edition in *Catena Classicorum* series.

Sophocles Elektra, J.H. Kells, 1973.

Sophocles Elektra, Campbell and Abbott, 1877.

The Elektra of Sophocles, M.A. Bayfield, Reprint of the 1901 edition.

Sophocles Elektra, J. March, 2001.

Sophocles Elektra, Thompson and Hayes.

We will read lines: 1-85, 251-471, 516-609, 660-679, 1098-1125, 1174-1231, 1398-1507. (Total of about 716 lines).

## Sophokles.

Sophokles had a long life (496-406) and wrote about 120 plays of which sadly only 7 complete plays survive, and a reasonable portion of the satyr play *The Ichneutai*. He began competing in plays in 468 and was 90 when he staged his last play. He won more prizes than either Aischylos or Euripides. He came from a wealthy family and held public office (as state treasurer) and fought in the battle to put down the revolt on Samos in the time of Perikles.

As a playwright he was very popular and was said to be the first to add the third actor, thereby reducing the role of the chorus and to employ painted stage scenes. His character development is much more than we see in Aischylos and he makes very bold use of language and metaphor - which can make him hard at times to translate.

Elektra was performed somewhere between 413 and 410.

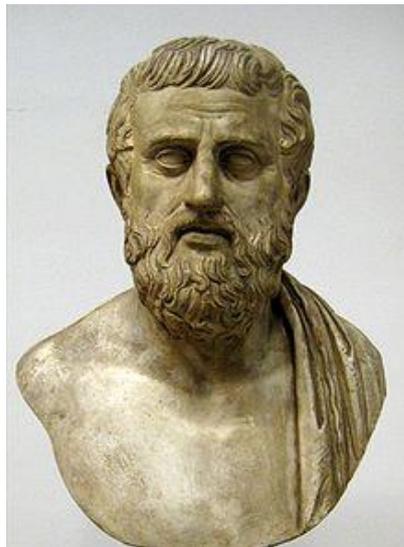


Figure 2. Sophokles.

**NOTES:****Prologos: Lines 1-120: (With threnos 86-120).**

The opening scene is in front of the palace at Mykenai with images of Apollo Lykeios and other gods.

9. φάσκειν - Infinitive for imperative, 'Deem, assure yourself'.
12. 'from the hands of your sibling and sister'.
14. τιμωρόν - '(to be) the avenger'.
19. ἐκλέλοιπεν - 'has died away'.
21. ἐμέν is corrupt but is a dialect form of ἐσμέν.
31. 'and if I miss the mark in some way, bring me back into line'.
36. ἄσκευον αὐτόν - 'alone, without the aid of ...'.
37. Lit. 'by stealth snatch with my hand the righteous death-blow', tr. 'by trickery to accomplish by my own hand a deed of justifiable slaughter'.
- 39b. 'whenever opportunity grants you entrance'.
43. γνῶσ' - 'recognise'. (3<sup>rd</sup> p. pl. aor. subjunctive after οὐ μή).  
 ἠνθισμένον - lit. 'flowered', tr. 'matured', since he has grey hair.
48. ἐξ ἀναγκαίας τύχης - 'as the result of fatal accident'.
52. χλιδαῖς - 'luxuriant tributes'.
54. τύπωμα χαλκόπλευρον - 'a bronze-walled urn (lit. casting)'.
56. λόγῳ κλέπτοντες - 'deceiving them with this story'.
59. λόγῳ θανῶν - 'by a feigned death'.
61. 'I think that nothing one says which brings profit is a bad thing'.
63. λόγῳ - 'by report'.
66. δεδορκότα - i.e. 'alive'.

72. ἀρχέπλουτον - 'master of my wealth'.

74. χρέος - 'task'.

83b. 'and thence to make an auspicious beginning'.

85b. 'and power over our actions'.

86ff. The threnody has two halves tagged a systema and an antisystema.

*Systema:*

O holy light, and sky with equal measure to the earth, how often have you heard from me many odes of lamentation and many blows falling full upon my bloodied breast, whenever the dark night ceases. As to the vigils I spend all through the nights and the miserable bed of my hateful house, these you know, and how often I lament for my poor father, whom murderous Ares welcomed not in the land of strangers and how my mother and her bedfellow Aigisthos, as woodmen fell an oak, they cleft his skull with a murderous axe. No cry of lamentation comes from any place except from me, when you O father died so cruelly and piteously.

*Antisystema:*

As long as I look upon this bright-shining brilliance of the stars and see each day I will never cease from dirge and sore lament, nor before the doors of my ancestral house will I cease, like some nightingale that has lost its child, in lamentation to lift up my voice to everyone. O house of Hades and Persephone, O chthonic Hermes and lady Ara, dread daughters of the gods, Erinyes, who see those who die without justice, and come to marriage beds beguiled. Come, help me, get revenge for the murder of my father and send to me my brother, for I have no longer the strength to hold up alone the burden of grief that holds me down.

**Parodos: Lines 121-250: (in the form of a kommos).**

(Translation by Jebb)

**Strophe a:**

Ch: Ah, Electra, child of a most wretched mother, why are you always wasting away in this unsated mourning for Agamemnon, who long ago was godlessly

ensnared in your false mother's wiles and betrayed by her corrupt hand? May the one who did that perish, if I may speak such a curse without breaking the gods' laws.

El: Ah, noble-hearted girls, you have come to relieve me in my troubles. I know and feel it: it does not escape me. Still I cannot leave this task undone, nor abandon this mourning for my poor father. Ah, friends whose love responds to mine in every mood, allow me to rave as I am, oh, please, I beg you!

**Antistrophe a:**

Ch: But never by weeping nor by prayer will you resurrect your father from the pool of Hades which receives all men. No, by grieving without end and beyond due limits you will find cureless misery and your own ruin; in these actions there is no deliverance from evils. Tell us, why do you pursue such suffering?

El: Foolish is the child who forgets a parent's piteous death. No, closer to my heart is the mourner who eternally wails, "Itys, Itys," that bird mad with grief, the messenger of Zeus. Ah, all-suffering Niobe, you I count divine, since you weep forever in your rocky tomb!

**Strophe b:**

Ch: Not to you alone of mortals, my daughter, has sorrow come, though you face it with less restraint than those girls inside, Chrysothemis and Iphianassa, whose parents and blood you share. They still live, as he, too, lives, sorrowing in his secluded youth, yet happy in that this famous realm of the Mycenaeans shall one day receive him as a noble lord, if with the blessing of Zeus's escort he, Orestes, returns to this land.

El: Yes, I await him with unwearied longing, as I walk my sad path from day to day childless and unwed, bathed in tears, bearing that endless doom of evils. But he forgets all that he has suffered and learned. What message comes to me that is not proven false? He constantly desires to be with us, but though he desires it, he does not choose to appear.

**Antistrophe b:**

Ch: Courage, my daughter, courage; Zeus in the sky is still mighty, and he sees and rules all. Leave your oversharpest anger to him; be neither excessively hostile to those you hate, nor forgetful of them, since Time is a god who brings ease. Neither the son of Agamemnon, who dwells by Crisa's cattle-feeding shore nor the god who reigns beside Acheron is unmindful of you.

El: But the best part of life has passed away leaving me in hopelessness, and I have no strength left. I waste away without children and have no loving husband to champion me, but like some despised foreign slave, I serve in the halls of my father, wrapped in shabby garments and standing to eat scanty meals.

**Strophe c:**

Ch: Mournful was the voice heard at his return, and mournful the voice amidst your father's reclining banquet when the straight, swift blow of the bronze-jawed axe was sped against him. Deceit was the plotter, Lust the slayer, two dread parents of a dreadful phantom, whether it was god or mortal that did this deed.

El: O that hated day, hated beyond all that have come to me; O that night, the terrible grief of that unutterable feast, the shameless death-strokes my father saw from their twin hands, hands which took my life captive by treachery, which cast me to ruin! May the great god of Olympos create for them sufferings in penalty, and may they never have enjoyment of their splendour since they have committed such crimes!

**Antistrophe c:**

Ch: Be advised to say no more; do you not see by what actions under the present circumstances you plunge so shamefully into self-made miseries? You have far excelled in achieving misfortune, ever breeding wars in your hardhearted soul. But such strife should not be pushed into a conflict with the powerful.

El: I have been forced to it, forced by a terrible compulsion. I know my own passion; it does not escape me; but, under such terrible compulsion, I will not

restrain these disastrous cries of frenzy, so long as life is in me. Who indeed, my noble friends, who that keeps what is appropriate in mind, would think any word of comfort right for my ears? Let me be, let me be, my comforters! For these ills will be reckoned with those which have no cure; I will never know a respite from my pains, or the sum of this wailing.

### **Epode:**

Ch: It is nevertheless with goodwill, like a true-hearted mother, that I dissuade you from begetting misery upon miseries.

El: But what limit has nature begot for my affliction? Tell me, how can it be right to neglect the dead? Has such a seed been sown in any mortal? May I never have such men's esteem; never, when I am close to prosperity, may I dwell in ease, hindering the wings of shrill lamentation so as to deprive my begetter of his honours!

For if the dead is to lie a wretch, merely dust and nothingness, while his slayers do not pay back to him blood for blood in penalty, then shame and reverence will vanish from all humanity.

### **First Episode: Lines 251-471:**

251. σπεύδασα - 'keen for', 'mindful of'.

265. τητάω - 'to deprive'.

272. αὐτοένης - 'murderer', (only here in Greek).

275. μιάστορι - 'polluter'.

281. ἔμμηνα - 'monthly'. The gods referred to are probably Zeus and Apollo.

284. ἐπωνομασμένην - tr. 'named after my father'.

285. αὐτὴ πρὸς αὐτήν - 'alone by myself'.

288. 'but know that you will be justly punished'.

289. δύσθειον μίσημα - 'hateful thing, unwelcome to the gods'.

300. sc. ὕλακτεῖ.

301b. `that utter pest.'

302. ποιούμενος - `carries out'.

304. ἐφήξειν - `come to my aid'.

305-309. `For the perpetual imminence of his actions has eradicated every hope that I could conceive. In such a state of affairs, then, friends, there is no room for self-restraint or for reverence. Rather, in these dire straits there is much need to pursue a dire course.'

312a. `most assuredly (he is away).'

313. ὀχνέω = οἴχομαι

320. ὀκνεῖν - tr. `hesitate'.

327. ἐντάφια - `offerings for the tomb'.

328. πρὸς θυρῶνος ἐξόδους - `by the passage of the portal'.

331. χαρίζεσθαι κενά - `to idly indulge'.

335. πλεῖν ὑφειμένῃ - lit. `to sail with slackened sail'.

336. πημαίνειν - `to give them grief'.

338-9. `yet right is not as I declare it, but as *you* judge it'.

341. sc. ἔστι

345b. φρονεῖν κακῶς - `either be imprudent'.

350. ἐκτρέπεις - `deflect, divert'.

357. ἡμῖν - ethic dative.

360. χλιδᾶς - `take pleasure'.

362b. `let your life be in abundance'.

364. οὐκ ἐρῶ - `I do not care'.

375. σχήσει - `will restrain'.

377. ἀντείποιμι - `contradict'.

382. στέγη -tr. `dungeon'.

384b. `now is the time to think wisely'.

388. ἐπαράομαι λόγον - 'to utter an imprecation'.
- 397b. 'you speak of things not in my disposition'.
398. ἐξ ἀβουλίας - 'as a result of imprudence'.
400. sc. με.
401. Lit. 'these words are on the side of cowards to commend'.
402. συναινέω - 'to agree'.
404. ἐστάλην - 'I was sent'.
406. τυμβεύσαι - 'to put on the grave'.
415. ἔσφηλαν καὶ κατώρθησαν - 'cause to slip and overthrow'. (Gnomic aorists).
- ἤδη - 'in the past'.
418. ὀμιλίαν - tr. 'return'. Kells renders it as 'intercourse' and sees it as sexual. The reference to the sceptre and the 'flourishing limb' (βρύοντα θαλλόν) may add weight to this.
430. μέτει - 'you will seek me out again'.
436. εὐνή - tr. 'resting place'.
439. ἀρχήν - 'to begin with', Lat. *omnino*.
440. ἔβλαστε - tr. 'had been'.
441. ἐπέστεφε - 'have tried to bedeck on'.
445. ἐμασχάλισθη - lit. 'was arm-pitted' from μασχάλη 'the armpit'. The corpse had its limbs cut off and packed under the armpits to prevent it returning and taking vengeance.
- 445b-446. 'and she by way of funeral ablution, wiped the blood stains on his head'. This was believed to transfer the pollution to the corpse.
447. λυτήρια - 'deliverance, absolution'.
449. ἄκρας φόβας - 'edge strands' (lit. 'foliage'.
451. ἀλιπαρή - lit. 'unanointed' and hence 'neglected', but the word is not found elsewhere and there are metrical issues.

452. χλιδαῖς - 'luxurious ornaments'.

455. ἐξ ὑπερτέρας χερός - 'with superior strength'.



Figure 3. Elektra gives Chrysothemis the belt and lock of hair. (Kaufmann 1741-1807).

460. δυσπρόσοπτα- 'appalling'.

466-467. 'In regard to a just deed, it is unreasonable for two people to argue, but reasonable to jump to action'.

470. πικράν - tr. 'to my sorry'.

### First Stasimon: Lines 472-515:

#### Strophe a:

If I am not a deranged prophet and one who lacks wise judgments, Justice, the sender of the omen, will come, winning the just victory of her hands' might. She will come in pursuit before long, my child. Courage is mine, since I heard just now of this sweet-blowing dream. Never does the lord of the Hellenes, your producer forget, nor does the axe of long ago forget, striking with bronze on its jaws, which in most shameless disgrace annihilated him.

#### Antistrophe a:

She, too, will come, she of many hands and many feet who lurks in her terrible ambush, the bronze-shod Erinyes. For an unwed, unbetrothed passion for a marriage polluted by murder seized the pair, though divine law forbade it to

them. Therefore I am confident that the portent—a wonder which I will never blame—will draw near to the criminals and conspirators. To be sure, mortal prophecy from fearful dreams or divine signs exists no more, if this vision of the night does not find due fulfillment.

**Epode:**

O chariot-race of Pelops long ago, source of many a sorrow, what disaster you have brought upon this land! For ever since Myrtilus sank to rest beneath the waves, hurled to utter destruction from his golden chariot in disgraceful outrage, from that time to this, outrage and its many sorrows were never yet gone from this house.

**Second Episode: Lines 516-1057: (including a kommos 823-870).**

516. ἀνειμένη ... στρέφει - lit. 'you range having broken loose'.

518. φίλους - tr. 'relatives'.

525. πρόσχημα - 'pretext'.

536. Lit. 'he had no share with them for the killing of my daughter', tr. 'he had no right to kill my daughter for them'.

537. 'if he slew my child instead (of that) of his brother Menelaus, ...'.

543. δάισασθαι - lit. 'to dine on'.

545. παρείτο - lit. 'slacken', 'dissolve'.

545b. 'but there was in him (longing for Menelaus' children)?'



Figure 4. Klytāimnestra

546. 'Were these not the marks of a thoughtless and malicious parent?'

550. δύσθυμος - 'disheartened, dismayed, conscious-stricken'.

554. ἐφῆς - 'you will allow'.

557. ἐξῆρχες - 'started out'.

568ff. 'and over the slaughter of which he happened to let fall some boastful words'.

571. ἀντίσταθμον - 'compensation'.

573. θύματα = θυσία.

575. 'for which reason having been much constrained and resisted'.

581. μετᾳγνοίαν - 'remorse'.

584. 'but look to see if your excuse is false' (lit. does not exist)'.  
 585. ἀνθᾳότου - 'in return for what (crime)'.

587. παλαμναίω - 'the guilty man' (as we say 'with blood on his hands').

589. εὔσεβεῖς - tr. 'lawful'.

595. 'but no, we are not even allowed to admonish you'.

596a. 'who protest loudly', lit. 'give full license to thy tongue'.

598. οὐκ ἔλασσον - 'more'.

600. συννόμου - 'consort'.

604. ἐπαιτιόμαι - 'accuse'.
606. χρῆς = χρήξεις
608. ἴδρις - 'cognizant'.
- 611,12. φροντίδα -tr. 'consideration'.
618. ἔξωρα - 'unfitting', lit. 'out of season'.
624. νιν - 'these words'.
625. εὐρίσκειται - 'find for themselves'.
626. θράσους - 'punishment'.
628. ἐκφέρει- 2<sup>nd</sup> p. passive.
635. πάγκαρπα - '(offerings) of many fruits'.
648. πλούτου τοῦ παρόντος - 'from my current prosperity'.
649. μή ... ἐφής - 'do not permit them'.
651. ἀμφέπειν - 'to wield'.
657. καί for καίπερ
658. ἐπαξιῶ - 'I expect'.
- 670b. 'conveying/forwarding a matter of high significance'. In Aischylos, the news is sent by Strophios.
682. πρόσχημ' ἀγῶνος - lit. 'a show consisting of a contest', tr. 'show-piece of a contest'.
683. ὀρθίων κηρυγμάτων - 'high-pitched summons'.
- 684b. 'which was decided to take place first'.
686. lit. 'having made the end of race equal to the beginning', i.e. 'having completed the circuit of the race'.
688. ἐν πολλοῖσι - 'where there is much to tell'.
- 690-695. 'But this one thing you must know: in all the contests that the judges announced, he carried away the prize, and men deemed him happy as often as the herald proclaimed him an Argive, by name Orestes, son of Agamemnon, who once marshalled Greece's famous expedition.'

705. ξανθαῖσι πώλοις -tr. 'chestnut mares'.

708. ἐκπληρῶν - 'manning'.

709ff. 'They took their stations where the appointed umpires placed them by lot and ranged the cars.'

712. ὁμοκλέω - 'to call out'. Homeric word, only here in Tragedy.

713. μεστόω - 'to fill'.

δρόμος - tr. 'race-course'.

716b ff. 'so that one of them might pass the wheel-hubs and the snorting steeds of his rivals; for both at their backs and at their rolling wheels the breath of the horses foamed and smattered.'

720-730. 'Orestes, driving close to the near edge of the turning-post, almost grazed it with his wheel each time and, giving rein to the trace-horse on the right, he checked the horse on the inner side. To this point, all the chariots still stood upright. But then the Aenian's hard-mouthed colts carried him out of control as they passed out of the turn from the sixth into the seventh lap and dashed their foreheads against the rig of the Barcaean. Next, as a result of this one mishap, the cars kept smashing and colliding with each other, and the whole race-ground of Crisa swelled with shipwrecked chariots.'

731-748. 'Seeing this, the clever charioteer from Athens drew aside and paused, allowing the equestrian flood to pass in mid-crest. Orestes was driving last, keeping his horses behind, as his trust was in the race's end. But when he sees that the Athenian is alone left in, he sends a shrill cry ringing through the ears of his swift colts, and gives chase. Bringing yoke level with yoke the two of them raced, first one man, then the other, showing his head in front of the other's chariot. Up to now the ill-fated Orestes had driven upright safely through every circuit, upright in his upright car. But then he slackened his left rein while the horse was turning and unwittingly struck the edge of the pillar, breaking the axle-box in two. He spilled forward over the chariot-rail and was caught in the trim reins, and as he fell to the ground, his colts were scattered into the middle of the course.'

749. στρατός -tr. 'crowd'.

754. κατασχεθόντες - 'bringing under control'. (Poetic second aorist.)

765. πρόρριζον - 'clean down to the roots'.

770-771. `There is a terrible power in motherhood; a mother may be wronged, but she can feel no hate for those whom she bore.'

776. ἀποστάς-tr. `having deserted'.

777. ἀπεξενούτο - `he has alienated himself'.

781. στεγάζειν - lit. `to cover me'.

782. διῆγε - `kept me living'.

787a. `for all her threats', (as in line 387).

791. `You certainly are not, but he is fine as he is.'

792. `She has heard who should be heard, and has ordained well.'

799b. `if these matters are settle satisfactorily'.

801b. `nor the ally who sent you'.

802. The Messenger and Klytaimnestra go inside the house.

809. `for you have gone having torn my heart to pieces'.

819. ἀνανῶ - `I will wither'.

820. εἰ βαρύνεται - `if he is displeased (with my action).'

### **Kommos 823-870.**

826. `if they cover them up indifferently'.

835. ὑποίσεις - `you suggest'

836. `you will trample your feet against me'.

837. Amphiaros the seer was tricked into joining the Seven Against Thebes by his wife Eriphyle who had been bribed to do so using the `necklace of Harmonia'. He was killed in the attack but thought by the gods to good to die and so was swallowed up by the Earth. His son Alkmaion came as his avenger.

ἔρκεσι - `necklace(s)'.

κρυφθέντα - `having been ensnared'.

841. πάμψυχος - only here and of doubtful meaning. Tr. `fully alive' in the sense that although in Hades he is still alive.

846. μελέτωρ - lit. `someone who cares', tr. `avenger'.

849. 'unhappy woman who has met with unhappy circumstances'.

851. 'with my life swept through all the months by abundant terrors and horrors!'

855. παράγης - 'divert'.

861ff. 'and is it a law of nature too that amidst the contest of white-flashing horses, he should become entangled with raw-cut traces, in the way this poor fellow did?'

864. 'the outrage is unimaginable'.

**871. Chrysothemis enters the stage.**

διώκομαι - 'I am urged on'.

872. τὸ κόσμιον μεθεῖσα - 'having abandoned decency'.

873. ἀνάπαυλαν - 'relief from'.

888. The sense is 'that you are excited by something that has set your heart afire'.

894. κολώνης - 'mound'.

896. θήκη - tr. 'sepulchre'.

898. εγχρίμπτη - 'might close upon me (lit. might touch upon)'.

900-1. ἐσχάτης ... πυρᾶς - 'at the edge of the tomb (lit. pyre)'.

901. νεώρη - 'new, fresh, late'.

902-3. 'a familiar form broke in upon my mind in some way'.

908. ἀγλάισμα - 'fair adornment'.

909. προσήκει - tr. 'belongs properly'.

912. ἀκλάστῳ i.e. 'without punishment'.

916b-17. Tr. 'No mortal life is attended always by the same fortune'.

919. κύρος - 'ratification'.

939b. Tr. 'you will lighten the load'.

942. φερέγγυος - 'capable, able to undertake'.
945. εὐτυχεῖ - 'succeeds'.
948. παρουσίαν - 'availability'.
950. Only classical instance of first person perfect dual and only one of three first person duals, the others being in Iliad 23.485 and Philoktetes 1079.
953. πράκτορα - 'exactor (or vengeance)'.
955. 'the very agent of our father's murder' (Kells).
958. ποῖ = μέχρι τίνος  
 ῥάθυμος - 'indifferent'.
959. ἔτ' ὀρθήν- tr. 'still upright'.
960. κτήσιν object of ἔστερημένη.
972. 'for everyone prefers to look towards what is good'.
979. εὖ βεβηκόσιν - 'well-placed'.
- 992-4. 'Before she began to speak, women, if she had happened to have a mind not disordered, she would have preserved her sense of caution, but as it is she has not preserved it.'
999. 'their fortune gets better day by day'.
1002. ἔξαπαλλαχθήσεται - 'will escape'.
1005. λύει - 'sets free'. (The common equation λύει = λυσιτελεῖ would require a dative.)
- 1008b. 'cannot even meet with this (death)'.
1009. ἀντιάζω - 'I entreat'.
1012. ἀτελεῖ - 'without effect'.
1013. 'learn sense, at least in this late hour'.
1020. 'for I will not let it go unfulfilled'.
1024. Lit. 'Practise to remain with such a mind throughout your life'.
1026. ἐγχειροῦντα - 'if I did lend a hand'.

1030. 'The future, which is long enough, will be the time to judge this'.

1035. οἶ ... ἀτιμίας - 'to what level of dishonour'.

1035. 'Must I then follow your determination of what is right?'

1040. 'You have described accurately the trouble in which you lie.

1045b. Lit. 'not at all dismayed by you'.

1053. 'for it is the height of folly even to seek for such things'.

### **Second Stasimon: Lines 1058-1097:**

#### **Strophe a:**

Why, though we see the birds above, most thoughtful creatures, taking care for the sustenance of those from whom they derived life and enjoyment, why do we not pay these debts in like measure? No, by the lightning-flash of Zeus, by Themis throned in the sky, we are not long unpunished. O Voice of the underworld that reaches to mortals, shout for me a piteous cry to the sons of Atreus below. Carry the reproaches not appropriate to my dancing!

#### **Antistrophe a:**

Tell them the affairs of their house, how it is now diseased; how among his children, double-sided strife has overwhelmed their loving manner. Electra, betrayed, braves the storm alone. In misery she bewails her father's fate without pause, like the all-grieving nightingale. She cares not at all about death, but is ready for that eternal blindness, could she but subdue the double Erinyes of her house. Who could grow to be so noble a daughter of so noble a father?

#### **Strophe b:**

None of the good willingly clouds his fair repute and becomes nameless by leading a corrupt life, my child. Similarly, you, too, have chosen a lifetime of shared mourning and have armed against dishonor, so that you might win in one breath a twofold praise as wise, and as the best of daughters.

**Antistrophe b:**

May I yet see you live exalted in might and wealth above your enemies by as much as you now dwell beneath their hand! For I have found you enjoying no prosperous estate, yet for observance of nature's highest laws you win the noblest prize by your reverence toward Zeus.

**Third Episode: Lines 1098-1383: (including a melos 1232-1286).**

1102. ἀζήμιος - lit. 'blameless', tr. 'cannot be faulted'.

1104. κοινόπουν - lit. 'with common foot', (Only here). Tr. 'that we, the two of us who have come together, have arrived much desired by you'.

1110. κληδόνα - tr. 'rumour'.

1113. λείψανα - 'vestage'.

1116. πρόχειρον - 'ready to hand'.

1118. στέγον - neut. participle.

1125b. 'or even a blood relative'.

1139-40. παμφλέκτου πυρός ... ἄθλιον βάρος - 'your wretched remains (lit. burden) from the flashing pyre'.



Figure 5. Orestes and Elektra.

1142. ὄγκος - lit. 'heap, pile'.

κῦτος - 'vessel'.

1143. `my nurture of you long ago`.
1148. προσηδῶμην - `I was addressed`.
- 1151a. `you have come like a whirlwind`.
1157. δαίμων - `fortune`.
1171. φρόνει = σωφρόνει.
1174. λόγων ἀμηχανῶν - tr. `when words fail`.
- 1176b. Lit. `with respect to what did you happen to say this`, i.e. `why did you say this?`.
1181. καὶ αθέως - `and godlessly`.
1182. δυσφημεῖς - `you speak ill-omened words`.
1184. ἐπισκοπῶν - `examining me`.
1185. `It seems that I don't know anything about my ow troubles`.
1186. `In what, in what has been said, have you come to know this?`.
1187. ἐμπρέπουσαν - `conspicuous`.
1188. παῦρα - `(only) a few`.
1194. οὐδὲν ἐξισοῖ - `she is nothing like`.
1195. λύμη - `degradation, privation`.
1197. ὁ ἐπαρήξων - `some-one to help`.
1201. `I am the only one who has come grieving over the same pains as you`.
- 1203b. `if the good-will of these (the chorus) were present`.
- 1209a. `I declare I will not allow it`.
1211. `Speak a propitious word, for it is not with justice that you grieve thus`.
- 1215b. `This (urn) is not yours`.
1217. ἠσκημένον - `contrived`.
1230. καὶ πὶ συμφοραῖσι - `at your happy fortune`.
1231. γεγηθὸς ... δάκρυον - `tear of joy`.

**Melos 1232-1286:****Electra**

O seed, seed of the person to me most dear, you have just now come, you have come, and have found and seen her whom your heart desired!

**Orestes**

I am with you; but keep silence and wait.

**Electra**

What do you mean?

**Orestes**

It is better to be silent so that no one inside may hear.

**Electra**

No, by ever-virgin Artemis, I will never think it right to tremble before eternally house-bound women, that useless burden on the ground!

**Orestes**

Yes, but remember that Ares dwells in women, too. You know this well by experience, I believe.

**Electra**

oh, no! ah, me! You have reminded me of my sorrow, one which by its nature cannot be veiled, cannot be done away with, cannot be forgotten!

**Orestes**

I know this, too; but when occasion prompts, we must recall those crimes.

**Electra**

Each moment of all time, as it comes, would be a proper occasion for me to make these just complaints. Scarcely now have I had my lips set free.

**Orestes**

Yes, I agree; therefore guard your freedom.

**Electra**

What must I do?

**Orestes**

When it is inopportune, do not want to speak too much.

**Electra**

No, who could exchange due silence for speech, when you have appeared? For now my eyes have seen you, beyond all thought and hope!

**Orestes**

You saw me when the gods moved me to come.

**Electra**

You have told me of a grace higher still than the first, if a god brought you to our house; I acknowledge in it the work of the divine.

**Orestes**

On the one hand I hesitate to curb your gladness, but on the other I fear that you may be overwhelmed by too much joy.

**Electra**

O you who, after such a long time, saw fit to make your most happy journey and appear to me, do not, now that you have seen me in all my misery—

**Orestes**

What should I not do?

**Electra**

Do not rob me of the comfort of your face; do not force me to forego it!

**Orestes**

I would be angry, indeed, if I saw another attempt it.

**Electra**

You give your consent?

**Orestes**

Why would I not?

**Electra**

My friends, I heard a voice that I could never have hoped to hear; nor could I have restrained my emotion in silence and without a cry, when I heard it.

ah, me! But now I have you. You have appeared with that dear face, which I could never, even in misery, forget.



Figure 6. Orestes and Elektra.

1291. τὰ δ' ἐκχεῖ- 'squanders idly'.

1292. 'for the story would preclude a due measure of time'.

1301-6. 'O brother, just as it is agreeable to you, thus will my will (sc. βούλημα) be in this matter. Since I have taken this happiness from you and I do not possess it as my own, nor would I receive a great boon for myself, if it meant grieving you even a little, for otherwise I would ill serve the good luck we now have'.

1311. ἐντέτηκε - lit. 'has melted into me', tr. 'is ingrained'.

1314. τῆδ' ὁδῶ- 'on this single journey'.

1315. ἄσκοπα - 'unimaginably'.

1319. ὥς σοι θυμός - 'as desire takes you'.

1320a. 'failed to achieve one of two things'.

1326. τητώμενοι - 'deprived'.

1329. 'not on the brink of, but in the middle of'.

1331. σταθμοῖσι - 'doorway', lit. 'door posts'.

1334. εὐλάβειαν τῶνδε προυθέμην - 'I made this my care'.

1336. ἀπλήστου - 'insatiable'.

1337. τὸ μέλλειν - 'delay'.

1338b. Lit. 'it is the right time to make an end', tr. 'now is the time to have done with the deed'.

1344. τελουμένων - (G.A.) 'when things are brought to completion'.

1349-5. οὐ ... χεροῖν - 'by whose (two) hands'.

1358. 'tr. 'whose feet were kindly servants'. (lit. 'sweetest service of feet').

1359. οὐδ' ἔφαινες - 'you gave me no light'.

1360. ἔργα - tr. 'facts'.

1364b. 'the intervening story' (between Orestes' departure and his return.)

1369. ἐφέξετον - 'delay', 'hold back'. (Dual).

1374. ἔδη - tr. 'statues'.

1378. λιπαρεῖ - 'persistent'.

1382. ἐπιτίμια - 'wages, reward'.

### **Third Stasimon: Lines 1384-1397:**

#### **Strophe a:**

Behold how Ares stalks onward, breathing bloody vengeance that is hard to oppose. Just now have the hunters of wicked crimes passed beneath that roof there, the hounds which none may flee. And so not long shall the vision of my soul hang in suspense.

#### **Antistrophe a:**

The champion of the spirits infernal is ushered on guileful feet into the house, the rich, ancestral palace of his father, and he bears keen-edged death in his hands. Maia's son Hermes, who has shrouded the guile in darkness, leads him right to his goal and delays no longer.

### **Exodos: Lines 1398-1510: (including a kommos 1398-1441).**

#### **Kommos:**

**Electra**

My dearest friends, in a moment the men will do the deed. But wait in silence.

**Chorus**

How do they fare? What are they doing now?

**Electra**

She is decking the urn for burial; the two of them stand close to her.

**Chorus**

And why have you hurried out?

**Electra**

To guard against Aegisthus entering before we are aware.

**Clytaemnestra**

*Within.*

Oh! Oh! Our house is empty of friends and filled with murderers!

**Electra**

Someone shouts inside. Do you not hear, friends?

**Chorus**

I heard, ah, me, sounds unfit to be heard, and I shudder!

**Clytaemnestra**

*Within.*

Ah, misery! Aegisthus, where, where are you?

**Electra**

Look, once more someone cries out!

**Clytaemnestra**

*Within.*

My son, my son, have pity on your mother!

**Electra**

Why? You had none for him, nor for the father that begot him.

**Chorus**

Wretched city, wretched race, now the fate that has held you day by day perishes - it perishes!

**Clytaemnestra***Within.*

Oh, I am wounded!

**Electra**

Stab her doubly, if you can!

**Clytaemnestra***Within.*

Ah, wounded again!

**Electra**

Would that Aegisthus, too, were wounded!

**Chorus**

The curses bring fulfillment: those who are buried live. For men long dead are draining their killers' blood in a stream of requital.

**Chorus**

And now they are here! The red hand drips with sacrifice to Ares, and I cannot blame the deed.

**Electra**

Orestes, what happened?

**Orestes**

All is well within the house, if Apollo's oracle spoke well.

**Electra**

The miserable woman is dead?

**Orestes**

Have no more fear that your haughty mother will ever again trample on your rights.

**Chorus**

Quiet! For I see Aegisthus in plain sight.

**Electra**

You, young men, get back inside!

**Orestes**

Where do you see the man?

**Electra**

He is at our mercy walking from the suburb, full of joy.

**Chorus**

Go with all speed to the vestibule, so that, just as your first task prospered, so this one again may prosper now.

**Orestes**

Have courage. We will accomplish it.

**Electra**

Hurry, then, to wherever you wish.

**Orestes**

See, I am gone.

**Electra**

Things here will be my concern.

1448b-9. `For otherwise I would be ignorant of (lit. outside of) those most dear' (reading φιλτάτων).

1451. Lit. `they have made their way to their dear hostess', but there is a double meaning of `they have made an end of their hostess'.

1456. `You have made me very happy for a change'.

1462. στόμια - lit. `my bit', tr. `bridle'.

1463. φύση φρένας - `gain wisdom'.

1466ff. `By Zeus, I see an apparition that has fallen not without some spite. But to avoid Nemesis I will say nothing about it. Release the covering from the face so that my kinsman might meet with due lamentation from me.'

1471. `to loom upon them and greet them kindly'.

1476. ἄρκυστάτοις - `hunting nets'.

1478. θανοῦσιν ... ἴσα - `as though they were the dead'.

1485. `for when mortals are enmeshed in troubles, what benefit can he who is sure to die win from (allowance of) time?' (Kells).

1488. ταφεῦσιν - `grave-diggers'.

1494. πρόχειρος - 'ready'.

1498. 'they present and coming woes of the Pelopidai'.

1499. ἄκρος - 'proficient'.

1500. i.e. Your father did not have this skill.

1506. ὅστις ... γε - 'whoever that is ...'.

1507. 'for then crookery would not be so commonplace'.

1510. 'brought to ripeness by the current onset'.

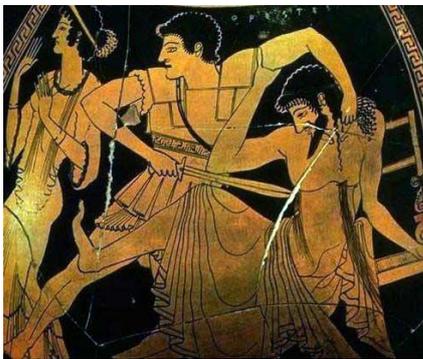


Figure 7. The death of Aigisthos.