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Dressing the Part: Robes and Revelations in Aeschylus' The Oresteia

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Dressing the Part:
Robes and Revelations in Aeschylus' *The Oresteia*

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Languages and Literature
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
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This project is dedicated to Mera Flaumenhaft, without whom I would have never discovered Classical myth and literature.

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Introduction

“She’s fainting – lift her,
sweep her robes around her,
but slip this strap in her gentle curving lips...
here, gag her hard, a sound will curse the house’ –
and the bridle chokes her voice... her saffron robes
pouring over the sand...”¹

Iphigenia’s death haunts Aeschylus’ *The Oresteia*. The image of her robes constricting her body, referenced above, as her father sacrifices her, is a recurring image throughout the trilogy. The subsequent and similar deaths of various characters in the tragedy, Agamemnon, Cassandra, Aegisthus, and Clytaemnestra define the narrative. Clothing and cloth play an active role in the text. This project proposes that visual depictions of Aeschylus’ tragedy use drapery and robes almost as characters with roles in the drama. Three chapters explore the references and portrayals of fabrics to gain insight into their precise function in the text, in images, and, by extrapolation, in staged productions.

Throughout the text and its visualizations on both vases and relief sculpture, fabrics further the action of the tragedy. The textiles woven by the women of *The Oresteia* act as accomplices to Aeschylus as he weaves the text. *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and *The Eumenides*, all describe select clothing and fabrics. Aeschylus incorporates rich descriptions of garments into his tragedy with attention to color. Costume defines the identity of characters throughout the narrative, creating an inseparable bond between character and cloth. The two become so interwoven that loss of costume creates a loss of identity in both text and image. Curtains, however, divide scenes and conceal or reveal events.

The surviving vases and sarcophagi depict the mythology surrounding the Aeschylean tragedy incorporating or editing costume and cloth to interpret the story and to contextualize the

¹ Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, tr. Robert Fagles, (New York: Penguin Classics, 1977), l. 233-8.

scenes. Drapery often defines the moments in these visualizations, acting again to identify and animate. Greek vase painters depict the same nine scenes of the tragedy in a variety of interpretations with varying costumes, but a limited color palette of red terracotta and black paint. Later Italic vases incorporate different colors, such as white, into their compositions, bringing them closer to the vibrancy of the Aeschylean text. These vases then set the stage for Roman sarcophagi, illustrating Aeschylus' trilogy as it may have appeared in performance. To explore the use of fabric in the text and in subsequent images, this project divides into three chapters by medium.

Chapter One, "The Text," argues that the use of robes and their colors advances the action of the tragedy and acts to identify characters. The role of material varies in the three plays. In *Agamemnon*, robes identify, protect, and trap characters, propelling the narrative of the play. Then, in *The Libation Bearers*, the destruction of robes and contrasts of color connect characters to each other and to the past while setting the stage for the future. Specifically, textiles, the product of female labor emerge as catalysts for emotion. Chapter One also explores the use of the colors, red, black, and white, throughout the trilogy to define intention. Finally, *The Eumenides* employs the addition of movement in relation to color. Over the course of the plays, fabric evolves with the characters and tone.

Chapter Two, "The Vases," builds on Chapter One's analyses of the text by exploring how drapery and costume in Greek vase paintings of the myth specify a scene, identify a character, and define emotion. The colors named by Aeschylus perfectly fit the palette of Greek paint, both in Attica and Italy. Twenty-nine surviving vases depict aspects of the tragedy, and

this chapter presents a close analysis of nine: three from *Agamemnon*, three from *The Libation Bearers*, and three from *The Eumenides*.²

Four Attic vases depict scenes from *Agamemnon*, and all are roughly contemporary with the tragedy, dating from 500 to 400 B.C.E. and using the red-figure technique. One kylix shows Clytaemnestra entering the palace; a calyx krater illustrates the death of Agamemnon; and a kylix and hydria picture the death of Cassandra. (figs. 1, 2, and 3) The hydria, depicting a woman standing over another woman wrapped in a shroud, has been excluded from my analysis due to its damaged state and imagery not specific to *Agamemnon*. The data for all of the vases is in Appendix I.

Fifteen vases illustrate scenes described in *The Libation Bearers*. Of these fifteen vases, ten are Attic and five are Italic. Two Attic vases use the black-figure painting technique, while the remaining thirteen use red-figure. Two vases, one black-figure and one red-figure, predate Aeschylus' tragedy. Seven vases are roughly contemporary with the tragedy and include the remaining black-figure vase. Another six vases, one Attic and five Italic, come well after the first performance of the tragedy; they date from 400 B.C.E. to 300 B.C.E. and utilize red-figure. These scenes from *The Libation Bearers* appear on one hydria, three pelike, a lekythos, a stamnos, three calyx kraters, a column krater, a skyphos, an oinoche, and three amphoras. Each vase shows one of three types of scenes: Agamemnon's grave, the death of Aegisthus, and the death of Clytaemnestra. As murder was not shown onstage, only the grave scenes were portrayed onstage. A skyphos with a grave scene (fig. 4), a *Mixing bowl (calyx krater) with the killing of Agamemnon (reverse)* (fig. 5), and an oinoche with Orestes and Clytaemnestra flanking Apollo (fig. 6) will be analyzed in Chapter Two as each depicts one of these scenes. None of the black-

² *Beazley Archive* (University of Oxford, 2017), <http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/index.htm>.

figure vases are studied as the technique makes them difficult to read in reproductions. The data for the vases in Chapter Two is provided in Appendix II.

Four Attic and seven Italic vases survive with scenes described from *The Eumenides*. Ten vases use red-figure, excepting one Apulian Gnathian vase.³ Three of the Attic vases are roughly contemporary with the tragedy, two column kraters and a chous, and the remaining eight vases, one Attic pelike and all seven Italian (a calyx krater, a volute krater, and five bell kraters) date later than the text, from 400 B.C.E. to 300 B.C.E. The vases portray three scenes, all acted onstage: Apollo repelling the Furies, the sleeping Furies, and Orestes pursued by the Furies. One example of each scene is analyzed in Chapter Two. The Hoppin Painter's Apulian bell krater (fig. 7), the Judgement Painter's *Mixing bowl (bell-krater) depicting Orestes at the Delphic Omphalos* (fig. 8), and a pelike attributed to an artist named Kerch. (fig. 9) The details about these vases exists in Appendix III.

Chapter Three, "The Orestes Sarcophagi," explores how Roman sarcophagi adapt both the textual and ceramic tradition. It argues that the relief sculpture uses drapery to define the narrative, both as a participant and as a divider. The Arachne database identifies eleven surviving sarcophagi depicting the mythology of Orestes.⁴ All of these sarcophagi fall into two categories, the Lateran or the Cleveland-Vatican type. This third chapter focuses on the two types, referencing both the Cleveland and Vatican examples for the latter category. The sarcophagi, surprisingly, have few references to the vases. Appendix IV lists the data on the surviving sarcophagi.

³ Oliver Taplin, *Pots and Plays: Interactions between Tragedy and Greek Vase-painting of the Fourth Century B.C.* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2007). Gnathian is an Apulian polychrome adaptation of red-figure vase painting.

⁴ *Arachne* (German Archeological Institute, 2017), <http://arachne.uni-koeln.de>. Maybe explain a little more about the database including that it's in German

Taken together, the Greek and Roman artifacts provide many clues about costuming and staging of *The Oresteia* in antiquity. The Conclusion speculates about how the text, the vases, and the reliefs might shed light on ancient theatrical production and the role of costume to communicate. The very end of the conclusion includes my ideas for bringing this evidence from the past into future productions.

The work presented in this project relies on pre-existing scholarship. James Laver, T. B. L. Webster, and J. R. Green contribute to the scholarship on the broader topic touched upon by this project: the role of costume in ancient theater. James Laver's *Costume in the Theater* acts as a foundation for understanding Greek theatrical costume.⁵ Using historical analysis of images and texts, Laver explores the fundamentals of costume in theater from ancient Greece and Rome to the mid-twentieth century. His reading of nudity as a costume in comedy influenced my reading of Orestes' nudity on the vases and sarcophagi. T. B. L. Webster's *Greek Theater Production* presents a more specific analysis. Webster argues that the production of any Greek play shaped the meaning of the play.⁶ Webster studies ancient drama and tragedy, ancient writings on the plays, ancient theaters, and ancient art to support his argument. His ideas are particularly relevant to my analysis of color used in costume. J. R. Green's *Theater in Ancient Greek Society* provides an even greater context for ancient Greek drama.⁷ Through art, archaeology, and text, Green asserts that the theater not only reflected but impacted Greek society socially and politically. Green cites Aeschylus' use of silence as a way to increase the drama of a particular scene. This technique became so well-known by the audience that Aristophanes parodied the technique in *The Frogs*, emphasizing the tragedian's impact on Greek

⁵ James Laver, *Costume in the Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964)

⁶ T. B. L. Webster, *Greek Theater Production* (London: Methuen Publishing, 1970)

⁷ J. R. Green, *Theatre in Ancient Greek Society* (New York: Routledge, 1996)

society. My thoughts on the lasting effect of the tragedy were inspired by Green's extrapolations. While these texts inform the entire project, more specific works inspired the chapters.

The first chapter of this project relies heavily on the work of Lynda McNeil, Robert Goheen, and David Sider. Lynda McNeil's "Bridal Cloths, Cover-ups, and Kharis: The 'Carpet Scene' in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*" argues that Clytaemnestra's tapestry must have been a bridal cloth, as it is the only fabric that would serve as a robe, tapestry, and blanket, causing outrage when walked on.⁸ McNeil refers to ancient literature and modern scholarship to support her thesis. I use her reading to interpret the bond between Iphigenia and Clytaemnestra that sets up the entire trilogy. Robert Goheen's "Aspects of Dramatic Symbolism: Three Studies in the *Oresteia*" presents a more focused look at the trilogy. Goheen suggests that understanding Aeschylus' tragedy requires a knowledge of the symbolism in the text.⁹ I follow Goheen's interpretation of the color red. In his analysis of the red tapestry in *Agamemnon*, he states that the color overtly represents spilled blood, a recurring symbol throughout the text. Finally, David Sider's "Stagecraft in the *Oresteia*" uses the tragedy, ancient visualizations, and modern analysis of the text to explore how the visual elements of the tragedy unify the trilogy.¹⁰ Specifically, Sider equates Cassandra's removal and trampling of her robes to Agamemnon's entrance into the palace on the tapestry. I build on his work in my discussion of Cassandra's and the Furies' costumes.

Chapter Two, "The Vases," uses Oliver Taplin, Thomas Carpenter, and Hetty Goldman as foundations to study Greek vase paintings of dramatic scenes. Oliver Taplin's *Pots and Plays: Interactions between Tragedy and Greek Vase-painting of the Fourth Century B.C.* argues that

⁸ Lynda McNeil, "Bridal Cloths, Cover-ups, and Kharis: The 'Carpet Scene' in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*", *Greece & Rome*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (April 2005): 1-17.

⁹ Robert Goheen, "Aspects of Dramatic Symbolism: Three Studies in the *Oresteia*," *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (1955): 113-37

¹⁰ David Sider, "Stagecraft in the *Oresteia*," *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 99, No. 1 (Spring, 1978): 12-27

the interactions between theater and art, as well as art and life, were the strongest during the fourth century in the Greek west, the source for the Italic vases included in this project.¹¹ Taplin studies Greek funerary vases in the context of tragedies. He discusses few of the vases in this project, but helped shape my approach. As Aeschylus wrote in the Fifth Century, this text, like Taplin, analyzes vases directly influenced by the performance of Aeschylus' tragedy. Thomas Carpenter's *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece* uses art and literature to argue that the changes in visual representation of stories parallels the changing perception of the myths by Greek people.¹² His diachronic approach informs the structure of my chapter. Hetty Goldman's "The Oresteia of Aeschylus as Illustrated by Greek Vase-Painting" explores how vase-painters identify and interpret scene types within the dramatization of popular myths.¹³ Goldman supports her argument through close reading thus providing a methodological model for all of the visual analysis in this project.

All studies of Greek vases stand upon the work of John Beazley. This project uses the online database run by the University of Oxford that continues his categorization. Though Beazley's database does not incorporate all Italic vases, it serves as the starting point for my research on Greek vase painting.

Similar to the Beazley Archive, Arachne, compiled by the University of Cologne and maintained by the German Archaeological Institute does the same for sarcophagi. It provided a convenient source for data collection. For interpreting the sarcophagi, Diana Kleiner and Eve D'Ambra's work on funerary art taught me the proper vocabulary, while Paul Zanker and Jenifer

¹¹ Oliver Taplin, *Pots and Plays: Interactions between Tragedy and Greek Vase-painting of the Fourth Century B.C.* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2007)

¹² Thomas H. Carpenter, *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991)

¹³ Hetty Goldman, "The Oresteia of Aeschylus as Illustrated by Greek Vase-Painting," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 21 (1910): 111-59

Neils laid the foundation for iconographic interpretation in my third chapter.¹⁴ Zanker's *Living with Myths: The Imagery of Roman Sarcophagi* argues that the myths depicted on the sarcophagi comforted the living and provided a framework for grief and remembrance of the deceased, citing images and literature.¹⁵ I build on his argument by disagreeing with his analysis of the Lateran Sarcophagus. Jenifer Neils' "The Orestes Sarcophagus and Other Classical Marbles" uses images to assert that funeral monuments reflect the religious beliefs and personal style of their patrons.¹⁶ Her reading of the Cleveland Sarcophagus influenced my ideas on the cyclical impact of the tragic performance on costume as depicted on the sarcophagi.

In addition to these scholars, this project relied on the support of my family and pets. Thank you Mom and Dad for your life-long support, and thank you Cella for staying my sister even when I yelled at you while frustrated. To my dogs, Chicky and Cilly, thank you for bottomless kisses and love, even when I was writing and not in the mood. Thank you Gus for your silent support; I know you love me because I give you cat treats.

I would also like to thank my wonderful advisor, Professor Diana DePardo-Minsky. Your comments were always appreciated, even when illegible. Thank you for always pushing me to strive for more, even when I was perfectly happy with just skating by. Of course, thank you to the other members of my board, Professors Lauren Curtis and Bill Mullen. Your help and insight was much appreciated along the way. I also owe many thanks to Professor Rob Cioffi who enthusiastically encouraged me to major in Classics, without you this project would have never been.

¹⁴ Diana E. E. Kleiner, *Roman Imperial Funerary Altars with Portraits* (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider Editore, 1987).

Eve D'Ambra, *Private Lives, Imperial Virtues: The Frieze of the Forum Transitorium in Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

¹⁵ Paul Zanker and Bjorn C. Ewald, *Living with Myths: The Imagery of Roman Sarcophagi*, tr. Julia Slater, Tra ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁶ Jenifer Neils, "The Orestes Sarcophagus and Other Classical Marbles," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (April, 1984): 102-13.

Finally, I have to thank my incredibly supportive friends. Madison, thank you for always listening to my complaints and frustrations. Your words of encouragement over endless lunches, dinners, and ice cream runs helped me through even my most stubborn moments. Thank you for your help in deciphering Diana's handwriting, and thank you for teaching me how to get books from the library. Without you, I would have no Bibliography. To Zohra, thank you for putting up with me, even when I was miserable. Your late night support over mozzarella sticks, wine, or tequila always helped cheer me up, even when I wanted to wallow. And, of course, thank you to all of my theater friends, sorry to lump you together, but your neediness for costume help pushed me to find my passion.

Chapter One: The Text

Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, first performed in 458 B.C.E., consists of three tragedies, *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and *The Eumenides*.¹ All three tragedies reference costume, and its raw material, cloth, throughout the narrative. Aeschylus uses clothing as identity and entanglement in *The Oresteia*. Costume, textiles, their colors, and their ornaments further the action of each individual tragedy and the trilogy as a whole. Additionally, costume and cloth act as characters; created by female hands, they often articulate female blood ties, both standing in for the dead and identifying those present. The colors and associations heighten emotions.

Agamemnon, the first tragedy of *The Oresteia*, recounts the titular character's return to his wife, Clytaemnestra, following the Trojan War. Agamemnon arrives to find a trap Clytaemnestra has woven to punish him for their daughter's death. Before the events of the tragedy, Agamemnon had sacrificed Iphigenia in exchange for better sailing conditions to Troy. This earlier death hangs over the play. Clytaemnestra ultimately murders Agamemnon as retribution for the sacrifice of their daughter. Cloth and clothing play critical roles in both of these crimes.

At the beginning of the first tragedy, the chorus recalls Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia as Agamemnon's return is announced. The chorus speculates about what Agamemnon may have said during Iphigenia's sacrifice: "She's fainting – lift her, / sweep her robes around her, / but slip this strap in her gentle curving lips... / here, gag her hard, a sound will curse the house' – / and the bridle chokes her voice... her saffron robes / pouring over the sand."² As thus referenced, Iphigenia's robes cannot protect her from her fate. Instead, their saffron color evokes her sacrifice at the hands of her father. Iphigenia's robes "pouring over the sand" define her as a

¹ Christian Meier, *Athens: A Portrait of the City in its Golden Age* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998), 316.

² Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, tr. Robert Fagles, (New York: Penguin Classics, 1977), l. 233-8.

sacrifice, setting the stage for her bloodletting. The saffron-colored fabric enshrouds her body as her father and his comrades prepare her for sacrifice. Iphigenia's robes should keep her safe, as their function dictates. But even as her robe surrounds her, the costume's protective properties cannot offset her father's blood lust. As Iphigenia's robes swaddle her, she becomes caught in their fabric, foreshadowing her father's fate when his own robe ensnares him later in the tragedy. While the sacrifice of Iphigenia does not occur on stage, Aeschylus' imagery of the flowing fabric dramatizes the transgression that Agamemnon will later commit. The audience hears and envisions that, in the moment of sacrifice, warm blood joins and saturates the robes flowing onto the sand. Although the saffron of Iphigenia's costume does not precisely match her blood in color, the warmth and fluid movement of the described fabric suggests Iphigenia's blood pouring onto the sand. Aeschylus sets the stage for a reading in which cloth has a protector and betrayer while also creating temptation and tragedy.

Concerned with Iphigenia's potential screams, Agamemnon states, , "here, gag her hard, a sound will curse the house." Here, he ignores the potency of the silent curse that will continue with her death. Although his men gag her, presumably with cloth, the spilled familial blood prompts his wife's persecution of him. Silencing Iphigenia's screams cannot prevent a curse but can prevent them from reminding her father of her innocence, thus stopping the sacrifice.³ The curse on the House of Atreus did not begin or end with Iphigenia's sacrifice, and the mother and daughter's attempts to stop the violence would have been in vain. Iphigenia's gagged silence evokes the sound absorbing qualities of fabric as the robe represents her absence after her death. Agamemnon must then face the consequences of his actions when he returns from the war and

³ Gloria Ferrari, "Figures in the Text: Metaphors and Riddles in the Agamemnon," *Classical Philology*, Vol. 92, No. 1 (1997): 1-45. 6-10. Ferrari emphasizes the innocence of Iphigenia: her gaze pierces her father's accomplices in an attempt to stop them. Ferrari states that without the narration, the scene would be completely silent with no indication of struggle by Iphigenia. Ferrari also argues that the theme of entanglement in robes continues throughout the trilogy.

reunites with his wife, Clytaemnestra, igniting another curse. The fabric referenced in the death of Iphigenia would have been, as with all textiles, a product of female production.

For Clytaemnestra, another textile, the red tapestry she makes for Agamemnon, also evokes and thus represents the blood of her lost daughter.⁴ Upon Agamemnon's return from the Trojan War, Clytaemnestra entraps her husband with a tapestry that she has woven while he was away. She orders her servants to spread the material in Agamemnon's path to the palace:

"Quickly. / Let the red stream flow and bear him home/ to the home he never hoped to see – Justice, / lead him in!"⁵ Clytaemnestra rushes her servants to place the tapestry at Agamemnon's feet before he can step off his chariot. Aeschylus' word choice is precise and his meaning is clear: she wants the tapestry to "flow" like a "stream" of "red" blood under his feet into their home.⁶ Clytaemnestra assumes that Agamemnon never intended to return home by referencing "the home he never hoped to see."⁷ She now, upon his appearance, believes that Justice will punish Agamemnon for the sacrifice of Iphigenia if he treads on the blood-like tapestry: as the Chorus states, Justice "turns to find her eyes to find the pure in spirit - / spurning the wealth stamped counterfeit with praise, / she steers all things towards their destined end."⁸ Aeschylus here suggests that Justice, a female goddess, damns those who value wealth and praise.

Clytaemnestra, aware of this weakness in Agamemnon, knows that her highly decorous tapestry will seduce him. Clytaemnestra displays her anguish at her daughter's death through the

⁴ Robert Goheen, "Aspects of Dramatic Symbolism: Three Studies in the Oresteia," *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (1955): 113-37. Goheen interprets the color of the tapestry as red, as opposed to purple. I follow his reading in my argument.

⁵ *Agamemnon*, l. 902-4.

⁶ Melissa Mueller, "Tragic Textiles and the House of Atreus," in *Objects as Actors: Props and the Poetics of Performance in Greek Tragedy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 49-56. Mueller, unlike Goheen and myself, reads the color of the tapestry as purple, citing its dying process.

⁷ *Agamemnon*, l. 904.

⁸ *Agamemnon*, l. 764-6.

tapestry.⁹ While Agamemnon pursued glory and wealth through more bloodshed in war, she remained bereaved and betrayed in the female domestic realm, weaving her sorrow into a physical object of high value and significance. The tapestry becomes her product, her daughter, and the bridal cloth that Iphigenia never wore.¹⁰ If Agamemnon dares to walk across it, Justice will act through Clytaemnestra to rectify Iphigenia's murder.

To Agamemnon, however, the red tapestry at first signifies an indulgence suitable only for the gods. Agamemnon hesitates to walk on Clytaemnestra's tapestry: "Never cross my path with robes and draw the lightning. / Never – only the gods deserve pomps of honor / and the stiff brocades of fame. To walk on them... / I am human, and it makes my pulses stir / with dread."¹¹ Agamemnon fears that by treading on the tapestry, he will commit an act of hubris. He believes Zeus will strike him down, with "lightning," for his indulgence in walking on a richly decorated tapestry suitable for a god. He fears Zeus' wrath so intensely that he does not want Clytaemnestra to approach him with the red tapestry. Agamemnon interprets his highly celebrated entrance, accompanied by the exquisite tapestry, as tempting the gods, and he fears their wrath, as he is only human and should not tread on such a carpet. To Agamemnon, walking on the tapestry indicates that he thinks of himself as better than the tapestry's luxury and, therefore, equal to the gods. A man of war, Agamemnon never contemplates a female context or connotation for the cloth. Iphigenia and her contribution to his success are forgotten to him but

⁹ Lynda McNeil, "Bridal Cloths, Cover-ups, and Kharis: The 'Carpet Scene' in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*", *Greece & Rome*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (April 2005): 5-6. McNeil states that such a decorous tapestry would be "woven by the queen herself," while slaves would weave simpler household textiles. Although the text never explicitly states that Clytaemnestra weaves the tapestry herself, I argue that she weaves the tapestry while Agamemnon fights in Troy. In the Homeric tradition, women, such as Penelope and Helen, weave their tapestries to show their devotion to their husbands away at war. Unlike these women, however, Clytaemnestra does not weave to show her loyalty to her husband, as she begins an affair with Aegisthus, Agamemnon's cousin.

¹⁰ McNeil 2005, 1-17. McNeil reads the tapestry presented to Agamemnon as a bridal cloth that could be worn as a robe. This reading leads me to recall Iphigenia's sacrifice. Agamemnon tricked Clytaemnestra and Iphigenia into believing Iphigenia would marry Achilles upon reaching Aulis; however, she was sacrificed in exchange for better sailing weather. If the tapestry was, in fact, a bridal cloth, it could have been the bridal cloth intended for Iphigenia completed by Clytaemnestra after her sacrifice.

¹¹ *Agamemnon*, l. 914-8.

not to Clytaemnestra. Aeschylus uses their diverging interpretation of the fabric to suggest their mindsets.

The red tapestry embodies Clytaemnestra's anger, Agamemnon's hubris, and, of course, Iphigenia's death or absence. Agamemnon remains reluctant to step on the red fabric, but, eventually, Clytaemnestra persuades him to walk on it. Agamemnon crosses quickly while he says, "Hurry, / and while I tread his splendours dyed red in the sea, / may no god watch and strike me down with envy / from on high. I feel such shame – / to tread on the life of the house, a kingdom's worth / of silver in the weaving."¹² Even though he freely walks on the lavish material, Agamemnon still believes it an act of hubris. Clytaemnestra elaborately embellished the red cloth with silver thread, and, to Agamemnon, it holds the "life of the house," an unintentional reference by Agamemnon, but not Aeschylus, to the life extinguished in their house. Yet, after Clytaemnestra convinces Agamemnon that Priam would also walk upon the tapestry, he has almost no hesitation. His fear of hubris is circumstantial: Agamemnon fears the wrath of the gods but values his image as a hero over the threat of divine punishment and in absolute oblivion to female loss. Ultimately, Agamemnon commits hubris in his belief of superiority over his rivals from the war. However, his belief in his superiority over Priam is not his only act of hubris; his second act of hubris is his assertion that the red and silver tapestry evokes envy from the gods. Agamemnon appears to believe that this tapestry is better than what the gods possess. In his third act of hubris, Agamemnon offers no appreciation for the sacrifice of his wife and daughter. His hubris seals his fate. By walking on the "life of the house," Agamemnon once more treads on his daughter's life and his wife's loyalty, as he has already done by sacrificing Iphigenia to the gods.

Clytaemnestra's description of the tapestry enforces the idea that Agamemnon must be killed as compensation for Iphigenia's sacrifice. Clytaemnestra encourages Agamemnon to enter

¹² *Agamemnon*, l. 942-7.

the palace on the tapestry, saying “tides on tides of crimson dye our robes blood-red. / Our lives are based on wealth, my king, / the gods have seen to that. / Destitution, our house has never heard the word. / *I* would have sworn to tread on legacies of robes, / at one command from an oracle, deplete the house – / suffer the worst to ring that dear life back!”¹³ The phrase “tides of crimson dye” projects an image of the sea turning red with Iphigenia’s blood after her murder. As Iphigenia was sacrificed, Clytaemnestra’s home and family have lost their value due to Agamemnon’s selfish actions. Their monetary wealth, however, remains never ending, giving Agamemnon reason to walk across the tapestry.¹⁴ Clytaemnestra claims she would walk on the tapestry herself, “*I* would have sworn to tread on legacies of robes,” but her words become ominous as they imply Agamemnon will yet pay for the sacrifice of Iphigenia, one of the “legacies of robes.” The red of the tapestry acts as an omen predicting the amount of blood that must be spilled to equal Iphigenia’s sacrifice. Given Clytaemnestra’s desire for vengeance, her encouragement becomes foreboding as the tapestry flows like blood across the ground, and Agamemnon follows it into the palace. Clytaemnestra’s words elucidate the significance of Agamemnon’s actions and evoke Iphigenia’s murder while describing the wealth and beauty of her work, a work that will ensure his death.

Another woman witnesses the scene. Cassandra, now Agamemnon’s concubine, has accompanied him back to Argos and to his home where Clytaemnestra waits, unfaithfully, for her husband’s return. Cassandra, known as Priam’s most beautiful daughter throughout Greece, recalls Helen and Iphigenia. Like Helen, Clytaemnestra’s twin and the cause of the Trojan War, she is an abducted beauty used unfairly by the gods. Apollo granted Cassandra the power of

¹³ *Agamemnon*, l. 960-6.

¹⁴ Mueller 2016, 53. Mueller argues that the dye represents the family’s monetary wealth, as bottomless as the sea. Also, the snails used in the dying process come from the sea, again associating the fabric with undulating waves.

prophecy in an attempt to win her affection, but her rejection of him turned her gift into a curse.¹⁵

¹⁶ Like Iphigenia and Clytaemnestra, she is another female suffering at the hands of Agamemnon.

After Agamemnon enters the palace, Cassandra's visions begin. His robe works against him in Cassandra's vision of his death, which she narrates to the chorus: "a thrash of robes, she traps him – / writhing – / black horn glints, twists – / *she gores him through!* / And now he buckles, look, the bath swirls red."¹⁷ Cassandra's vision likens Agamemnon's murder to a bull gored by his mate, entangled in his own robes. Without the "thrash of robes," Clytaemnestra could not trap her husband in the bath. The bath turns red after Agamemnon's murder like a dye vat used to color fabrics such as the tapestry or Iphigenia's clothing.¹⁸ The physical presence on stage of Clytaemnestra's tapestry and Agamemnon's robes act as evidence substantiating Cassandra's vision. Dyed fabrics, already seen, will surround Agamemnon and ensnare him, allowing his wife to brutally murder him as he had killed their daughter. In his death, Agamemnon's robe encircles him in the same way that Iphigenia's robe cocooned her. In this way, fabric intended to protect ultimately results in gruesome deaths.

Different fabrics also help identify different functions. While onstage, Cassandra wears a distinct costume to characterize her as an oracle of Apollo, which probably includes a veil over

¹⁵ Herbert Jennings Rose and Jennifer R. March, "Cassandra," *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) accessed online.

¹⁶ Sue-Ellen Case, "Classic Drag: The Greek Creation of Female Parts," *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 37, No.3 (Oct., 1985): 323. Case argues that Cassandra's rejection of Apollo and his retaliation renders her "mute" and "and expelled from effective dialogue." Cassandra remains unheard even though she prophesies Agamemnon's and her death correctly. Case also argues that Cassandra is not only unheard by the men present but also the women, most notably Clytaemnestra.

¹⁷ *Agamemnon*, l. 1128-30.

¹⁸ Richard Seaford, "The Last Bath of Agamemnon," *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (1984): 251. Seaford argues that Aeschylus uses intentionally vague language to create parallels between Agamemnon's death and marriage. I argue that Iphigenia's sacrifice disguised as a marriage becomes equivalent to Clytaemnestra's murder of Agamemnon in his bath.

her cloak.¹⁹ Aeschylus' use of specific costume pieces would help clarify identity for his audience. Cassandra's veiled robes would define her as a seer, while soon the Furies' choral costumes label them as a unified force. Through color and uniformity of dress, the Furies appear as a single mass rather than as individuals, whereas Cassandra's distinct garments separate her. Cassandra relies on her costume to protect and distinguish her from others while asserting her status as not only a princess but also a seer who accurately predicts the future.

In Cassandra's utterances, she defines her own robes as indicating her status as a seer, thus introducing the idea of costume as a marker of identity. In the midst of her vision, she exclaims: "See, / Apollo himself, his fiery hands – I feel him again, / he's stripping off my robes, the Seer's robes!"²⁰ Cassandra here indicates that her clothing identifies her as a prophetess regardless of whether others believe her prophecies. Yet she feels that Apollo ripping off her robes, a reference to the metaphorical stripping of her power when the god cursed her prophecies to never be believed.²¹ Her visions have induced a state of insanity in which she might literally strip off her robes and, thus, her identity as seer.²²

Other female players in *Agamemnon* also wear clothing that defines their roles. After the deaths of Agamemnon and Cassandra, the Furies appear, and their robes, like Cassandra's, serve a purpose. Their costumes, described by Aeschylus in *The Libation Bearers* as "shrouded in black," label these women and aid them. When Aegisthus, Clytaemnestra's lover and

¹⁹ David Sider, "Stagecraft in the Oresteia," *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 99, No. 1 (Spring 1978): 15-18.

²⁰ *Agamemnon*, l. 1285-7.

²¹ Without original stage directions, Cassandra's exclamation makes it difficult to determine whether or not she disrobes on stage. However, as all actors of the time were male, any form of Cassandra's nudity would be a costume itself.

²² Sider 1978, 15-18. Sider argues that Cassandra physically removes her costume onstage and then walks over it as a way to recall Agamemnon's trampling of the tapestry. This action "signals her divorce from Apollo" both metaphorically and in action. Sider also asserts that the garment Cassandra removes is a net-like garment worn over her dress. By removing her costume and stepping on it, Sider argues, Cassandra symbolically differentiates her death from Agamemnon's. I believe this action could also emphasize the difference in her and Iphigenia's deaths where Iphigenia's robes restrained her for sacrifice. Additionally, the metaphorical or physical removal of her prophetic identity would separate her from Apollo, and, thus, her gift would turn into a curse.

Agamemnon's cousin, celebrates Agamemnon's death, he references these very clothes: "Now at last I see this man brought down / in the Furies' tangling robes."²³ These robes thus join Agamemnon's own to kill the father who killed his daughter while she was ensnared in her dress. Aegisthus equates the Furies' swirling robes with the tapestry used by Clytaemnestra to entrap her husband. Both the Furies' and Agamemnon's robes surround them in a menacing fashion. However, the Furies' robes serve them, whereas Agamemnon's undermined him. Aegisthus suggests that the Furies' costumes aided Clytaemnestra, yet the Furies' robes tangled Agamemnon in his fate the moment he sacrificed his daughter. They precede, yet coincide with, his own robes in the moments before his death. Agamemnon's robes betray their owner, but the Furies' swirling robes serve their purpose. Aeschylus closes his first tragedy with the chorus mourning Agamemnon's death, which angers Aegisthus. Aegisthus then incites an argument with the Chorus leader who threatens to kill Aegisthus for his transgressions. Clytaemnestra steps in to stop the argument and calm down Aegisthus by reminding him of their new power as king and queen.

The second tragedy in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, *The Libation Bearers*, opens with Orestes' visit to the grave of his father, Agamemnon. Orestes was in Phocis at the time of his father's death and has returned to Argos to visit his father's grave eight years after his death.²⁴ Here, at the tomb, he reunites with his sister, Electra. The two siblings (with their sister Iphigenia apparently now forgotten) will go on to return to the palace so that Orestes may avenge his father's assassination. His actions, however, will have consequences, and the Furies will begin to pursue him. Aeschylus' use of costume in *The Libation Bearers* advances his narrative while identifying his characters: black identifies mourners; Orestes reveals himself to his sister,

²³ *Agamemnon*, l. 1609-10.

²⁴ Herbert Jennings Rose and Jennifer R. March, "Orestes," *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) accessed online.

Electra, through costume; Orestes sees Agamemnon's robe then proceeds to kill his mother and her lover; and, finally, Orestes recognizes the Furies only by their costume.

At the opening of *The Libation Bearers*, at Agamemnon's grave, Orestes encounters a group of mourning women. Orestes hides but observes the group. The black of the mourners' robes indicates their anguish and function. This distressed chorus describe themselves with "cheeks glistening, / flushed where the nails have raked new furrows running blood; / and life beats on, and / we nurse our lives with tears, / to the sound of ripping linen beat our robes in sorrow, / close to the breast the heart beats throb."²⁵ The women thus appear overcome by their suffering as indicated by Aeschylus' description of the red of the blood from their cheeks and chests mixing with the black of their robes.²⁶ The red runs down their faces in small rivulets, mixing with their tears, emphasizing their pain in life now that Agamemnon has died. They tear their linen robes, exposing their chests that throb with their agonizing heartbeats. The mourners act as the manifestation of Orestes' internal anguish. They express what he cannot, as his banishment forces him to remain hidden, until he has completed the task set out for him by Apollo: Orestes must kill Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus. The mourners' dark, tattered robes foreshadow the state of Orestes' mind after he commits matricide.

The mourners' emotion damages their robes, which, nevertheless, continue to identify and protect them. Anguish defines their costume, actions, and emotions. The costume consists of black linen and veils, which simultaneously conceal the emotion that they evoke. The emotion of the mourners also leads to the physical destruction of their robes: "And we beat the tearing

²⁵ Aeschylus, *The Libation Bearers*, l. 29-34.

²⁶ Sider 1978, 18-21. Sider argues that the mourners' costumes reflect their role as agents of the Furies in *The Libation Bearers*. He also asserts that the women not only mourn Agamemnon's death, but also the absence of Orestes and the state of Argos under Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra's rule. Aeschylus' language leaves room for interpretation as to whether or not the chorus persuades Orestes to fulfill his duties to kill his mother or if he had firmly decided to fulfill his task before encountering the women. Sider argues that the costumes of the mourners so equate them with the Furies that it is the Furies, not the mourners, who encourage Orestes and Electra to seek revenge for their father's death.

hatred down, / behind our veils we weep for her, / her senseless fate.”²⁷ The mourners words reveal that they weep for Electra’s fate behind the protection of their costume.²⁸ They address Electra and “her senseless fate,” but her sister, Iphigenia, no longer referenced, also faced a “senseless fate.” Electra all but disappears from the tragedy upon returning to the palace, thus acting as a physical representation of the passivity of young women in *The Oresteia*.²⁹ Only adult women appear to have any control over their fates in the tragedy, and the mourners’ actions express the injustice faced by their younger counterparts. Their agony and “tearing hatred” manifest in the “ripping linen” of their black costume. Although the passion of the mourners destroys their robes, the costumes serve their intended functions by defining a group but shielding the specific identities of its members, thus protecting them from the harm of others.

Just as the attire of the Furies lets the audience recognize their role, so too Orestes’ costume acts to identify. Since the murder of their father, Orestes and Electra have been kept apart by Clytaemnestra and Agamemnon who sent Orestes to be raised by the king of Phocis.³⁰ Orestes now reveals himself to his sister at their father’s grave by his clothing. Electra had been falsely informed that Orestes had died but, nevertheless, believes that her brother may also be at their father’s grave. However, she cannot fully admit this idea to herself until Orestes addresses her and draws attention to his attire: “Work of your own hand, you tamped the loom, / look, there are wild creatures in the weaving.”³¹ Orestes’ speech shows that he believes that his sister will

²⁷ *The Libation Bearers*, l. 79-81.

²⁸ Herbert Jennings Rose and Jennifer R. March, “Electra,” *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) accessed online. In Aeschylean, Sophoclean, and Euripidean tragedy, Electra primarily mourns for her lost brother and father. It is only after reuniting with her brother in all three tragedies that she is driven to seek vengeance for her father’s murder. Electra’s fate is her perpetual sorrow and loss of first Orestes, then Iphigenia, then Agamemnon, and finally, Clytaemnestra.

²⁹ Froma I. Zeitlin, “Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama,” *Representations*, No. 11 (Summer, 1985): 63-94. Here, I disagree with Zeitlin’s assertion that Orestes only succeeds in killing his mother because of his sister’s help.

³⁰ Rose, “Orestes.”

³¹ *The Libation Bearers*, l. 233-4.

recognize her own embroidery of his costume. If Electra had woven the decoration on Orestes' robe, he believes that she should recognize the garment and, therefore, her brother. Orestes' display of the distinct work assures Electra that her brother is real and not an impostor intent on trapping her. Weaving is women's work, and the weaving here defines her brother's identity, as one woven from the same cloth, so to speak. The costume serves to distinguish its wearer through ornamentation, to identify this male to this female as an ally. Unlike her mother, Electra weaves for good, and Orestes' costume fulfills its role without betraying its wearer or weaver.

After leaving Agamemnon's grave, the mourning women, Electra, and Orestes reach the palace. Electra and Orestes enter to fulfill their duty to Apollo by murdering their mother and Aegisthus. After their deaths, Orestes displays Agamemnon's robe to the same chorus of women. Orestes reveals how the costume serves as a reminder its own destruction as well as the destruction it caused: "Look once more on this, / you who gather here to attend our crimes – / the master-plot that bound my wretched father, / shackled his ankles, manacled his hands. / Spread it out!"³² Orestes reveals the robe, dyed completely with Agamemnon's blood, to the chorus as his father's murder weapon.³³ By addressing the chorus directly, he implicates them as witnesses who observed the tragedies plaguing his family. Their spectatorship of his mother's crime makes them understand the robe's role in binding Agamemnon while Clytaemnestra killed him. The robe itself is damaged by Clytaemnestra's action. The stains now define the costume itself, preventing the robe from being perceived as anything other than evil. The spirit of Clytaemnestra's actions stain the robe both literally and figuratively, driving Orestes to take action against her in revenge for his father's fate.

³² *The Libation Bearers*, l. 970-4.

³³ *Agamemnon*, l. 1411-2. In *Agamemnon*, Clytaemnestra reveals Agamemnon's robe after she murders him and Cassandra. Clytaemnestra describes his death with "great sprays of blood, and the murderous shower dyes me black."

The blood on Agamemnon's robe documents Clytaemnestra's deed and Orestes' actions. After he murders his mother, Orestes reveals the robe his father wore when murdered: "This shroud's my witness, dyed with Aegisthus' blade – / Look, the blood ran here, conspired with time to blot / the swirling dyes, the handsome old brocade."³⁴ Iphigenia, Agamemnon, and Clytaemnestra are dead but their robes remain, all tainted with blood. The robe Orestes possesses is a witness to Agamemnon's death, and the blood has become a permanent fixture of its design after drying over the course of several years. Designs woven into the fabric define brocades, but blood has mixed with the existing decoration creating a new pattern. The blood is no longer characterized by its red color but is now identified by its swirling pattern permanently absorbed by the robe. Similarly, the murders of Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra have permanently tainted Orestes so that their deaths are a part of him.

The contaminated robe remains to remind Orestes of his parents. Orestes continues to lament his father's death at the hand of his mother: "You were my father's death, great robe, I hail you! / Even if I must suffer the work and the agony / and all the race of man – / I embrace you... you, / my victory, are my guilt, my curse, and still –"³⁵ As Clytaemnestra entrapped Agamemnon in the robe to kill him, Orestes considers the robe the murder weapon just as much as the blade. However, the robe is also the last physical object he has to connect him to his now dead parents, so he grants it a certain degree of veneration. Orestes embraces the robe as a representation of his fate as well as the final embodiment of his deceased parents. He is unable to move past the blood-dyed robe, which holds the blood that once gave his parents, and thus himself, life. The robe acts as the final manifestation of Orestes' family, and he is unable to

³⁴ *The Libation Bearers*, l. 1006-8.

³⁵ *The Libation Bearers*, l. 1010-3.

relinquish it, though it is the source of his anguish. This anguish is soon embodied in the reappearance of the Furies.

After Aegisthus' and Clytemnestra's murders, the Furies, who entangled Agamemnon, now engage Orestes, who shouts: "No, no! Women – look – like Gorgons, / shrouded in black, their heads wreathed, / swarming serpents!"³⁶ Orestes panics at the appearance of the Furies, likening them to Gorgons. Once more, the Furies' costume signifies their collective identity. The women "shrouded in black" evoke corpses prepared for burial. The wreaths around the Furies' heads emphasize their divine status, but the "swarming serpents" reveal the sinister nature of these beings. The costume of the Furies defines them as much as their snake-like movement. This brief, general description of the Furies also emphasizes that their identity is as a group, not as individuals. They now take central stage.

The third and final tragedy of *The Oresteia*, *The Eumenides*, details Orestes' suffering as the Furies pursue him after his mother's murder. He then rushes to Delphi in search of purification to escape the Furies. Apollo then sends Orestes to Athens for Athena's guidance. With the help of Athena, he goes on trial and is acquitted. The Furies now cease to pursue Orestes, and under the wisdom of Athena's rule, they become benevolent goddesses, or the Eumenides.

After the arrival of the Furies, at the end of *The Libation Bearers*, Orestes flees to Delphi to seek the help of the Pythia, a priestess of Apollo. Orestes appears in Delphi dressed as Apollo, a costume granted to him moments before the appearance of the Furies. His attire signals Apollo, but he is covered in blood and still holding his sword. This disheveled costume mirrors the state of Orestes' mind as he attempts to flee the Furies: the pious implications of the costume and his acts go hand in hand with his impious acts. He had, after all, acted in the name of Apollo. When

³⁶ *The Libation Bearers*, l. 1048-50.

the Pythia sees Orestes, his appearance frightens the Pythia: “I see a man – an abomination to god – / he holds the seat where suppliants sit for purging; / his hands dripping blood, and his sword just drawn, / and he holds a branch (it must have topped an olive) / wreathed with a fine tuft of wool, all piety, / fleece gleaming white.”³⁷ The Pythia first refers to Orestes as “an abomination to god” before describing his appearance. It is unclear whether the oracle alludes to Orestes’ garments or his violent attributes (blood and the bloody sword) as the abomination. Orestes’ costume, the branch and wreath of Apollo, misleads the oracle at first, but his blood covered hands and sword reveal his true identity. The only color here identified is the white of the wool on Apollo’s wreath. In *The Oresteia*, white defines the Olympic gods, such as Apollo and Athena, while Aeschylus uses black to identify the older, chthonic gods, like the Furies. Blood red, meanwhile, marks humans in the tragedy. As he arrives at Delphi, Orestes has the white fleece, the black robes of the Furies surround him, and the red blood on his hands. Aeschylus thus visualizes Orestes’ confusion.

The Pythia next describes the Furies sleeping around Orestes: “*These* have no wings, / I looked. But black they are, and so repulsive. / Their heavy, rasping breathing makes me cringe. / And their eyes ooze a discharge, sickening, / and what they wear – to flaunt that at the gods, / the idols, sacrilege!”³⁸ The oracle first takes note of the Furies’ lack of wings, which are often an identifying feature of Furies in visual depictions. In spite of their absence, she easily recognizes their robes and “repulsive” nature. The black of the Furies’ costumes also describes their essence as fearsome and disgusting with their “rasping” breaths and mucus-filled eyes.³⁹ The Pythia even finds the unsightliness of the Furies’ costume offensive to Apollo and Athena. The black robes

³⁷ Aeschylus, *The Eumenides*, l. 42-7.

³⁸ *The Eumenides*, l. 54-9.

³⁹ Sider, 1978, 22. Sider argues that the Furies intentionally appear as similar to the mourners of *The Libation Bearers* with faces “caked in blood.” This fearsome appearance could be read as oozing with more than tears.

display the darkness of these beings, defining their nature through costume and color. The interior evil of the Furies manifests in the black of their exterior appearance. Even in sleep, the Furies cannot overcome their black spirit as they surround Orestes.

The color of the Furies' robes casts them as outsiders to the other gods of light and white. During Orestes' trial, the Furies criticize the newer gods: "We want no part of their pious white robes – / the Fates who gave us power made us free."⁴⁰ The Furies here equate white with piety, which then further emphasizes the impious nature of their black costume and essence. Nevertheless, they believe that their status as outsiders to the younger gods gives them freedom that the other gods do not possess, and their freedom lies in their pursuit of justice for familial bloodshed. The newer gods' rejection of the Furies further establishes the wicked spirit of the Furies. Although the black costume of the Furies excludes them from the Olympians, it emphasizes the unified force of the Furies in their pursuit of retribution.

The Furies' black robes mirror the anguish encoded in the mourners' robes. The fates taunt Orestes with a description of their effect on their victims: "And all men's dreams of grandeur / tempting the heavens, / all melt down, under earth their pride goes down – / lost in our onslaught, black robes swarming, / Furies throbbing, dancing out our rage."⁴¹ Orestes' hope will cease to exist if the Furies continue to pursue him, and he will be lost in the darkness. The Furies' robes will entangle Orestes' spirit the same way Iphigenia's and Agamemnon's robes entrapped them. Additionally, the hopelessness encoded in the black of the Furies echoes the robes worn by the mourners at Agamemnon's grave. Orestes' previously internal anguish is brought to the surface with the swirling of the Furies' finery.

⁴⁰ *The Eumenides*, l. 351-2.

⁴¹ *The Eumenides*, l. 370-4.

Following Orestes trial, Athena becomes the Furies' leader, turning them into the protectors of Athens, known as the Eumenides. After Athena delivers her verdict, she leads the Furies on a procession through Athens. But before this, they are first granted red robes to accompany their new kindly state: "Girls and mothers, / trains of aged women grave in movement, / dress our Furies now in blood-red robes. / Praise them – let the torch move on! / So the love this family bears towards our land / will bloom in human strength from age to age."⁴² The Athenian women present new robes to the Furies as an act of honor for their new role in Athenian society. The Furies will no longer torment those who have committed familial murder, but they will instead protect Athens.⁴³ Their new role will allow Athens and Orestes to thrive without any torment. The red of the Eumenides' robes signifies their rebirth as benevolent goddesses as well as serving as a reminder of their old purpose (punishing spillers of familial blood).⁴⁴ The blood red of the robes also recalls Clytaemnestra's tapestry, which represented familial bloodshed.⁴⁵ With their new robes and rebirth, the Furies old role is not forgotten. Red drapery frames the opening and closing of *The Oresteia*.

Therefore, saffron or red robes open and close *The Oresteia*, just as curtains might begin and end the tragedy. The color of death has become the color of life as the cycle of tragedy ends. Drapery, with its ability to hide and trap or to cling and reveal, plays multiple roles in Aeschylus' trilogy. Over the course of the play, it has defined moments, characters, and emotions through its

⁴² *The Eumenides*, l. 1036-41.

⁴³ Case, 1985, 324. Case argues that Orestes' acquittal relies on paternity as defining parenting. She then argues that this misogynist decision comes from Athena's male characteristics and paternal birth. The Furies' role change into the Eumenides removes their womanly power in pursuing justice for matricide and replaces it with authority over marriage. I argue that the Furies power comes from male fear of their femininity, as shown in Greek vase painting. However, the Furies' transformation into the Eumenides makes them more palatable to the male viewer.

⁴⁴ Sider 1978, 24. Sider likens the red robes of the Eumenides to those of the metics, or resident aliens of Athens.

⁴⁵ Goheen 1955, 125. Goheen argues that the color of the Eumenides robes intentionally reflects the tapestry, converting the malicious carpet into a symbol of blessing.

provenance, color, or pattern. It takes on an equally large part in painted and sculptural representations of the text.

Chapter Two: The Vases

Given the rich descriptions and critical role of cloth in *The Oresteia*, it comes as no surprise that this imagery occurs in visual representations of the narrative. Vases dating from the sixth through fourth centuries B.C.E. show the communicative value of costumes as painters translate the verbal story into a visual narrative. Once more, flowing fabric defines identity, adds emotion, and participates in the plot, but, on the vases, drapery is usually restricted to costume; no tapestries are depicted. Red, saffron, or black, the colors most frequently named in *The Oresteia*, perfectly suit the restricted palette of Attic vases, while white, an important reference in *The Eumenides*, occurs frequently in Italic vases, the second category of surviving ceramics. However, analysis reveals that color plays a limited role in these paintings except on the Italian examples where it does seem to contribute to visual meaning. The portrayal of chlamyses, peploi, chitons, and himatia on these vases suggest the possible appearance of ancient theatrical productions. As in Chapter One, the structure of this chapter follows the trajectory of the tragedy. Three exemplary images are studied for each play.¹ Each of these paintings either depicts the mythic tradition of the tragedy, the Aeschylean narrative, or an interpretation of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. These vases are all in good condition and the artist paid attention to costume, fabric, and drapery.

Of the three scenes from *Agamemnon* depicted on vases, (Clytaemnestra entering the palace, the death of Agamemnon, and the death of Cassandra) only the moment of Clytaemnestra's entrance to the palace, shown on a kylix by the Brygos Painter, was performed onstage. (fig. 1) The other two scenes seen on pottery, the murders of Agamemnon and Cassandra, occurred offstage in Aeschylus' text. All of these paintings, nevertheless, illustrate

¹ As mentioned in the Introduction, Appendices I, II, and III provide the data and sources for the twenty-nine surviving vases. The introduction explains rationale for choosing these nine vases.

how costume and fabric functioned to visualize narrative and thus remain relevant to this project. The three vases analyzed here (the Brygos Painter's Kylix with Clytaemnestra, the Dokimasia Painter's calyx krater with the killing of Agamemnon on its obverse, and the Marlay Painter's kylix of Clytaemnestra killing Cassandra) demonstrate the vital role of textiles, especially for costumes, in Greek drama. (figs. 1, 2, and 3) They are addressed according to their order in the narrative.

The Brygos Painter's red-figure kylix, dating from 500 to 450 B.C.E., shows a woman running from the left to the right inside a circle ornamented with a meander pattern.² (fig. 1) To the left, the woman's outstretched right arm and hand holds an upside down double-sided axe, identifying her as Clytaemnestra. Clytaemnestra's left arm reaches toward the palace door and her hand points down; her head, in profile, like her arms and legs, faces the door on the right. Clytaemnestra's torso, however, turns to the viewer. Her bent legs, seen through the fabric of her dress, suggest running towards the door. Her left leg precedes her right. Her feet conform to the curve of the vase, defining the ground line and heightening the impression of running. The artist uses the red terracotta of the vase for Clytaemnestra's skin and her heavy, pleated costume. The folds of Clytaemnestra's robe mask much of her torso, but reveal her breasts. The faint but defining outline of her legs and breasts contrast with the vertical lines defining the texture of the fabric. In spite of these anatomic details, the gravitational pull of the cloth emphasizes its weight. The undulating thick material reaches her ankles, drawing attention to her bare feet and quick pace. Her dress, a peplos, divides into three sections with the top overhang, fastened at her shoulders, hanging to below her breasts and decorated with a dark trim.³ The next portion of her

² William Biers, *The Archaeology of Greece* (Ithaca: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 122. A meander pattern uses a continuous line to create a repeated twisting pattern in a decorative border.

³ Biers 1996, 343. Biers defines a peplos as "a heavy, one-piece garment worn by women." He continues to explain that the peplos almost always had an overfold and connected at the shoulders with pins.

costume billows out around her torso, covering her bottom, before the third portion hangs to her ankles while revealing her legs. Finally, a headband pulls Clytaemnestra's hair away from her face and its excess length hangs behind her right shoulder. Clytaemnestra with her axe also appears on the other two *Agamemnon* vases under analysis.

Clytaemnestra once more holds her weapon in her right hand on the obverse of a calyx krater painted by the Dokimasia Painter. Dating from circa 460 B.C.E. and measuring 51 cm tall by 51 cm in diameter, this krater picks up the narrative a few moments later than the Brygos Painter's kylix in a scene never shown onstage.⁴ (fig. 2) The composition now reads from the outside in, with the artist depicting four women and two men between registers of palmettes above and a stopped meander pattern below.^{5 6} The artist shows all six figures in activated twisted perspective.

On this obverse, two women stand both to the left and to the right of the two central male figures. The females outstretch their arms to direct the attention of the viewer to the men. The woman on the far left turns her head toward the action in the center with her left arm bent over her head and her hair flowing behind her. (fig. 2a) Her other arm stretches out towards the reverse of the vase.⁷ Her costume does not reflect her body; schematic strong verticals only define the weight of the fabric. However, her bare feet indicate that, although her head turns toward the action, her body faces away, as if fleeing the scene. The woman on the far right of the vase stands in a mirrored pose with her right arm bent over her head, her face turned to the center, and her body directed away. (fig. 2b) Her left arm also reaches toward the reverse and her

⁴ Museum Label, *Mixing bowl (calyx krater) with the killing of Agamemnon*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston, MA, 2017.

⁵ Biers 1996, 122. A stopped meander is a meander periodically interrupted by other geometric shapes, such as crosses.

⁶ On the Dokimasia vase, Aeolic columns decorate the space above the handles to frame the scenes on the obverse and reverse.

⁷ The reverse of a vase is its back side. See fig. 5.

feet turn away from the scene. The costume of this woman gives a better indication of her body than that of her pendant. The vertical lines creating the folds of her dress appear faint, but prominent horizontal lines divide her dress into three sections with the cords of a belt visible just below the second fold. The costume fits the woman loosely, hiding the shape of her body. A third woman immediately to the left of this woman serves a similar function. She turns her whole body to the center, stretching her right arm over the head of the man next to her. Her other arm bends up at the elbow with her palm parallel to her face creating a vertical. Her face turns to the center with her hair flowing behind her upright hand. Her costume hides her body beneath the fabric but delineates her forward leg, indicating motion. Her robes are again primarily schematic serving to identify her as just another woman drawing attention to the central men. Her pendant on the left side of the vase, however, plays a more significant role.

The woman second from the left at first appears to function only as another framing element. She faces the central action with her left arm outstretched towards the men in the middle, as does her partner, but her other arm reveals her specific identity. Her right arm hangs down behind her, slightly bent, with a double-sided axe held in her fist, indicating that she is Clytaemnestra. Like the other women, her dress gives no indication of her body underneath, but her bare feet show that her whole body turns toward the center. Clytaemnestra's wide stance, similar to the other women, makes her appear in motion. Her robe recalls that worn by Clytaemnestra in the Brygos Painter vase but the top, overfold, portion now hangs below her waist. Unlike the other women on the krater, but, like the Brygos Painter's Clytaemnestra, her robe sports a dark trim. However, her robe is probably not a peplos but a himation, a garment worn over one shoulder, revealing another piece of thinner fabric, her chiton, beneath the heavier

drapery.⁸ Clytaemnestra's chiton is pleated with finer verticals than her dark-trimmed himation. Below Clytaemnestra's waist a section of her chiton balloons out around her hips with loops of cord hanging below the fold, possibly indicating where the dress is belted. Finally, her skirt does not expose her legs in the same manner portrayed by the Brygos Painter, but the fabric does pull tight against her left shin as she steps forward. The remaining fabric flows behind her with no indication of her legs. This fabric has the same delicate texture as that covering her right breast. This continuity of texture indicates that she wears a long chiton. As depicted in the kylix by the Brygos Painter, Clytaemnestra wears her hair pulled back with a headband, ends blowing behind her.

In front of Clytaemnestra and to the right, a bearded man stands turned away from her. His left arm reaches out to hold down another man, while his right arm draws back brandishing a sword and slightly overlapping Clytaemnestra. The sword, as well as Clytaemnestra's position behind him, identify him as Aegisthus. He wears a chiton belted at the waist with visible cords. The densely folding fabric gives little indication of Aegisthus' body. The costume leaves his arms exposed. The loose-fitting top ends just past Aegisthus' waist with an irregular edge flopping over his belt before flowing into his short skirt which ends mid-thigh. His loose skirt blows behind him to his left to show his movement to his right. Aegisthus' bare legs and feet stand wide apart with a slight bend at the knee, emphasizing his diagonal plunge toward the other man. A large piece of black-trimmed fabric, his himation, hangs over his left shoulder, draping at a diagonal to further accentuate his fast pace.

To the right of Aegisthus, a man leans backwards, entrapped in a large piece of sheer fabric, identifying him as Agamemnon. His retreating diagonal runs parallel to Aegisthus',

⁸ Biers 1996, 341-2. A chiton is "a light, one-piece garment fastened with buttons or pins." Biers simply defines a himation as a cloak.

indicating response. His restrictive fabric appears completely sheer with Agamemnon's thin frame visible under the material. His right arm, bent slightly at the elbow, reaches toward Aegisthus, as far as the fabric will allow. His is not a normal garment designed for motion but the entrapping fabric. His other arm bends sharply behind him, also apparently caught in the material. Although covered completely in cloth, Agamemnon appears nude with a bleeding stab wound in his chest. Agamemnon's long hair and beard blend into the fabric, combining with the pattern, as if wet and pulled flush against his head. The artist decorates the material with wavy lines and spots before reaching a delicate decorative trim along the bottom register.

While the Dokimasia Painter emphasizes Aegisthus' treachery over Clytaemnestra's, the Marlay Painter returns Clytaemnestra to the force. The third vase narrating *Agamemnon* is the Marlay Painter's red-figure kylix dating from 450 to 400 B.C.E. (fig. 3) This vase shows two women engaged in a struggle inside a stopped meander-ornamented circle. The artist depicts a toppled tripod on the far left and an altar on the far right, both closer to the perimeter than the women. A small tree stands behind the woman on the right, establishing a natural setting. The woman on the left, standing near the central axis, holds a double-sided axe above her head with both hands, identifying her once more as Clytaemnestra. Her body faces right. She appears in motion with both elbows bent at right angles, with her right arm obscuring her face. Clytaemnestra's knees bend slightly beneath her dress, while her bare right foot breaks out of the circular frame, overstepping the meander. The artist depicts Clytaemnestra's dress differently than on the two previous vases. This dress clings to her muscular frame belted at the waist where the fabric lifts upward in response to her motion. The skirt appears made up of multiple layers with a smooth fabric ending just below her knees on top of a pleated material. The under layer, perhaps a chiton, is decorated with dots around her mid-calf, then extends to her ankles. Her

whole body turns toward the woman kneeling in front of her. This woman faces Clytaemnestra with her upper torso also twisting slightly to Clytaemnestra but with her lower body, below her hips, turned away toward the altar. Her left knee rests on a step leading to the altar, and her other leg reaches out behind her, overlapping Clytaemnestra. Due to position, setting, and moment, this woman can be identified as Cassandra. Her right arm reaches out entreatingly toward Clytaemnestra's invisible face, while she looks up at the axe. Cassandra's left arm bends upward behind her at a right angle; her hand reaches above her head, running parallel to the tree to great dramatic effect. Cassandra's costume covers only her left shoulder, leaving her right breast and shoulder exposed. This nudity emphasizes her vulnerability. The dark trim of the fabric marks the bottom of the overfold at Cassandra's waist where the fabric gathers before flowing over her rumpled skirt, which ends with a similar dark trim. The hem of the dress reaches Cassandra's ankles but little of her figure is discernable underneath the flowing fabric which thereby obscures the awkward turn of her torso.

In all three of these vases, costume or drapery plays a central identifying role. Though Clytaemnestra is specified by her axe, not her costume, she always appears richly clad. Thus, the axe is not Clytaemnestra's only attribute. In spite of slight variations, Clytaemnestra always wears the most elaborate peplos in the scene, befitting a queen. Her costume, as depicted by the Brygos Painter and the Dokimasia Painter, has the same tripartite composition as well as a dark trim to identify Clytaemnestra. The only real difference in her dress in these two images is the addition of the longer himation on the krater. In contrast, though Clytaemnestra's costume on the Marlay vase still divides into three parts, the artist has replaced the dark trim with more folds, suggesting a finer fabric and a more elaborate dotted design in her hem, establishing an even more elaborate peplos appropriate for the queen.

Clytaemnestra's costume is never described in the Aeschylean tragedy, but the recurring tripartite dress and trim probably indicates what may have been worn on stage. Clytaemnestra's robes must not hinder her ability to move and to murder, and the costumes depicted on the vase paintings are as utilitarian as they are visually pleasing. She is repeatedly depicted in motion wielding her axe without any interference from her dress. Additionally, Clytaemnestra's lack of footwear emphasizes her active role in mythology. Although not an athlete or a hero, she is a fierce character, almost masculine in her violence.⁹

While the identities of the characters on the two kylixes are clear, three of the four women on the krater cannot be identified by their attributes. None of these women wear a costume similar to that of Cassandra on the Marlay vase, preventing continuity of dress from easily identifying her.¹⁰ However, Cassandra's costume on the Marlay vase appears alike to the dress of a woman with power, fitting for her role as princess. While the costuming of Clytaemnestra on all three vases serves to identify her status and mobility, that of Cassandra functions differently and adds emotion. On the Marlay Painter's kylix, Cassandra's attire recalls Clytaemnestra's as depicted by the Brygos and Dokimasia Painters. The dark trim here indicates Cassandra's status as the trim marked Clytaemnestra's status in the other kylix and krater. The Marlay Painter, however, also uses drapery for a second purpose, a purpose fulfilled by color in the play. The agitation in her costume suggests her fear just as the red-dyed fabrics described by Aeschylus foreshadowed bloodshed. Furthermore, her exposed right shoulder and exposed neck

⁹ Sue-Ellen Case, "Classic Drag: The Greek Creation of Female Parts," *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 37, No.3 (Oct., 1985): 323. Case argues that Clytaemnestra's resolve and intensity align her with male traits. Additionally, her strong decision making, another male role, and taking a lover "disrupts the gender code." I argue that Clytaemnestra's barefoot appearance and violence equate her with male heroes and emphasize her masculine side.

¹⁰ Emily Vermeule, "The Boston Oresteia Krater," *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 70, No.1 (1966): 3. According to Vermeule, Cassandra's costume on the Dokimasia vase is similar to the dress of a slave, which helps identify her as Cassandra. As Agamemnon's concubine, Cassandra might have taken on some roles of slave, including dress. In the Aeschylean tragedy, Cassandra wears "seer's robes," not a slave's costume. I argue that this disagreement between text and image suggests that the Dokimasia vase depicts the myth of Agamemnon's death more than the play because of her costume.

suggest her vulnerability, while her exposed breast may be an interpretation of her “stripping” off her costume in her vision-induced hysteria.¹¹ The Marlay Painter has made the tragedy’s verbalized fears visible.

While the costumes of Clytaemnestra and Cassandra identify their status and suggest some emotion, they also advance the plot. By emphasizing Clytaemnestra’s movement from left to right, drapery highlights her active role. The costumes of the men on the krater, however, draw attention from the women, rendering them secondary to the narrative. Agamemnon’s murder, as depicted on the Dokimasia vase, shows Aegisthus, rather than Clytaemnestra, committing the crime. Aeschylus describes the murder of Agamemnon by Clytaemnestra twice in the tragedy. Once told by Cassandra and then again by Clytaemnestra herself.¹² The queen’s agency is clear in the text but not depicted on the vase where Clytaemnestra acts as a support for Aegisthus. The painter here reduces the power of Clytaemnestra and Cassandra by obliterating their anatomy beneath heavy drapery. Just as Agamemnon is trapped in the robe by Clytaemnestra, the two women are obscured, unable to perform their roles in the tragedy, literally covered up.

By contrast, the Dokimasia Painter’s depiction grants Aegisthus more power than he holds in the Aeschylean tragedy and emphasizes how helpless Agamemnon becomes once covered in the cloth.¹³ The Dokimasia Painter visually juxtaposes the two men by means of their dress. Aegisthus’ costume grants him power. His short, sleeveless chiton exposes strong arms and legs, allowing him full motion without any hinderance. Agamemnon, in comparison, is powerless; nude yet smothered by the fabric. The hero bound becomes helpless. Finally, the dark trim of Aegisthus’ robes is identical to Clytaemnestra’s, aligning the two as partners in crime.

¹¹ *Agamemnon*, l. 1285-7.

¹² Cassandra’s description is in *Agamemnon*, l. 1115-285; Clytaemnestra’s is in *Agamemnon*, l. 1391-431.

¹³ Thomas H. Carpenter, *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991), 236. Although only one vase depicts the murder of Agamemnon, reliefs and shield bands beginning in the sixth century B.C.E. show variations of this scene, returning Clytaemnestra’s power.

The two vase types discussed here, kylix and krater, were used during symposia for drinking and mixing wine. In symposia, they would be handled primarily by men, and their decoration warns of the dangers of women. Both kylixes, once emptied of their wine, reveal a murderous Clytaemnestra wielding her axe. This decoration acts as a reminder to the men using the cups that, should they betray their wives as Agamemnon betrayed his, they may suffer the same fate. In contrast, the krater contains water mixed with wine. This vessel serves the entire group rather than the individual in the way a kylix does. This image diminishes the role of women, casting them as supporting and framing devices for men. The women at the periphery of the image reflect the function of the vase as unintended for female use.

As with these three *Agamemnon* vases, the three vases related to *The Libation Bearers* also use costume, rather than more generic cloth or tapestry, to identify person, emotion, and plot moment or movement. These three vases all represent either scenes at Agamemnon's grave, the death of Aegisthus, or the death of Clytaemnestra. They are all roughly contemporary with the play: a skyphos by the Penelope Painter dates from 450 to 400 B.C.E. and depicts Orestes and Electra visiting Agamemnon's grave; the reverse of the same calyx krater by the Dokimasia Painter dates from circa 460 B.C.E. and shows Orestes' murder of Aegisthus; while, an oinoche by the Shuvalov Painter dates from 450 to 400 B.C.E. and illustrates Clytaemnestra's murder. (figs. 4, 5, and 6) They are here analyzed in the order of their scenes in the tragedy.

The Penelope Painter's red-figure skyphos shows two women at a grave on the obverse and two men on the reverse. (fig. 4) The two women on the obverse stand on either side of a stele labelled with Agamemnon's name. The stele rests on top of three steps with a lekythos on the top step and a wreath on the bottom. The woman on the left turns toward the grave and ties a sash onto the stele. She wears a himation pulled over her head, indicating that her actions are sacred.

This woman wears a form-fitting peplos belted at the waist with straps that tighten the fabric around her breasts. The dress exposes the woman's arms, and the skirt flows to the ground. A layer of fabric with a dark trim hangs over the skirt as part of the bodice of the dress. The other woman also faces the stele, but her torso turns to the viewer. With both hands away from the grave, she holds a flat basket with sashes that hang down. This woman wears a similar but simpler costume. Her dress suggests her body without clinging as tightly to her breasts or legs. The top of her peplos hangs loosely to the waist where it is belted and reaches the top of her thighs before revealing the skirt underneath. Her exposed hair is tied back into a bun. Both dresses cover the women's feet hiding their footwear. Costumes and actions suggest these women represent Electra and an attendant.

The men on the reverse turn to the right holding spears. They are both nude with hooded cloaks, or chlamyses, and bare feet.¹⁴ The man on the left holds his spear at a diagonal in his left arm. His right arm bends at the elbow with his hand resting on his hip. He has short hair and youthful facial features. His cloak hangs almost completely behind his back exposing his muscular body. His left knee bends creating a contrapposto stance, while his feet and lower body turn toward the other man, suggesting that he follows. These two men should, therefore, represent Orestes, to the right, and his companion, Pylades, to the left. Orestes stands in a similar position to Pylades. He holds his spear completely upright in his left hand with his elbow bent, and his other hand rests on his hip. Orestes' chlamys covers his left shoulder and that half of his body. The cloak has a dark trim along the bottom edge, elevating it above Pylades'. Orestes leans slightly forward to his left with his right foot pointed out to the viewer, and his other foot turned to the right side of the vase, suggesting greater activation and leadership. Taken together, the two

¹⁴ James Laver, *Costume in the Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 18. Laver describes a chlamys simply as a shorter cloak than a himation. Beazley vase descriptions also define Orestes' costume as a chlamys. This data can be viewed in Appendices II and III.

sides of the skyphos suggest the opening of *The Libation Bearers*, when Orestes and Pylades observe Electra and the mourners at Agamemnon's grave.

The reverse of the calyx krater by the Dokimasia Painter depicts a later moment in the narrative. (fig. 5) Two men and two women now engage in a struggle. As on the obverse, framed composition reads from the outside in. The woman on the far left stands with a double-sided axe held in her right hand above her head, once more, identifying her as Clytaemnestra. She turns toward the central action as she did on the obverse of the vase. Clytaemnestra's left arm reaches out to the man next to her with her hand resting on his shoulder. Again, she wears her hair pulled back with a headband, yet her costume is otherwise completely different than on the obverse. Clytaemnestra now wears a loose-fitting chiton with a spotted pattern that covers her arms from shoulder to elbow. A himation drapes over her left shoulder forming a cross-body sash with a dark trim on the bottom edges. Under the himation, her dress balloons out just above her knees before becoming slightly more fitted and sheer, exposing her moving legs. Her pendant, a young woman, turns to the central action with her right arm outstretched to the men in the center. Her other arm reaches the center of her chest with the elbow bent behind her. Her curly hair flows behind her as the folds of her dress mask her body. Her rumpled chiton covers her arms from shoulder to elbow with a sash-like himation over her left shoulder almost falling to her wrist. Her dress loosely curves around her body at her knees before the weighty fabric falls to her ankles. Both women have her bare feet. Her position on the vase suggests that this woman most likely represents Electra.

In front of Electra, a man sits in a chair reclining with his feet apart. His face turns up toward his attacker with a long straight beard, similar in appearance to that of Agamemnon on the obverse. He reaches his right arm out to the other man in an attempt to stop him, and his left

arm stretches down behind him holding a lyre that overlaps Electra. His chest is exposed with a bloody stab wound, identifying him as Aegisthus. A himation wraps around him covering his left shoulder and groin. This dark-trimmed robe ends at his knees revealing a thinner piece of fabric ending at his mid-calf. His attacker looms over Aegisthus with a sword in his right hand, identifying him as Orestes. Orestes' extended left arm holds Aegisthus' head, while Orestes' right arm bends slightly at the elbow, pulling back his sword. Although his torso faces the viewer, Orestes' head and lower body turn toward Aegisthus. Orestes now wears full armor including a helmet, breastplate, and greaves. Orestes' long curls peak out from under his helmet. A thin arc with a checkered pattern decorates the helmet and defines his head. His breastplate covers his shoulders and ties across his chest. Orestes' scabbard hangs slightly off his body under his left arm and its strap crosses chest. Under the breastplate, Orestes' vertically lined and patterned tunic hangs to the top of his thighs. His legs stand apart with his bare feet activated.

Orestes holds a similar pose in the third vase depicting a scene from *The Libation Bearers*. The Shuvalov Painter composes three figures across a red-figure oinoche, dating from 450 to 400 B.C.E., to depict the next chronological scene, Orestes' murder of his mother. (fig. 6) On the left of the vase, a nude man stands with his left arm outstretched to the central figure. He holds a hammer-like weapon in this hand, touching the central figure. His other arm bends slightly at the elbow holding a sword across his pelvis, identifying him once more as Orestes. His left leg bends at his knee, creating almost a right ankle. Orestes' right leg stretches out behind him, causing him to appear as if he is lunging toward the other two figures. Unlike the previous vases, this Orestes wears sandals that tie around his feet and lower calf. Orestes' head is now covered by a hat, emphasizing his profile. He still wears a chlamys, exposed on either side of his nude body. His torso turns toward the viewer, while Orestes' feet face the center.

The tall man in the center stands in contrapposto facing Orestes. He holds a large laurel branch in his left hand, identifying him as Apollo. Apollo's right arm bends to a right angle with his hand resting on his hip. This arm both points at and protects him from Orestes. His head turns to Orestes with his face angled down slightly. Over his long curly hair, Apollo wears a laurel crown. His sheer, flowing robe covers from his left shoulder to his ankles. Under the fabric, the outline of Apollo's legs appears. His supporting right foot points, bare, toward the viewer. His left leg bends slightly, separating his two feet. His left foot, with heel off the ground, also faces front. On the far right, a woman sits on an altar, facing Apollo and Orestes. She holds up both arms with elbows bent and her palms up. Her fingers point upward as she curves back slightly in defiance or fear. Her legs stretch out with ankles crossed, her bare feet exposed below the ankle-length hem. Her peplos leaves her arms uncovered and fits loosely around her breasts. The dress belts at the waist before the skirt clings to her legs. Her long dark curls cover her shoulders, and she has no attributes to identify her. However, the text suggests she must be Clytaemnestra.

As these vases illustrate, in *The Libation Bearers*, Orestes becomes the focus of the trilogy, killing both Aegisthus and his mother for their transgressions. On all three vases, costume aids position, pose, and attributes to identify Orestes. On the skyphos, his is the more ornamental chlamys; on the krater, his armor defines his action; while, on the oinoche, his attire contrasts with the god's. On two of these three vases, the skyphos and oinoche, the painters depict Orestes as nude with only a hooded cloak to cover him. As nudity presumably did not appear onstage, a chlamys must have accompanied some other type of garment, such as tights or prosthetic phalloi.¹⁵ Nudity as costume, however, primarily appears in comedy, not tragedy.¹⁶

¹⁵ Eric Csapo, "The First Artistic Representations of Theatre: Dramatic Illusion and Dramatic Performance in Attic and South Italian Art," *Theatre and the Visual Arts*, ed. G. S. Katz, V. Golini, and D. Pietropaolo (Toronto: Legas, 2001), 23-24.

Nudity here suggests heroics, although Orestes never appears fully nude. His cloak, described in the tragedy as decorated with animals, acts to cover Orestes without trapping him as Agamemnon became trapped. On the vases, the soft folds of the fabric further serve to contrast with his muscular build. The only article of clothing Orestes wears when described by Aeschylus is his cloak that reveals his identity to his sister, Electra. Aeschylus gives no indication that Orestes must appear fully clothed.

On the krater, however, the Dokimasia Painter shows Orestes fully clothed in the costume of an Athenian hoplite. Although the scene of Aegisthus' death would not appear onstage, Orestes' armor might reflect his costume in a staged production.¹⁷ This vase does, after all, date from the same period, circa 460 B.C.E. This costume allows for a wide range of motion and emphasizes strength, violence, and killing: the attributes of soldiers. The only specific detail that Aeschylus defines of Orestes' attire does not appear on the surviving vases: the embroidery that Electra recognizes.

In the play, costume, specifically embroidery, links the siblings, Orestes and Electra. On the vases, aspects of Electra's pose and clothes associate her with both her brother and her mother.¹⁸ Electra appears on the vases by the Penelope Painter and the Dokimasia Painter in a long dress. The two different depictions indicate how Electra might be perceived in each scene. At Agamemnon's grave, she pulls her robe over her head to show her piety and devotion to her

¹⁶ Laver 1964, 14-26. Laver asserts that tragedy is defined by long-sleeved chitons, himations, and the large boots worn by tragic actors. Comedy, by comparison, often made fun of nudity with actors sporting prosthetic phalloi or loincloths.

¹⁷ Hetty Goldman, "The Oresteia of Aeschylus as Illustrated by Greek Vase-Painting," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 21 (1910): 134. Goldman argues that the use of armor indicates that this vase depicts Stesichorus' *Oresteia*, rather than that of Aeschylus. However, I disagree with this reading due to the lack of costume description in the Aeschylean tragedy and this vase's roughly contemporary dating.

¹⁸ Carpenter 1991, 236. Carpenter asserts that all grave scenes in which Electra and Orestes reunite are directly influenced by the Aeschylean tragedy. Although the skyphos depicts the moment before their reunion, I, like Carpenter, argue that this promise of meeting at the grave shows the influence of the staged production by creating suspense.

father.¹⁹ Her dress bears the dark trim so common on Clytaemnestra's outfits. Electra's garment allows the viewer to see her anatomy, her physical vulnerability, while at her father's grave. The crumples in her peplos, especially in comparison with her companion, suggest emotional engagement, while the dark trim also links her to her brother on the other side.

Electra's costume on the Dokimasia vase differs in weight and texture from that on the skyphos: her light chiton follows her moving legs, serving to emphasize her involvement in the murders of Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra. The difference in costume between the two scenes echoes the differences in her mood in the Aeschylean tragedy. She appears devoted but agitated before she joins her brother in action. Once participating, her dress does not emphasize fragility. Costume defines her states on the vases just as it might have identified them onstage. Heavy drapery hanging down could contrast with lighter flying drapery to amplify action and emotion seen at a distance.

Aeschylus does not describe Electra's costume in his tragedy, only indicating that her fellow mourners dress in black, torn robes. Although neither vase painter shows Electra in mourner's costume, the terracotta of the vase recalls the saffron color worn by Iphigenia, her sister, at her sacrifice. This color creates a link between the two sisters, even though the bare terracotta colors all of the costumes. Therefore, Aeschylus' vivid use of color does not translate into Attic vase painting, but the lack of color allows for an emphasis on the folds, ornament, and motion of the fabric.

Electra's simple attire on the krater distinguishes her from her mother, pictured on the left side of the same scene. On the krater, Clytaemnestra always wears a dark-trimmed robe.

However, Clytaemnestra's costume appears very differently between the Dokimasia Painter

¹⁹ Goldman 1910, 123-5. Goldman agrees with my identification of Electra through her costume. Her devotion to her father as illustrated by her veil indicates that her character is driven by emotion, specifically sorrow.

obverse and reverse. While Clytaemnestra's axe acts to identify her on the Dokimasia reverse, her dress does not appear as the same tripartite garment she wears on the other side. The shift from heavy fabric obscuring her body on the obverse to the transparent gown on the reverse suggest a shift from strength to weakness, from murderer to victim.

Clytaemnestra wears similarly vulnerable attire in the Shuvalov Painter's composition. She now has no attributes or defining features. Instead, she must be recognized through context established in the Aeschylean narrative and her placement on an altar as the recipient of Orestes' forward motion. Her dress is more form-fitting than in her other depictions, emphasizing female anatomy and defenselessness, as do her bare, raised arms. Costume here aids the plot. Therefore, the three vases narrating *The Libation Bearers* establish the same significance for draped costume as those depicting *Agamemnon*: costume identifies characters, amplifies emotion, and propels the plot. Seemingly small details, such as a trim, a sandal, or a covered head, signify

Two of the *The Libation Bearers* vase types, the krater and the oinoche, would again be used predominantly by men during a symposium. Once more, both of these vases depict murder, perhaps acting to warn the user. However, the skyphos, another cup type used for drinking wine, depicts a much tamer scene.²⁰ This cup does not teach its user a lesson in the same way the two kylixes showing scenes from *Agamemnon*. Instead, it tells a story, depicting the moment before Electra and Orestes reunite at their father's grave. This meeting sets the events of the tragedy in motion in the same way the decoration rims the cup, accessible before drinking from the cup may act as a catalyst for any events that may follow. The kylixes only revealed their more dangerous lessons after their contents were drained.

²⁰ Oliver Taplin, *Pots and Plays: Interactions between Tragedy and Greek Vase-painting of the Fourth Century B.C.* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2007), 49. Taplin asserts that the use of the grave scene on a small cup indicates that it served as an inexpensive grave good. The scene also aids in the mourning of the deceased, as Roman sarcophagi will do in the second century C.E.

As with the three *Agamemnon* and *Libation Bearers* vases just analyzed, the three vases related to *The Eumenides* also use costume, rather than more generic cloth or tapestry, to identify person, emotion, and plot moment. These three vases all represent scenes involving Furies: a bell krater by the Hoppin Painter dates from circa 375 B.C.E. and shows Apollo repelling the Furies; the bell krater by the Judgement Painter dates from circa 360 B.C.E. and shows the sleeping Furies, now tamed by Apollo; while, a pelike by Kerch dates from 400 to 300 B.C.E. and shows the Furies in pursuit of Orestes.²¹ (figs. 7, 8, and 9) They all date after the first performance of the trilogy. They are essentially analyzed in the order of their scenes in the tragedy: The three vases were all used before and during wine consumption, and all employ the Furies as potential forewarning. For the first time, white pigment augments the compositions.

The Hoppin Painter's Apulian bell krater, dating from circa 375 B.C.E., and thus well after the premiere of the play, and measuring 37 cm tall by 38.6 cm in diameter, depicts four figures at a large dome, Apollo's omphalos.²² (fig. 7) On the left, two winged figures, representing the Furies, move toward the omphalos; one flies in the air and the other appears to run on the ground. On top of the omphalos, a man, Orestes, crawls left toward the Furies. Behind him, in the middle-ground, another male stands, pointing a bow towards the flying Fury, identifying him as Apollo. Apollo, seen from the back, is mostly nude with a single piece of fabric encircling his body, lifted by the speed of his actions. Apollo's left leg bends at the knee with his flat foot pointing toward the omphalos. Apollo's right leg stretches out behind him with his toes pointing down, indicating motion. The man next to him, Orestes, also has his back to the viewer, but his head turned toward the women. His left arm bends sharply at the elbow hiding his

²¹ Taplin 2007, 58. Taplin argues that Aeschylus was the first to give the Furies an anthropomorphic form, and all vases depicting the Furies directly reference the Aeschylean tragedy.

²² Museum Label, *Bell Krater: A, Orestes at the Altar of Apollo at Delphi; B, Three standing Men*, Yale Art Gallery, New Haven, CT, 2017.

forearm behind his body. His right arm, in the same position, can barely be seen. His exposed left leg bends at the knee with his shod foot mounting the dome near his groin. His right leg extends to the ground behind him with his knee bent slightly. He appears nude, except for a hooded cloak, or chlamys. The cape swoops behind Orestes covering his back and ballooning out around his hips revealing his lower body and suggesting that, like the other figures, he is in motion. His shoes distinguish his humanity from the nature of the others represented.

Though unbalanced, perhaps to emphasize the action, the composition centers on Orestes. The Furies, both turn toward him. The flying Fury's left hand touches Orestes' face. Her right arm reaches above her head with her hand in a fist. Her costume leaves her arms uncovered and emphasized. Her short skirt, belted at the waist, flows out behind her. As she flies, it pulls tight against her thighs. The hem of the thin fabric reaches only just above her knees, revealing her legs through the material. Her large wings dwarf her body, and the other Fury's wings appear smaller as they rest still behind her back.

The grounded Fury's left arm reaches out to Orestes with the elbow slightly bent, while her other arm bends to a right angle with her hand above her head, echoing her partner. Her costume also leaves her bare arms exposed and threatening. The thin fabric of her belted dress swirls around her thighs reaching just above her knees and revealing her outstretched legs. Her left leg extends behind the omphalos hiding her leg below the knee. Her right leg lengthens behind her, cut off by the bordering meander. Delicate white highlights define the top edge of the Furies' wings.

White also serves as an important highlight on the Judgement Painter's Apulian bell krater, dating from circa 360 B.C.E. and measuring 36 cm tall by 39.3 cm in diameter.²³ This

²³ Museum Label, *Mixing bowl (calyx krater) depicting Orestes at the Delphic Omphalos*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston, MA, 2017.

second krater depicts the same two men now with three women in the next moment of the narrative. (fig.8) The artist uses black, white, and yellow to decorate the vase in addition to the red terracotta.²⁴ The central register is defined by Athena standing and facing right, a frontal view of Orestes at the omphalos, and Apollo facing Athena.²⁵ Above these figures, a libation bowl and bucrania hang suspended to the left and right of Orestes. Athena wears an elaborate helmet on her head with her long curly hair emerging on her shoulders. Her left arm, covered by her aegis, bends slightly. Her hand peeks out from under the aegis, and Athena's index finger points at Orestes. Her right arm bends up with her hand grasping her spear at the level of her face. She wears bracelets on her right wrist, and the point of her spear rests on the ground next to her bare feet. Beneath her aegis, Athena wears a chiton covering her shoulders to her elbows. The dress belts at the waist with a spotted strap. The pleated skirt hangs straight against her legs to her ankles. Her left leg stands straight supporting her weight on a flat foot. Athena's right leg bends slightly at the knee with her foot resting lightly behind her, posed to step.

To the right of Athena, Orestes stands nude leaning against the omphalos. Orestes' head angles towards Athena with his body turning slightly to the omphalos on his left. His left arm reaches around and behind the omphalos with his hand emerging and resting on its other side. His right arm wraps around the front of the omphalos bending at the elbow. Orestes holds a sword angled upward in his right hand. He stands nude with a dark-trimmed cloak flying behind him, suggesting motion although his lower body indicates stillness. Apparently, he has just arrived. His left knee bends sharply, resting on the omphalos, and his right leg reaches out

²⁴ Biers 1996, 280. Red-figure painting becomes more ornate in the Italian provinces of fourth-century Greece. White, red, and yellow were added to compositions along with shading, gilding and relief work to ornament the vases.

²⁵ Taplin 2007, 66. According to Taplin, Athena's presence on the krater cements its association with the Aeschylean tragedy, rather than the general mythology of Orestes.

straight at a diagonal from his body. Orestes wears shoes on both feet, and his right foot rests firmly on the ground.

On the far right of the vase, a nude Apollo stands turning toward Orestes, balancing Athena in the composition. His right arm bends upward holding an attribute, two arrows. His left arm hangs by his side with another attribute, a laurel staff, resting in his hand and over his shoulder. The artist adorns his hair with a laurel wreath. A long himation drapes over his left shoulder down to his elbow and hangs behind Apollo's back. His right leg stands straight with his shod foot planted firmly on the ground. Apollo's left leg bends slightly at the knee with no weight on his foot, creating a gentle contrapposto.

Below the central register, two sleeping Furies recline along the bottom register. The Fury on the left lounges with her eyes closed. Her head angles down held up by her right fist. Her right arm bends at the elbow supporting her resting body on a hillside. Her other arm relaxes along her side with her hand resting on her thigh and holding a spear. The Judgement Painter decorates her pleated dress with a spotted belt that crosses her chest. Her short chiton leaves her arms bare and the hem ends above her knees. She wears shoes that lace up to her mid-calf, and her feet rest on the groundline. Her legs separate slightly, bending at the knees. Next to her lies another sleeping Fury turned to the right side of the vase. Her left arm rests against her thigh, and her other arm droops on the ground with a spear held in her fist. Her costume echoes her companion's but she wears a gold band wrapped around her arm forming three loops. Her hair is also full of golden decorations. Although it has the same silhouette and ornament as the other dress, this woman's costume appears more sheer with the outline of her thighs seen through the fabric. She holds her legs together bending at the knees with her shod feet resting on the ground. The Furies will awaken again in the final vase.

The addition of white paint by the Judgement Painter highlights decoration on the costumes and attributes of the five figures. On Athena's aegis, the artist paints the Gorgon's face white to draw the viewer's attention. Her belt, as well as the Furies' belts, have white spots, perhaps metal studs, as ornament. Orestes' costume has a white button closing the chlamys, while the omphalos he holds has white tasseled ropes to decorate it. Apollo's attributes are all highlighted with white: his wreath, his laurel branch and his arrows.

Kerch's red-figure Attic Pelike, dating from 370 to 360 B.C.E. and measuring 30 cm tall, shows only two Furies and a barefoot Orestes. (fig. 9) Unlike the previous vases the Pelike does not represent one particular moment of the tragedy, but rather, a recurring image that represents *The Eumenides* as a whole. Orestes' pose on the omphalos echoes that on the Judgement Painter's krater, except his left arm now hangs down by his side with his hand holding onto his sheath and supporting him on top of the omphalos. This arm is covered by a thick himation that drapes behind his body, rests on the omphalos, and reappears flying out behind him next to his right thigh, once more suggesting arrival.

Two Furies flank and face Orestes. The left wears her hair pulled up with a snake along the side of her head, identifying her as a Fury. Her bent arms hold a long torch across her body, left hand raised to shoulder height, cradling the flame. Her ornately draped dress, belted at the waist, leaves her arms uncovered and hangs heavily to her ankles. Moving, her left leg steps forward with her knee bent. Her other leg bends behind her with her bare feet resting along the groundline. Her pendant also turns toward Orestes. A snake once more crowns her head, but her left arm bends back behind her with her torch held high. Her other arm reaches down towards Orestes. Her tight fitting dress has two tiers of ruffled drapery at her waist. Her skirt hangs

snugly around her thighs before ballooning out and swirling around her lower legs to convey her speed. Her exposed feet stand tip toe along the bottom decoration of the vase.

In all three of the vases illustrating *The Eumenides*, costume continues to identify, emote, and advance the plot with the addition of color, primarily white, heightening the effect. On all three vases, Orestes appears nude covered only by his cloak, and his nakedness emphasizes his heroic status. Orestes' nudity draws the viewer's attention, but each artist treats his cloak differently. The Hoppin Painter uses the cape to hide most of Orestes' body as he climbs on the omphalos, while its motion suggests his recent arrival, defining a narrative moment. Similar to the flying drapery used in fifth-century Athenian relief sculpture, the movement of the fabric adds drama in the scene. The Judgement Painter also utilizes a similarly stylized movement to create the illusion of action, present or future. The extended fabric also suggests Orestes' quick reflexes and his triumph over the sleeping Furies as he grasps the omphalos tightly. On the Kerch vase, though the Furies are awake, Orestes' cape behaves in the same way. On the pelike, however, this cloak also wraps around Orestes' arm and pools around his knee before flying out behind him, suggesting, once more, recent arrival and urgency.²⁶ On stage, such buoyant drapery would also highlight motion. Orestes also often wears shoes, which in the compositions by the Hoppin and Judgement Painters serve to identify his humanity. However, the Judgement Painter's decision to shoe all of the figures but Athena undercuts the signifying effect of shoes.

In addition to Orestes, only the Furies appear on all three vases. The Hoppin and Judgement Painters both depict the Furies in short dresses, ideal for pursuing Orestes. The lack of fabric covering their legs frees them to run and distinguishes them from the other players,

²⁶ Goldman 1910, 153. Goldman suggests that the Furies continue to pursue Orestes after he reaches Delphi because of Apollo's absence. As the other two vases depict Apollo, the Furies become less menacing and dangerous than on the Kerch vase. Orestes' urgency to reach the omphalos would not protect him from their wrath according to Goldman's analysis. This reading is consistent with the tragedy.

whether on vase or stage. The Hoppin Painter even includes highlighted wings to suggest their movement although the Aeschylean Furies do not have wings. Their drapery articulates their implied movement in their pursuit of Orestes with fabric billowing out behind them, similar to Orestes' cloak. The Judgement Painter shows his Furies sleeping, so there is no indication of movement in their costumes, but the long dresses used for Kerch's Furies distinguish them while still highlighting their movement, pursuit, as definitional to their identity. The skirts swirling around the Kerch Furies also suggest the dancing used by the chorus members during the Aeschylean tragedy.²⁷ Only these furies wear snakes in their hair as described by Aeschylus. The variety displayed in these portrayals might suggest that because Furies are neither human nor Olympic divinities, artists had more license in their depictions.

In addition to snakes and pursuit, the color black defines the Furies in *The Eumenides*. Not so on any of the vases. Instead, the appearance of white to highlight the wings on the Hoppin Painter Krater and the belts of the Judgement Painter's sleeping Furies, serves to advance the plot. Just as flying drapery suggests movement completed, the color white in art or onstage aligns the Furies with the Olympic gods they despise in *The Eumenides*. This transition in color could foreshadow events to come when the Furies transform into the Eumenides, converting their black robes to red, and allying with the white of Olympia.

White is also a defining feature in the Judgement Painter's costumes of Athena and Apollo. It appears on Athena's aegis, while it spots the leaves of Apollo's laurel branch and arrows. In sum, it emphasizes the attributes of these Olympic gods, distinguishing them from the chthonic Furies. Similarly, the Judgement Painter uses white on the pious libation bowl,

²⁷ Taplin 2007, 60. Taplin asserts that the long dresses of the Furies indicate their use onstage. The length and movement of the fabric indicate that their wearers dance rather than run.

bucrania, and omphalos to suggest the beneficence of these objects and the optimistic ending to come.

The two kraters and the pelike would all be used to hold liquids. Though decoration serves as a reminder of the consequences of murdering a family member, it also holds promise, just as wine or water can bring happiness or hell.

Taken as a whole, these nine vases suggest that Greek audiences, whether for vases or plays, were attuned to shifts in costume length, fabric density, and subtle coloration to signify meaning. Drapery pulled tight or flying free could identify a character or moment or might serve to amplify an action. The Roman heirs to Greek tradition continued to explore the role of cloth in visualizing Aeschylus' tragedy.

Chapter Three: The Sarcophagi

Approximately 485 years after the last surviving vase illustrating scenes from *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and *The Eumenides*, the Roman Orestes sarcophagi continue the tradition of visual depictions of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. Following the rise of inhumation in the second century C.E., the demand for mythological sarcophagi rose, leading to mass production of Orestes sarcophagi.¹ The surviving reliefs show only key scenes from *The Libation Bearers* and *The Eumenides*; no sarcophagi with scenes from *Agamemnon* remain. In these images, drapery plays a far greater role than on the vases, recapturing its function in the text and probably recording its contribution to staged productions. This chapter analyzes three sarcophagi in relation to the textual and ceramic traditions to show what they reveal about drapery and how it defines the narrative and character in the visual arts and theater.

Inhumation became popular in the second century C.E., replacing decorative altars, and these sarcophagi use decorative elements, such as garlands, representations of the seasons, and small mythological figures.² By the end of Marcus Aurelius' rule, in c.180 C.E., there was a shift to full mythological scenes. These scenes mostly depicted grief, especially Atalanta mourning Meleager and Achilles mourning Patroclus.³ By the third century, the size and number of figures represented on sarcophagi had increased and included portraits of the deceased in mythological scenes.⁴ The Orestes Sarcophagi, dating from c.135 to 180 C.E., relate more closely to the Meleager and Patroclus tradition. (figs. 10 and 11)

The Meleager Sarcophagus, dating from c.150 C.E., depicts Meleager reclining in a bed with a seated woman, surrounded by at least ten other figures. (fig. 10) The composition centers

¹ Jas Elsner and Janet Huskinson. *Life, Death and Representation: Some New Work on Roman Sarcophagi*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 127.

² Elsner 2011, 44-5.

³ Paul Zanker and Bjorn C. Ewald, *Living with Myths: The Imagery of Roman Sarcophagi*, tr. Julia Slater, Tra ed, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 62-6.

⁴ Zanker 2013, 249-52.

around Meleager and the seated Atalanta. The Patroclus Sarcophagus, dating from 160 C.E., shows Patroclus lying on a bed with Achilles sitting at his feet in mourning. (fig. 11) These two men sit in the center of the composition with six other mourners around them. These two Sarcophagi represent a larger group of sarcophagi that aid the families of the deceased in their grieving. These sarcophagi set the stage for more complex mythological and theatrical scenes.

Like sarcophagi with scenes of the deaths of Meleager and Patroclus, the Orestes Sarcophagi are multifigural narratives composed left to right. Unlike the Meleager and Patroclus examples, drapery plays a greater role in the Orestes compositions because of its greater contribution to Aeschylus' tragedy. Eleven surviving Orestes Sarcophagi follow two types.⁵ The first type, represented by the Lateran Sarcophagus (fig. 12), has only one surviving example. The other ten sarcophagi depict the second type, such as the Cleveland Sarcophagus (fig. 13) and the Vatican Sarcophagus (fig. 14). The Lateran example portrays Orestes and Pylades at Agamemnon's grave, while the dominant category shows sleeping Furies at a cairn. Two examples of the second variety are analyzed because of slight but telling variations.

The Lateran Sarcophagus, dating from circa 135 to 140 C.E. and measuring 215 cm wide by 89 cm tall by 80 cm deep, depicts events from both *The Libation Bearers* and *The Eumenides*.^{6 7} The composition reads from left to right, beginning with a seated female figure

⁵ *Arachne* (German Archeological Institute, 2017), <http://arachne.uni-koeln.de>. See Appendix IV

⁶ *Arachne*, "21263: Kasten des Orestesarkophages," (German Archaeological Institute, 2017)

⁷ Jenifer Neils, "The Orestes Sarcophagus and Other Classical Marbles," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (April, 1984): 110. Scholars debate the dating of some of the Orestes sarcophagi, especially the Lateran Sarcophagus. Jenifer Neils argues that it must have come after the Cleveland and Vatican sarcophagi as an expansion on the design of this sarcophagus type. However, if the Lateran Sarcophagus came first, the second type would be a simplification of this more decorous design, which I prefer. These sarcophagi were manufactured by many different artisans under a similar design, creating small differences in style and decoration between each sarcophagus.

and upright man in the left corner. The artist divides the long horizontal field into five scenes.⁸ Following the man and the woman in the composition, stand two nude males facing left. (fig. 12a) A slight space marks the end of the first scene. The artist composes the next scene of three figures: the old woman, Aegisthus, and Orestes. (fig. 12b) In the following scene, Orestes stands triumphant over Clytaemnestra's fallen form, while a young servant boy cowers. (fig. 12c) Drapery separates the next scene with two Furies from the final scene made up of a sleeping Fury and Orestes.⁹ (figs. 12d and 12e)

The woman in the lower left reclines with her back creating the edge of the composition. Her head hangs down with her eyes closed, identifying her as a sleeping Fury. Her left arm, hidden by her body, supports her head, which also rests on the double-sided axe held in her right hand. Her right arm rests against her body, bending at the elbow with her hand resting in her lap gripping the axe. Her dress leaves her arms uncovered and belts at the waist before the delicately folding fabric gathers around her bent right knee. The hem of the dress reaches her ankle, revealing her shod foot. Her left foot rests along the bottom of the sarcophagus, tucked under her knee. Her costume recalls the Furies in Kerch's pelike. (figs. 9 and 12a)

Behind the Fury, another figure rests upright, framing the composition on the far left and directing attention right. Wrapped in a shroud, the fabric conceals the man's eyes, but exposes his bearded chin resting on his chest. This upright man, cupped by dirt to his left, represents the corpse of Agamemnon in his grave.¹⁰ Agamemnon's placement at the left of the composition allows his figure to encapsulate all of the previous narrative. Next to Agamemnon, a nude man

⁸ Zanker 2013, 376. Zanker identifies three scenes: the grave scene, the death scene, and the Delphi scene. However, I identify five: the grave scene, the death of Aegisthus, the death of Clytaemnestra, the Furies' entrance, and Orestes in Delphi.

⁹ The lid survives showing the return of Iphigenia from Taurus as in Euripides' *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*. Although depicting some of the same characters, including Orestes, the Euripidean narrative and its images are not useful to this study.

¹⁰ Zanker 2013, 378. Zanker argues that Agamemnon stands in the archway to the underworld, but I argue that the artist creates a self-referencing composition by depicting Agamemnon's body resting in an open sarcophagus.

stands with his head turned toward the grave. His right arm bends at the elbow, reaching across Agamemnon's dead body. His left arm bends toward the companion to his left with his body turned toward the viewer. His cloak covers his left shoulder and hangs behind him to his mid-calf, just as Orestes' did on the Penelope Painter, Shuvalov Painter, Hoppin Painter, Judgement Painter, and Kerch vases. His prominence and proximity to Agamemnon assure his identity as Orestes. Orestes' right leg disappears behind the sleeping Fury with his bent knee exposed. Orestes' left leg straightens in a dramatic diagonal as he walks toward the grave. Next to him, a similarly nude, cloaked man stands behind him, most likely Pylades. Pylades left arm bends raising his hand slightly above his face, further directing attention to the grave. His left arm hangs by his side, hidden by his cloak swinging over his shoulder. Pylades' cloak hangs to his calves with his lower legs hidden behind the drapery of the figures on either side. His legs part, as if ready for a fight. Pylades primarily serves to amplify Orestes. The overlapping drapery of Orestes, Pylades, and the woman next to him marks the end of the grave scene.

The next scene begins with an old woman turning away from the central figures, looking over her right shoulder in Agamemnon's direction. She raises both arms to shield her face, while her left arm also reaches out to the men next to her. She leans away from the scene with the rest of her body hidden by the other figures. Her himation wraps around her outstretched arm, with the end of the fabric held in her hand. She most likely represents Orestes' aged nurse. Her fabric then disappears behind her back before overlapping and dividing her from Pylades in the grave scene. Next to her, another nude male looks over his shoulder towards her. He hunches over, pulling back a large piece of fabric. He holds the corner of the material with his left hand and, with his right hand, holds a sword, identifying him as Orestes. He appears to wipe off his sword on the material with his right arm reaching across his body and both elbows slightly bent. His

lower body hides behind the fabric with only his left knee and shin appearing from under the material. Beneath Orestes, a man tumbles slain with his knees up by the frightened woman's waist, and his head at the bottom of the feet of Orestes. The dead man has a beard, an indication of age, making him most likely Aegisthus. He is nude with the cloth held by Orestes only draping his left knee which hangs over his toppled throne. With his back arched, Aegisthus' left arm splays out to his side, elbow bent, and his right arm bends sharply at the elbow with his hand behind his head. The left side of his face rests on the floor, leaving only his profile exposed. He lies dead, deposed, and exposed.

In the center of the relief, Orestes appears for a third time. Nude, he stands with a sword in his right hand, and his chlamys over his left. He looks down over his right shoulder at the dead Aegisthus; his right arm reaches across his body with his elbow bent and his sword-wielding hand at shoulder height as if about to strike again. His left arm hangs by his side as his cloak falls further behind his left leg. Orestes stands with his legs roughly shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent, energizing his pose. His shins and feet are covered by the dead body of Clytaemnestra. She lies with her head tipped back, unsupported by her neck. Her left arm splays out beside her, palm facing upward, and her right arm hangs limp across her torso. Her back arches as if still in pain. Her wren costume exposing her breasts, but still covering her hips and legs. Her knees bend with her calves and feet hidden behind Aegisthus' body. To the right of Clytaemnestra, a young man hides behind a stool looking up at Orestes. He crouches with the stool held in both hands aligned with his face. Sitting in profile, his left shoulder hunches up toward his ear. Both elbows bend, hidden by his knees which fold up to his biceps. His tunic scrunches up around his pelvis where he leans forward, leaving his shoulder and thighs exposed with Clytaemnestra's arm resting in front of his calf. He most likely represents one of

Clytaemnestra's servants. The diagonal of his back, coupled with the vertical formed by drapery behind Clytaemnestra's head, separate him from the next scene.

Beginning the final scene of *The Libation Bearers*, a woman stands in front of a large piece of fabric with a snake wrapped around her arm, identifying her as a Fury. She faces Orestes with her outstretched and snake bearing arm towards him. Her right arm reaches behind her bending at the elbow; her dress closes around her bicep leaving an opening around her left shoulder. The dress then belts at her waist before flowing out around her thighs. The thin, sheer fabric clings to her left knee and thigh which stretch behind her as she walks quickly. The Fury's other leg hides behind the crouching boy. Behind her, another Fury stands behind the cloth with only her head revealed. She turns in the same direction as her counterpart. Both Furies wear their hair short and pulled back from their faces with snakes. Their curtain-like drapery separates them from the final scene.

At their feet, another Fury reclines with her face directed down, as if sleeping. Her right arm bends at the elbow, resting on the ground. Her other arm rests in her lap with her left hand on her opposite knee. A snake crawls along her arm and into her lap. Her dress crosses her chest in a tight twist over her shoulder, leaving her breasts exposed as she sleeps, reaching her ankles and clinging to her bent knees. Her left leg crosses over her right knee, and the drapery reveals her calf muscles through the fabric. The damage on the sarcophagus leaves it unclear whether she wears shoes. Orestes, once again nude except for the chlamys on his left arm steps over this sleeping Fury with his bent right arm in front of him holding his sword. His left hand tightly grips the tripod, fabric draped over his elbow from mid-bicep to the middle of his forearm. The material hangs to the top of his thighs. Orestes' right leg stands straight as his bare foot reaches

over the sleeping Fury. His left leg bends at the knee and disappears behind the tripod. The vertical folds of his chlamys coupled with the erect tripod close the composition.

The other Orestes Sarcophagus type, exemplified by the Cleveland and Vatican Sarcophagi, shows a simplified version of this same composition. The Cleveland Sarcophagus dates from 150 C.E., measuring 211 cm wide by 55.5 cm tall by 57 cm deep, while The Vatican Sarcophagus, dating from 160 to 170 C.E., measures 226 cm wide by 53 cm tall by 70 cm deep.¹¹ (figs. 13 and 14) In the Cleveland-Vatican type, the composition once more reads from left to right, beginning with the sleeping Furies at Agamemnon's grave. However, there are now three Furies, and the grave is represented by a pile of rocks, or cairn, rather than a vertical body. This composition is easier to decipher. The Fury in the bottom left corner of the sarcophagus rests in the same position as the sleeping Fury on the Lateran Sarcophagus. Above her and to the right, another Fury sits folded over. She faces away from the action on the sarcophagus with her face in her knees. Her left arm bends sharply at the elbow with her hand resting on her knee. Her right arm hangs relaxed with her hand reaching her left foot. The Fury's back curves as her chin rests on her bent knees. The sleeve of her costume covers her bicep, but leaves her shoulder exposed. Her dress belts at the waist, and her skirt reaches her ankle, revealing the top of her shoe. The Fury's left knee bends sharply with her foot hanging over the edge of the cairn and resting on the bottom Fury's hand. In the top left corner, the third Fury sleeps leaning on the cairn. Her head tilts to the left, resting on her shoulder. Her left arm then bends at the elbow, resting on the rocks. A snake wraps around her forearm, and her costume hangs over her bicep. The Fury's right arm hangs straight down over the ledge of the cairn. This initial grave scene contains only the three Furies without a shrouded Agamemnon, Orestes, or Pylades.

¹¹ *Arachne*, "4808: Kasten eines Orestsarkophags," (German Archaeological Institute, 2017)
Arachne, "131708: Orestsarkophag," (German Archaeological Institute, 2017)

The death scenes appear exactly the same on the second, Cleveland-Vatican, sarcophagus type as it does on the first. In both examples, the old nurse appears next to the first Orestes. Aegisthus, slain, once more tumbles from his chair, his left arm stretched to the dead Clytaemnestra with the second Orestes standing triumphantly above her behind a drape revealing his deeds. Even the boy hiding behind the stool appears the same. Again, a second large piece of fabric, hangs behind Clytaemnestra's head and the crouching boy. Unlike the Lateran type, the curtain now clearly ends, with dividing vertical folds, before the final appearance of Orestes. Furthermore, on the Cleveland-Vatican sarcophagus type, both Furies stand behind this large piece of fabric. On the right, a herm holds up the material concealing the two Furies' bodies. Below the herm, a sleeping Fury lies in the same position as on the Vatican sarcophagus type. Now this Fury holds a torch in her right hand. Again, Orestes steps over her, sword in hand and gripping the tripod, in the same position as the Lateran sarcophagus.

As there are more of the Cleveland-Vatican type and they tend to date later than the Lateran example, it seems probably the artisans or patrons rejected the great number of figures, and thus, greater work and cost necessary for the Lateran types. The Cleveland-Vatican composition is also more legible. The busy Lateran Sarcophagus depicts a slightly more literal visual representation of *The Libation Bearers*. Beginning with Orestes and Pylades at Agamemnon's grave, the first scene of the Lateran Sarcophagus reflects the opening of the Aeschylean tragedy. However, Electra does not appear on any sarcophagus. The multiplication of Furies and editing of Electra shows a departure from the skyphos. (fig. 4) These sarcophagi use the sleeping Furies, Agamemnon, or a cairn to imply the events before Orestes returns to the palace. While neither sarcophagus depicts the exact opening of the play, both use the sleeping

Furies to show the peace of Orestes' soul before he commits matricide.¹² The second sarcophagus type uses more sleeping Furies to portray a greater sense of calm and safety, while the Lateran Sarcophagus employs Orestes' piety by visualizing his father. In all of the sarcophagi the Furies wear costumes most similar to those on the Kerch vase. (fig. 9) This repetition of type makes the Furies easy to identify across the composition, across different sarcophagi, and most probably onstage. It also indicates that the main production of Roman sarcophagi, and perhaps Roman performance, did not allow the creative licence that the Greek vase painters enjoyed.

Both sarcophagus types then transition into the nearly identical death scenes. While most vases depict Aegisthus seated in a chair as Orestes stabs him with the sword, both sarcophagi types show the moment after Orestes removes his sword from Aegisthus' body which falls from his overturned chair. The text does not describe whether Aegisthus sits or stands when Orestes murders him. His body is revealed to the audience only once the palace doors reopen.¹³ On the sarcophagi, the chair could represent a throne or power, while the cloth behind which Orestes stands might recall the lowering of a curtain onstage to reveal Aegisthus' dead body. The drapery entwined with Aegisthus' body and held by Orestes, furthermore recalls the past deadly role of drapery: first in Iphigenia's sacrifice and then in Agamemnon's assassination. This presumably blood stained cloth plays a dramatic role in all of the sarcophagi. No equivalent occurs on the vases, but it strongly suggests a theatrical tradition. Roman second style paintings provide evidence of curtains dropping in Roman theater.¹⁴

The vertical folds of the curtain mark the transition to Clytaemnestra's death scene, again nearly identical on all sarcophagi. The death of Clytaemnestra is significantly less frequent in Greek vase paintings than that of Aegisthus, so there is little tradition of depiction in painting.

¹² Neils 1984, 110.

¹³ *The Libation Bearers*, l. 837-79.

¹⁴ Roger Ling, *Roman Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

However, the text describes Orestes as killing his mother over the body of Aegisthus.¹⁵ Here adjacency defines the time delay. Horrified servants bookend the two deaths on the sarcophagi, reminding the viewer that a servant recounts both deaths in the Aeschylean tragedy.

Following the death of Clytaemnestra, Orestes begins to see the Furies. On the sarcophagi their entrance into the palace is evoked by their placement in relation to another large piece of fabric. The Lateran type places one Fury in front of the fabric, emphasizing the large snake wrapped around her arm that identifies her rage. Her body leans forward with her head held high, possibly mirroring the choreography of the Furies in performances of the tragedy. The second sarcophagus type shows both Furies behind the fabric, hiding their bodies and masking their movement, adding anticipation or allowing the viewers to imagine their horror. The snakes encircling the women act to mark their entrance as described by Aeschylus: “No, no! Women – look – like Gorgons, / shrouded in black, their heads wreathed, / swarming serpents!”¹⁶ The snake motif continues to the sleeping Fury marking the shift to *The Eumenides* on both sarcophagus types.

After the end of the Furies’ curtain, both sarcophagus types depict Orestes’ purification the same way with Orestes stepping over the sleeping Fury while gripping the tripod.¹⁷ The Hoppin Painter, Judgement Painter, and Kerch vases use a similar device to mark Orestes’ presence in Delphi, but on the vases, Orestes holds the omphalos instead of the tripod. Both the omphalos and tripod indicate that Orestes has reached Delphi and asked Apollo for help. The tripod might have made a better prop than the omphalos during performances of the tragedy.

¹⁵ *The Libation Bearers*, l. 890-4.

¹⁶ *The Libation Bearers*, l. 1048-50.

¹⁷ Zanker 2013, 377. Zanker argues that because Orestes faces the center of the composition, the tripod represents the events before *The Libation Bearers* in which Apollo commands Orestes to seek retribution for Agamemnon’s murder by committing matricide. I, like Neils, however, argue that the tripod and sleeping Fury signify Orestes’ purification and Apollo’s repulsion of the Furies.

Because the redundancy of the sarcophagi suggest they draw upon an established theatrical tradition, the use of the tripod over the omphalos most likely reflects its use onstage.

Orestes' costume changes throughout the sarcophagi's narrative. In the first type, Orestes and Pylades appear with their cloaks fastened around their necks when they reach the grave of Agamemnon. As explored in Chapter Two, Greek vase painting often depicts Orestes and Pylades in some variation of this simple nude with cloak. In the death scene on both sarcophagus types, Orestes no longer wears his chlamys but stands behind drapery that might be his cloak, wipes off his sword after Aegisthus' murder. For the remainder of the composition, he wears a single piece of fabric, perhaps now his blood stained chlamys draped over his elbow as he stands over both his dead mother and the sleeping Fury. Unlike in the later Greek vases, gravity logically affects Orestes' cloak. The material hangs straight to the ground without flying around his body, perhaps indicating his lack of motion in the relief while certainly serving to divide and stop the composition. Perhaps Orestes' change in attire – from wearing, wiping, then holding – reflects costume changes that occurred during theatrical performances. His cloak in the opening scene indicates his status as a traveller. After he has revealed himself as Orestes, he would no longer need to hide behind the guise of a stranger. After removing his cloak from his shoulders, Orestes remains nude throughout the composition although, an actor would most likely not appear onstage naked. The held cloak, perhaps stained red, would act as identifier and record of the narrative.

The Furies' costume deserve more attention. In the second sarcophagus type, the three sleeping Furies at the grave wear long dresses with shoes. As noted, on Greek vase painting, Furies almost exclusively wear short dresses with shoes. However, Kerch paints the Furies in long dresses precursors to the Furies on the sarcophagi. (fig. 9) Probably the likeness between

these longer dresses indicates the theatrical costume. However, Kerch's Furies do not wear shoes with their long dresses. On the far right of the sarcophagi, the sleeping Fury at Delphi wears the same long dress as the sleeping Furies at Agamemnon's grave, but this Fury sleeps barefoot on both sarcophagus types, creating a continuity of costume between the vase and sarcophagi. Another slight distinction, the two types of sarcophagi reveal different amounts of the Furies' dresses from behind the large curtain-like fabric. The first type shows one Fury in front of the fabric wearing a dress that at first looks like the dresses depicted in vase paintings, but upon closer inspection, one can see that the sheer clinging fabric reaches down her legs. The shoulders of the other Furies can be seen over the hanging cloth, leaving the remainders of their dresses covered. The layers of fabric obscure the viewer's perception of the dress, and Aeschylus does not specify hem length in his descriptions of the Furies. It does seem that, despite these slight variations, the Roman sculptures display far less creativity than the Greek vases where Furies are concerned.

As noted, Agamemnon's shroud in the Vatican Sarcophagus type recalls the tapestry that traps him. This recurring image dominates Aeschylus' text in both *Agamemnon* and *The Libation Bearers*. However, it is completely forgotten by *The Eumenides* and only vaguely referenced in surviving Greek vase painting, only portrayed on the Dokimasia krater. (fig. 2) The tapestry enshrouds Agamemnon when Clytaemnestra murders him, but it is then removed from his body some time between his death and burial. Orestes then presents the bloody, red cloth to the chorus after he kills Aegisthus and his mother. Its color acts as the defining feature of the tapestry in the Aeschylean text, but the lack of the consistent color on the Greek vase painting and loss of paint on the sarcophagus eliminate this key characteristic. This lack of color creates confusion when

attempting to identify the tapestry on the sarcophagus, as the large piece of fabric held up by Orestes and the other masking the Furies could resemble a tapestry.

Large fabrics establish the setting of the death scenes and separate the narratives, making the carved imagery easy to read. As referenced above, the large piece of fabric associated with the Furies could set the death scenes inside the palace.¹⁸ This barrier actively separates scenes, acting as a sort of theatrical curtain. The two large pieces of outstretched material balance the composition. The cloth upon which Orestes wipes his sword acts as his chlamys, Aegisthus' robe, and another theatrical curtain, drawing attention to the Orestes standing in the center. It effectively separates the death of Aegisthus as a different scene from the death of Clytaemnestra. Additionally, the drapery of the old nurse's costume divides the grave scene on both sarcophagi from the first death scene. The long vertical folds of her drapery colliding with Pylades' cloak in the first type creates the illusion of another theatrical curtain, whereas the second type uses a void between the sleeping Furies and nurse to clarify the distinction between the scenes. In the second type, the nurse's long dress combined with Aegisthus' costume creates the illusion of another curtain partitioning one scene from the next. The clear separation of each scene aids to convey the meaning of Orestes' mythology.

Given that sarcophagi served as boxes to hold the dead and keep their memory alive for future generations who visit their mausolea, the ornamentation on the Orestes sarcophagi should carry meaning. The myth of Orestes may have been popular with Romans because it shows the extent of Orestes' virtue by avenging his father's murder, thus likening the deceased to his virtue, or the story could serve as an allegory for life on Earth, depicting its challenges and how they may be overcome.¹⁹ As most Romans did not have to avenge the murder of their father by

¹⁸ Neils 1984, 111.

¹⁹ Neils 1984, 113.

committing matricide, this myth may have been favored by Romans for its ending, rather than its exciting middle. *The Eumenides* ends *The Oresteia* on a positive note with both Orestes and the Furies purified and living a happy existence. Regardless of religion, the deceased is usually cleaned before burial, creating parallels to the purification of *The Eumenides*.²⁰ Both sarcophagus types end with the image of Orestes in Delphi, purified, stepping over the sleeping Fury. Regardless of the reason why Orestes became a popular image for sarcophagi, many were produced in the second century, a time of increasing turmoil in Roman society.

However, the lives of these sarcophagi did not end once placed in necropoli. As long as the descendants of the deceased continued to practice paganism, they would visit the graves. Then centuries later, these sarcophagi were resurrected and had a second life. The Lateran Sarcophagus, buried in the Tomb of Medusa, was placed in the Lateran Museum upon discovery in 1839.²¹ Pope Paul VI then moved the sarcophagus to the Gregoriano Profano Museum in 1970 upon opening.²² The Cleveland Sarcophagus arrived at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1928 shortly after its discovery in Rome.²³ The Vatican Sarcophagus was placed in the sacristy of Santa Maria Aracoeli at some unknown time. The Barberini then bought the sarcophagus in 1772 and moved it into the Vatican.²⁴ Excavated Orestes sarcophagi are documented as early as 1550 in Rome and inspire many Renaissance artists, including Raphael, Michelangelo, and Titian.²⁵ The horrified pose of the nurse can be seen in Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling: Adam mirrors the woman in his horror at God expelling him and Eve from Paradise. (fig. 15) A century later, this pose appears in Artemisia Gentileschi's *Susanna and the Elders* with Susanna's pose now

²⁰ J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971).

²¹ *Arachne*, "21263: Kasten des Orestsarkophages" and Neils 1984, notes.

²² "Gregoriano Profano Museum," Vatican Museums, 2017.

²³ *Arachne*, "4808: Kasten eines Orestsarkophags."

²⁴ *Arachne*, "131708: Orestsarkophag."

²⁵ Michael Greenhalgh, *The Classical Tradition in Art* (London: Duckworth, 1978).

emulating the sarcophagus.²⁶ (fig. 16) While the nurse inspired active poses, the pose of the seated sleeping Fury on the Lateran, Cleveland, and Vatican Sarcophagi, inspired Raphael's sleeping St. Peter in his *Deliverance of St. Peter*.²⁷ (fig. 17) The Orestes sarcophagi's influence even spread out of Rome to Venice where Titian depicted Goliath as Aegisthus in his *David and Goliath*.²⁸ (fig. 18) Titian again emulated the sarcophagi with *Bacchus and Ariadne*, where Dionysus leaping from his chariot descends from Orestes standing over Clytaemnestra's body.²⁹ (fig. 19) Finally, in Parma, Correggio's *Danae* reveals Zeus' seduction by composing the narrative against a raised curtain. (fig. 20) In these later two examples of the survival of motifs from *The Oresteia*, classical subjects once more animated art. The Orestes sarcophagi, therefore, with its flying drapery and theatrical staging, allowed Greek drama and theater to inspire artists long after the curtain had fallen on their performance.

²⁶ Neils 1984, 113.

²⁷ Neils 1984, 113.

²⁸ Neils 1984, 113.

²⁹ Luba Freedman, *Classical Myth in Italian Renaissance Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Conclusion

The use of costume in Aeschylus' *The Oresteia* lends itself to study in text and image, emphasizing the importance of dress in production. Clothing and cloth play an active role in the text, and visual depictions of Aeschylus' tragedy use drapery and robes almost as characters with roles in the drama. The references and portrayals of fabrics to gain insight into their precise function in the text, in images, and, by extrapolation, in staged productions. Throughout the text, Greek vase painting, and Roman sarcophagi, fabrics further the action of the tragedy. Text and textile weave a complicated narrative of murder and purification. Aeschylus' rich descriptions of garments in his tragedy define identity through color and material. The narrative relies on a bond between character and cloth running as deep as blood.

Chapter One, "The Text" explores the role of color and costume in Aeschylus' tragedy. Beginning with the sacrifice of Iphigenia, robes trap, silence, and transform their wearer, acting as both murder weapon and Iphigenia's blood. The conversion of her costume creates an association between robes and Iphigenia throughout *Agamemnon*. Clytaemnestra's red tapestry also deceives and traps Agamemnon, allowing Clytaemnestra to avenge her daughter's death with the help of a textile that may have been intended for Iphigenia's wedding. Meanwhile, Cassandra's robes serve as her identity, clarifying her oracular status, before her murder at the hands of Clytaemnestra. Robes in *The Libation Bearers* again identify the wearer, reflect emotion, and agitate characters, with Iphigenia now forgotten. The narrative advances with costume identifying the wearers: black identifies mourners; Orestes reveals himself to his sister, Electra, through costume; Orestes sees Agamemnon's robe then proceeds to kill his mother and her lover; and, finally, Orestes recognizes the Furies only by their costume. Finally, *The Eumenides* returns to the focus of robes' color to identify the wearer. White defines the Olympic

gods, such as Apollo and Athena, while Aeschylus uses black to identify the older, chthonic gods, like the Furies. Blood red, meanwhile, marks humans and the Furies transformed into the Eumenides.

Chapter Two, “The Vases” builds on the textual analysis of Chapter One by exploring how drapery and costume in Greek vase paintings of *The Oresteia* specify a scene, identify a character, and define emotion. The colors named by Aeschylus perfectly fit the palette of Greek paint, both in Attica and Italy. The nine vases representing scenes from *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and *The Eumenides* use costumes to communicate the Aeschylean tragedy as a visual narrative, but, on the vases, drapery is usually restricted to costume; no tapestries are depicted. Clytaemnestra’s richly decorated dress acts to identify her through continuity of costume. However, her costume changes on *The Libation Bearers* vases to represent the transformation of her character. Orestes, however, maintains the same costume in most scenes. The soft fabric of his cloak contrasts with his muscles, emphasizing his heroic status. The movement of the cloak defines the moment in Aeschylus’ text represented on the vase. Yet, the Furies appear in different costumes on every vase depicting them. The length of their dresses, both short and long, act to highlight their movement, pursuit, which is integral to their existence. The costumes of these characters as depicted on Greek vases set the stage for the Roman sarcophagi.

Chapter Three, “The Sarcophagi” considers how Roman sarcophagi adapt both the textual and ceramic tradition. The relief sculpture uses drapery to define the narrative, both as a participant and as a divider. The large pieces of cloth depicted on all of the sarcophagi serve as curtains separating scenes as well as costumes and sets, and the differences in the two types of sarcophagi affect the reading of these fabrics. Curtains may appear more or less menacing

depending of the placement of the Furies in front or behind. Additionally, the transformation of Orestes' costume from cloaked to mostly nude across the relief may reflect a costume change occurring during performance or the metamorphosis of fabrics themselves. One piece of material may act as robe, tapestry, and curtain in a single scene. The lives of the sarcophagi do not end with their patrons; they influence artists as soon as they resurface after their burial.

The union of text, pottery, and relief may give insight to the appearance of ancient productions. As the text describes, Clytaemnestra's tapestry must be red, the mourners and Furies must wear black, and the Eumenides must wear red. Color defines Aeschylus' tragedy as a way to connect and engage the audience. When sitting in a theater, characters are easiest to recognize and identify based on costume color. Although the Furies' dresses may change from vase to vase, their color remains the same, and through the help of the sarcophagi, their dresses become easier to picture. As the long dresses appear on both vase and relief, their continuity of costume may indicate their appearance onstage. Although text and image give an incomplete picture of ancient production, the perseverance of the written and visual narrative has led to *The Oresteia*'s continued performance today, allowing young artists like myself to engage with the tragedy in all levels of production.

I came to Bard in the fall of 2013, intending to major in studio art. At the time, I wanted to be a graphic designer and children's book illustrator, and Bard seemed like a great place to challenge myself intellectually while also pursuing these fields. After my first semester, I realized that funding my future career in art required employment in college. A close friend of mine suggested we both try to get jobs in the Fisher Center's costume shop. Following the easiest interview of my life, in which I confirmed that I did, in fact, know how to sew, I was

hired. I started out mostly cleaning and making small repairs on costumes until I was asked to work wardrobe for a production. I immediately loved the challenge, and when I returned the next fall, I asked to work wardrobe for every production.

That winter, some friends of mine produced a theater festival, and I asked to help out with costumes. I was encouraged to design some of the plays, and I realized my new passion for costume design. I began working harder in the costume shop, dedicating less time in the studio, but with moderation looming on the horizon, I tried to unite my work on costumes with my major. That spring, I attempted to moderate into studio art with what I believed to be a promising portfolio. The members of my board, however, did not agree. They told me it was too bad Bard did not offer any design courses and that maybe I should consider switching majors to theater. Unfortunately, theater was just as accommodating. I considered majoring in math, as I had always excelled in the subject, but I knew I wanted to write my senior project on costume design. In a moment where everything in life just magically clicks, I realized that Classics might be the major where I could combine my loves for theater and art to study costume design. After telling my idea to Rob, I was quickly encouraged to become a Classics major with the promise of writing a senior project on costume. I moderated into Classics the following fall and kicked my studies into high gear, completing the graduation requirements and, of course, senior project in my remaining two years at Bard.

Following graduation, I will take on an internship at the Shakespeare Theater of New Jersey as their wardrobe intern with the hopes of moving to New York City to work on Broadway this fall. I hope that this project will inform all of my future designs for productions, Classical or contemporary.

Appendix I: Surviving Vases Depicting *Agamemnon*

Vase Number ¹	Technique ²	Shape ³	Date ⁴	Attribution ⁵	Decoration ⁶	Scene ⁷
204027	Red-figure	Kylix	-500 to -450	Brygos Painter by Hartwig	A,B: Undecorated I: Woman running with axe (Clytaemnestra), door	Tragedy
275233	Red-figure	Calyx Krater	-500 to -450	Dokimasia Painter by Beazley	A: Death of Agamemnon, in net, Aegisthus with sword, women, one with double axe (Clytaemnestra), all in building (Doric entablature with Ionic column) B: Death of Aegisthus, draped, seated on chair with lyre, Orestes (warrior), women, one with double axe (Clytaemnestra), all in building (Doric entablature)	Myth
216252	Red-figure	Kylix	-450 to -400	Marlay Painter by Beazley	A: Ajax and Cassandra, at statue of Athena, woman fleeing with boxes B: Youth in chlamys and petasos with spears, pursuing woman, draped man with sceptre (?), woman I: Death of Cassandra, at altar, Clytaemnestra with axe, tree, tripod	Myth

1459	Red-figure	Hydria	unknown	Nekyia Painter by Bazant	SH: Clytaemnestra or Hypermetra (?), holding sword over Cassandra or Lynkeus(?)	Myth
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¹ Vase numbers from the Beazley Archive.

² Technique from the Beazley Archive.

³ Shape from the Beazley Archive.

⁴ Dates from the Beazley Archive.

⁵ Attributions from the Beazley Archive.

⁶ Decoration description from the Beazley Archive.

⁷ My analysis of whether the scene shown on the vase depicts the myth, tragedy, or interpretation of a scene.

Appendix II: Surviving Vases Depicting *The Libation Bearers*

Vase Number ¹	Technique ²	Shape ³	Date ⁴	Attribution ⁵	Decoration ⁶	Scene ⁷
6916	Black-figure	Hydria	-575 to -525	Lydos by Schefold	BD: Orestes and Aegisthus (?) (fight), onlookers SH: Centauromachy, Herakles and centaurs	Myth
201917	Red-figure	Pelike	-525 to -475	Berlin Painter by Beazley	A: Death of Aegisthus, Orestes, Clytaemnestra (all named) B: Clytaemnestra and Talthybios	Myth
8879	Black-figure	Lekythos	-500 to -450	Sappho Painter by Haspels	BD: Orestes, Electra, Pylades, teacher at tomb (omphalos) with snake of Agamemnon (?) shield device, panther head	Myth
202912	Red-figure	Stamnos	-500 to -450	Copenhagen Painter by Beazley	A: Orestes killing seated Aegisthus between Clytaemnestra with axe and Electra (all named) B: Youth with spear between draped men with staffs and sprig	Myth
12959	Red-figure	Calyx Krater	-500 to -450	Aegisthus Painter by Unknown Copenhagen Painter by Unknown	A,B: Death of Aegisthus, Orestes, Clytaemnestra, Talthybios, women, Erigone (?) with Penthilos (?)	Myth

205666	Red-figure	Column Krater	-500 to -450	Aegisthus Painter by Beazley	A: Death of Aegisthus, on table, Orestes, Clytaemnestra with axe, Pylades, woman (Electra ?) B: Komos (erotic ?), youths	Myth
275233	Red-figure	Calyx Krater	-500 to -450	Dokimasia Painter by Beazley	A: Death of Agamemnon, in net, Aegisthus with sword, women, one with double axe (Clytaemnestra), all in building (Doric entablature with Ionic column) B: Death of Aegisthus, draped, seated on chair with lyre, Orestes (warrior), women, one with double axe (Clytaemnestra), all in building (Doric entablature)	Myth
219000	Red-figure	Skyphos	-450 to -400	Penelope Painter by Beazley	A: Funerary, women, one with sash one with flat basket with sashes at tomb of Agamemnon with stele with inscription, lekythos, wreaths B: Youths in chlamydes and petasoi with spears (Orestes and Pylades)	Tragedy

215958	Red-figure	Oinoche	-450 to -400	Shuvalov Painter by Beazley	BD: Youth in pilos, chlamys and boots with sword and scabbard (Ion or Orestes) attacking woman seated on altar, apollo with laurel staff	Myth
231036	Red-figure	Pelike	-400 to -300	Jena Painter by Shefton	A: Orestes, cutting lock of hair, and Electra, at tomb of Agamemnon (named), youths seated, with chlamydes and spears, women B: Draped youths	Tragedy
N/A	Red- figure ⁸	Amphora ⁹	c. - 380 ¹⁰	Brooklyn- Budapest Painter ¹¹		Tragedy
N/A	Red- figure ¹²	Pelike ¹³	c. - 350 ¹⁴	Choephoroi Painter ¹⁵		Interpretat ion
N/A	Red- figure ¹⁶	Amphora ¹⁷	c. - 350 ¹⁸	Painter of the Geneva Orestes ¹⁹		Interpretat ion
N/A	Red- figure ²⁰	Amphora ²¹	c. - 350 ²²	Painter of Wurzburg H 5739 ²³		Interpretat ion
9003781	Red-figure	Calyx Krater	unkno wn	unknown	A: Pylades, Electra and Orestes B: Satyr and maenad	Interpretat ion

¹ Vase numbers from the Beazley Archive where applicable.

² Technique from the Beazley Archive unless otherwise noted.

³ Shape from the Beazley Archive unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Dates from the Beazley Archive unless otherwise noted.

⁵ Attributions from the Beazley Archive unless otherwise noted.

⁶ Decoration description from the Beazley Archive unless otherwise noted.

⁷ My analysis of whether the scene shown on the vase depicts the myth, tragedy, or interpretation of a scene.

⁸ Oliver Taplin, *Pots and Plays: Interactions between Tragedy and Greek Vase-painting of the Fourth Century B.C.* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2007), 52.

- ⁹ Taplin 2007, 52.
- ¹⁰ Taplin 2007, 52.
- ¹¹ Taplin 2007, 52.
- ¹² Taplin 2007, 53.
- ¹³ Taplin 2007, 53.
- ¹⁴ Taplin 2007, 53.
- ¹⁵ Taplin 2007, 53.
- ¹⁶ Taplin 2007, 54.
- ¹⁷ Taplin 2007, 54.
- ¹⁸ Taplin 2007, 54.
- ¹⁹ Taplin 2007, 54.
- ²⁰ Taplin 2007, 56.
- ²¹ Taplin 2007, 56.
- ²² Taplin 2007, 56.
- ²³ Taplin 2007, 56.

Appendix III: Surviving Vases Depicting *The Eumenides*

Vase Number ¹	Technique ²	Shape ³	Date ⁴	Attribution ⁵	Decoration ⁶	Scene ⁷
214713	Red-figure	Column Krater	-475 to -425	Orestes Painter by Beazley	A: Orestes with sword and spears on stone altar in Delphi, Apollo with branch, Furies B: Draped youths with staffs	Interpretation
207635	Red-figure	Column Krater	-475 to -425	Painter of Brussels R 330 by Beazley	A: Orestes in Delphi, in petasos and chlamys, with spears, Apollo seated with lyre and laurel, Artemis with torch, Pylades in petasos and chlamys, with spears B: Youths, women	Myth
3724	Red-figure	Chous	-450 to -400	Aison by Lezzi-Hafter Meidias Painter by Robertson	BD: Erigone and Orestes before Apollo (or Kreusa and Ion before Apollo ?)	Tragedy
N/A	Red-figure ⁸	Bell Krater ⁹	c. - 400 ¹⁰	Hearst Painter ¹¹		Tragedy
10546	Red-figure	Pelike	-400 to -300	Kerch by unknown	A: Orestes at Delphi, omphalos, Furies with torches and snakes	Interpretation
N/A	Red-figure ¹²	Bell Krater ¹³	c. - 380 ¹⁴	Eumenides Painter ¹⁵		Myth
N/A	Red-figure ¹⁶	Bell Krater ¹⁷	c. - 375 ¹⁸	Hoppin Painter ¹⁹	A: Orestes at the altar of Apollo at Delphi B: Three standing men ²⁰	Tragedy

N/A	Red-figure ²¹	Bell Krater ²²	c. - 360 ²³	Judgment Painter ²⁴	A: Orestes at Delphi B: Dionysos and maenad ²⁵	Interpretation
N/A	Red-figure ²⁶	Volute Krater ²⁷	c. - 360 ²⁸	Black Fury Painter ²⁹		Interpretation
N/A	Gnathia ³⁰	Calyx Krater ³¹	c. - 350 ³²	Konnakis Painter ³³		Tragedy
9003792	Red-figure	Bell Krater	unknown	unknown	A: Orestes in Delphi B: Two draped youths	Tragedy

¹ Vase numbers from the Beazley Archive where applicable.

² Technique from the Beazley Archive unless otherwise noted.

³ Shape from the Beazley Archive unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Dates from the Beazley Archive unless otherwise noted.

⁵ Attributions from the Beazley Archive unless otherwise noted.

⁶ Decoration description from the Beazley Archive unless otherwise noted.

⁷ My analysis of whether the scene shown on the vase depicts the myth, tragedy, or interpretation of a scene.

⁸ Oliver Taplin, *Pots and Plays: Interactions between Tragedy and Greek Vase-painting of the Fourth Century B.C.* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2007), 67.

⁹ Taplin 2007, 67.

¹⁰ Taplin 2007, 67.

¹¹ Taplin 2007, 62.

¹² Taplin 2007, 62.

¹³ Taplin 2007, 62.

¹⁴ Taplin 2007, 62.

¹⁵ Taplin 2007, 62.

¹⁶ Museum Label, *Bell Krater: A, Orestes at the Altar of Apollo at Delphi; B, Three standing Men*, Yale Art Gallery, New Haven, CT, 2017.

¹⁷ Museum Label, *Bell Krater: A, Orestes at the Altar of Apollo at Delphi; B, Three standing Men*, Yale Art Gallery, New Haven, CT, 2017.

¹⁸ Museum Label, *Bell Krater: A, Orestes at the Altar of Apollo at Delphi; B, Three standing Men*, Yale Art Gallery, New Haven, CT, 2017.

¹⁹ Museum Label, *Bell Krater: A, Orestes at the Altar of Apollo at Delphi; B, Three standing Men*, Yale Art Gallery, New Haven, CT, 2017.

²⁰ Museum Label, *Bell Krater: A, Orestes at the Altar of Apollo at Delphi; B, Three standing Men*, Yale Art Gallery, New Haven, CT, 2017.

²¹ Museum Label, *Mixing bowl (calyx krater) depicting Orestes at the Delphic Omphalos*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston, MA, 2017.

²² Museum Label, *Mixing bowl (calyx krater) depicting Orestes at the Delphic Omphalos*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston, MA, 2017.

²³ Museum Label, *Mixing bowl (calyx krater) depicting Orestes at the Delphic Omphalos*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston, MA, 2017.

²⁴ Museum Label, *Mixing bowl (calyx krater) depicting Orestes at the Delphic Omphalos*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston, MA, 2017.

²⁵ Museum Label, *Mixing bowl (calyx krater) depicting Orestes at the Delphic Omphalos*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston, MA, 2017.

²⁶ Taplin 2007, 61.

²⁷ Taplin 2007, 61.

²⁸ Taplin 2007, 61.

²⁹ Taplin 2007, 61.

³⁰ Taplin 2007, 64.

³¹ Taplin 2007, 64.

³² Taplin 2007, 64.

³³ Taplin 2007, 64.

Appendix IV: The Surviving Orestes Sarcophagi

Sarcophagus Number ¹	Type ²	Date ³	Provenance ⁴
21263	L	135-140 C.E.	Tomba della Medusa, Lateran Palace collection; Museo Gregoriano Profano, Vatican
4808	C-V	150 C.E.	From Rome, since 1928 in Cleveland Museum of Art
6524	C-V	150 C.E.	Since 1558 installed in the façade of the Cathedral of S. Maria del Fiore; in 1877 Museo dell' Opera del Duomo in Florence
131333	C-V	160-170 C.E.	Was in the 16th century before the church S. Stefano del Cacco. Around 1638 the sarcophagus was in the garden of a villa near Porta del Popolo in Rome. Between 1628 and 1630 the sarcophagus must have been owned by Giustiniani. Now in Palazzo collection.
131708	C-V	160-170 C.E.	First set up in the sacristy of S. Maria Aracoeli in Rome; then moved by Barberini in 1772 to the Vatican Museum.
2136	C-V	160-180 C.E.	Berlin, Schloss Glienicke
11813	C-V	160-180 C.E.	Probably from Rome; At the latest since 1488 in Madrid's Museo Arqueológico Nacional
131412	C-V	160-180 C.E.	Berlin, Schloss Glienicke
15221	C-V	Mid 2nd Century C.E.	Formerly built in the east façade of Villa Borghese; 1808 the Louvre acquired
131661	C-V	Mid 2nd Century C.E.	Erlangen, Antikensammlung / Sammlung der Universität
131666	C-V	Mid 2nd Century C.E.	Acquired by John Marshall in Rome; New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art

¹ Numbers from *Arachne* database.

² I identified each sarcophagus' type based on the grave scenes and entrance of the Furies. "L" corresponds to Lateran type, while "C-V" corresponds to Cleveland-Vatican type.

³ Dates from *Arachne* database.

⁴ Provenance from *Arachne* database in German. Translated from German via Google Translate.



1. Brygos Painter, *Vase No. 204027*, c. 475 B.C.E. (Beazley Archive)



2. Dokimasia Painter, *Mixing bowl (calyx krater) with the killing of Agamemnon (obverse)*, c.460 B.C.E. (Museum of Fine Arts Boston)



2a. Dokimasia Painter, *Mixing bowl (calyx krater) with the killing of Agamemnon (obverse)*, c.460 B.C.E. (Museum of Fine Arts Boston)



2b. Dokimasia Painter, *Mixing bowl (calyx krater) with the killing of Agamemnon (obverse)*, c.460 B.C.E. (Museum of Fine Arts Boston)



3. Marlay Painter, *Vase No. 216252*, c. 425 B.C.E. (Beazley Archive)



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4. Penelope Painter, *Vase No. 219000*, c. 425 B.C.E. (Beazley Archive)



5. Dokimasia Painter, *Mixing bowl (calyx krater) with the killing of Agamemnon (reverse)*, c.460 B.C.E. (Museum of Fine Arts Boston)



6. Shuvalov Painter, *Vase No. 215958*, c. 435 B.C.E. (Beazley Archive)



7. Hoppin Painter, c. 375 B.C.E. (Yale University Art Gallery)



8. Judgement Painter, *Mixing bowl (bell-krater) depicting Orestes at the Delphic Omphalos*, c. 360 B.C.E. (Museum of Fine Arts Boston)



9. Kerch, *Vase No. 10546*, c. 350 B.C.E. (Taplin *Pots and Plays*)



10. *Meleager Sarcophagus*, c.180 C.E. (Louvre Museum)



11. *Patroclus Sarcophagus*, c.160 C.E. (Ostia Archaeological Museum)



12. *Lateran Sarcophagus*, c. 135-140 C.E. (Egisto Sani)



12a. *Lateran Sarcophagus*, c. 135-140 C.E. (Egisto Sani)



12b. *Lateran Sarcophagus*, c. 135-140 C.E. (Egisto Sani)



12c. *Lateran Sarcophagus*, c. 135-140 C.E. (Egisto Sani)



12d. *Lateran Sarcophagus*, c. 135-140 C.E. (Egisto Sani)



12e. *Lateran Sarcophagus*, c. 135-140 C.E. (Egisto Sani)



13. *Cleveland Sarcophagus*, c. 150 C.E. (Cleveland Museum of Art)



13a. *Cleveland Sarcophagus*, c. 150 C.E. (Cleveland Museum of Art)



13b. *Cleveland Sarcophagus*, c. 150 C.E. (Cleveland Museum of Art)



13c. *Cleveland Sarcophagus*, c. 150 C.E. (Cleveland Museum of Art)



13d. *Cleveland Sarcophagus*, c. 150 C.E. (Cleveland Museum of Art)



13e. *Cleveland Sarcophagus*, c. 150 C.E. (Cleveland Museum of Art)



14. *Vatican Sarcophagus*, c. 160-170 C.E. (Marie-Lan Nguyen)



14a. *Vatican Sarcophagus*, c. 160-170 C.E. (Marie-Lan Nguyen)



14b. *Vatican Sarcophagus*, c. 160-170 C.E. (Marie-Lan Nguyen)



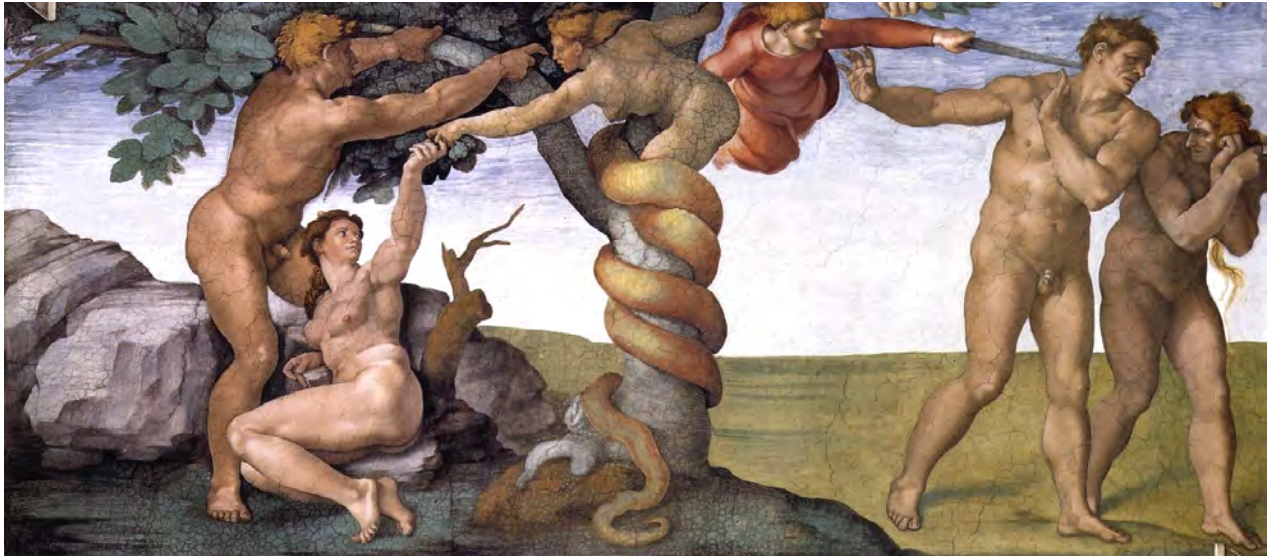
14c. *Vatican Sarcophagus*, c. 160-170 C.E. (Marie-Lan Nguyen)



14d. *Vatican Sarcophagus*, c. 160-170 C.E. (Marie-Lan Nguyen)



14e. *Vatican Sarcophagus*, c. 160-170 C.E. (Marie-Lan Nguyen)



15. Michelangelo, *Sistine Ceiling (Expulsion)*, 1509 C.E. (Web Gallery of Art)



16. Artemisia Gentileschi, *Susanna and the Elders*, c. 1610 C.E. (Alonso de Mendoza)



17. Raphael, *Deliverance of St. Peter*, 1514 C.E. (Web Gallery of Art)



18. Titian, *David and Goliath*, 1542-1544 C.E. (Eugene)



19. Titian, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, 1520-1523 C.E. (Eugene)



20. Correggio, *Danaë*, c. 1531 C.E. (Jacob)

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