

EUMENIDES

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

PRIESTESS: prophetic priestess (the Pythia) of Apollo at Delphi.

APOLLO: divine son of Zeus, god of prophecy.

ORESTES: son of Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra, brother of Electra.

CLYTAEMNESTRA: mother of Orestes, appearing as a ghost after her murder.

CHORUS: Furies, goddesses of blood revenge.

ATHENA: divine daughter of Zeus.

ATHENIAN CITIZENS.

[Scene: The play opens just in front of the temple of Apollo at Delphi. Enter the Pythia, the Priestess of Apollo.]

PRIESTESS

In my prayer, I hold Earth in highest honour,
as the first of prophets among all gods.

Then, after her came Themis. That goddess,
so the legend goes, followed her mother
at this seat of prophecy. Third in line,
another Titan, Phoebe, child of Earth,
was then assigned to occupy this throne.

There was no force—Themis approved the change.

Phoebe then gave it as a birthday gift

to the god who takes his name from her,

10

Phoebus Apollo. He left the island Delos,

moving from his lake and ridge to Pallas,
to those shores where ships sail in to trade.

[10]

Then he came to live on Mount Parnassus.

A reverential escort came with him—

children of the fire god, Hephaestus,
highway builders who tame the wilderness

and civilize the land. As he marched here,
people came out in droves to worship him,
including their king and helmsman, Delphus.

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Then Zeus inspired in him prophetic skills,
and set him on this throne as fourth in line.

Here Apollo speaks for Zeus, his father.

My prayers begin with preludes to these gods.

[20]

My words also give special prominence
to the goddess who stands outside the shrine,
Pallas Athena. I revere those nymphs
inhabiting Corycia's rocky caves,
where flocks of birds delight to congregate,