

# The Eumenides Aeschylus: Unmasking the Furies in Ancient Greek Drama

## AESCHYLUS THE EUMENIDES

Translated by E. D. A. Morshead



*Orange Street Press Classics*

**Aeschylus and the Eumenides**

The Eumenides is a famous tragedy written by Aeschylus, one of the greatest playwrights of ancient Greece. It is the final play of a trilogy called The Oresteia, which explores the themes of justice, revenge, and redemption. The Eumenides, also known as The Kindly Ones or The Furies, sheds light on the concept of divine justice and the role of the Furies as avengers of blood crimes.

## The Plot of The Eumenides

The Eumenides continues the story of the House of Atreus, where a cycle of violence and revenge has plagued the lives of its members. Orestes, the main character, seeks vengeance for his father's murder by killing his mother, Clytemnestra. However, his act of matricide haunts him and triggers the wrath of the Furies.



### **The Eumenides** by Aeschylus (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 4770 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Print length : 78 pages



In The Eumenides, Orestes seeks refuge in the sanctuary of Apollo, the Greek god of prophecy and healing. Apollo defends Orestes' actions, claiming that he was guided by divine command to avenge his father's death. The conflict between Apollo and the Furies serves as the central conflict of the play.

Ultimately, the case is brought before Athena, the goddess of wisdom and justice. She creates a court in Athens, the first trial by jury, to judge Orestes' case. The Furies argue for blood retribution, while Apollo and Athena advocate for a more civilized, law-based form of justice.

## **The Furies: Unveiling their Ancient Power**

The Furies, or the Erinyes, are ancient Greek deities associated with vengeance and retribution. They are typically depicted as terrifying creatures with serpents for hair, bloodshot eyes, and wings. In *The Eumenides*, Aeschylus humanizes these mythical beings, giving them a voice and a role in the evolving Greek justice system.

Contrary to their typical portrayal as malicious and merciless, Aeschylus presents the Furies in a more sympathetic light. He portrays them as pitiful creatures, tormented by their duty to avenge blood crimes and seeking a place in society.

The eventual transformation of the Furies into the Eumenides, meaning "Kindly Ones" or "Gracious Goddesses," signifies their transition from avengers to protectors. This metamorphosis marks an important turning point in Greek mythology, as it symbolizes the shift from vengeful justice to a more balanced and fair system.

## **The Significance of The Eumenides**

*The Eumenides* holds great historical and cultural significance. It explores the themes of justice, retribution, and the conflict between old and new systems of law and discipline.

Firstly, the play highlights the pivotal role of Athens in the development of modern democracy. The of a trial by jury system in Athens and the establishment of a

court to settle disputes represented a significant milestone in the evolution of justice.

Secondly, *The Eumenides* challenges traditional notions of revenge and blood feuds. Aeschylus emphasizes the importance of law, reason, and the power of the state over personal vendettas. This concept is particularly relevant in a society striving for social order and stability.

Lastly, *The Eumenides* delves into the psychological turmoil of its characters, shedding light on themes of guilt, redemption, and the search for inner peace. It prompts audiences to reflect on the consequences of their actions and the possibility of transformation and forgiveness.

## In Summary

*The Eumenides* by Aeschylus presents a captivating journey into the world of ancient Greek mythology and the Furies—the divine avengers of blood crimes. This tragedy explores themes of justice, revenge, and the conflict between old and new systems of law. The play's significance lies in its portrayal of the Furies' transformation and the establishment of a more civilized and balanced justice system.



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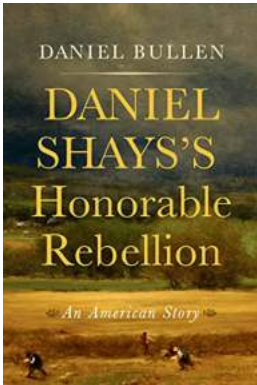


The Eumenides Aeschylus - Orestes, Apollo, and the Erinyes go before Athena and eleven other judges chosen by her from the Athenian citizenry at the Areopagus (Rock of Ares, a flat rocky hill by the Athenian agora where the homicide court of Athens later held its sessions), to decide whether Orestes's killing of his mother, Clytemnestra, makes him guilty of the crime of murder.



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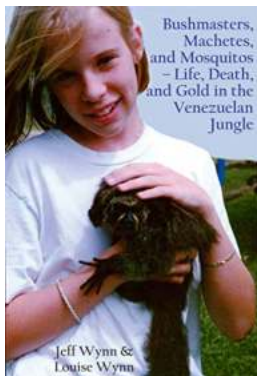
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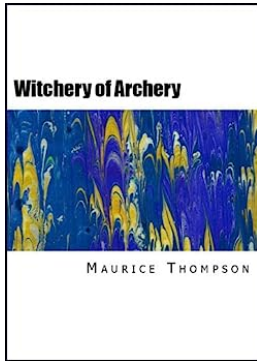
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