The background is a collage of ancient Greek vase paintings. On the left, a man in a red tunic holds a sword. In the center, a woman is depicted with a snake coiled around her neck. On the right, a man in a patterned tunic holds a dagger. The text is overlaid on this collage in a stylized, orange-red font.

There's a rule that lays it down that
spattering of life-blood spilling
on the ground must summon further
bloodshed. Murder calls upon an
Erinyes to draw on deadly
retribution for the murdered.

(400-405)

The background is a collage of ancient Greek art. On the left, a fragment of a vase shows a woman's arm and hand. In the center, a woman is depicted in a seated position, possibly from a vase painting. On the right, a woman is shown seated on a throne, wearing a crown and holding a scepter, likely representing a goddess or queen. The overall color palette is dark with highlights of gold and red.

ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ

that is,

Choephoroi

usually translated as

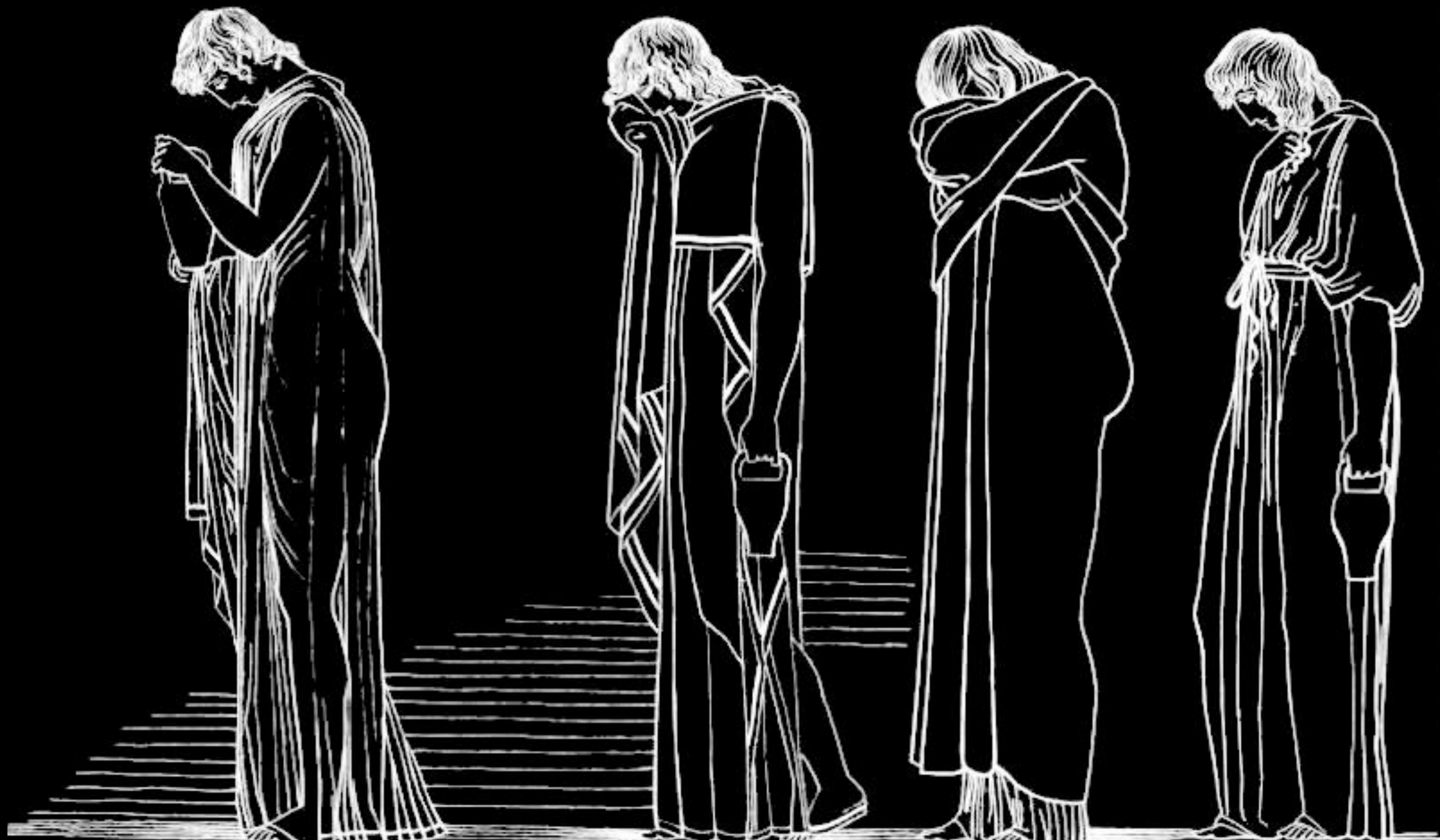
Libation Bearers

but known to us as

Women at the Graveside

A presentation by Kevin Batton

March 19, 2021



I. The Play





KINEMA
SARAJEVO

ELEKTRA

Apollo's oracle commanded me
to carry out this dangerous task—

...

Should I believe in oracles like these?

Well, even if I did not,

still it must be done, the deed.

For there are many urgings which combine to this one end

(270-298)



Against our enemies I ask for vengeance
so you killers shall be duly killed in return.

(142-3)



O curse upon this house, so hard to overthrow...
(692)



I say the dead are slaughtering the living.
(886)



O lord Apollo, here they come in swarms.
And from their eyes they drip disgusting blood and pus.
(1057-8)



Table 1: Complete *Oresteia* Casts, Overview

	Müller	DFA	Knox	Pavlovskis	Whallon	Ewans	Ashby	Cohen	Marshall
<i>Agamemnon</i>									
Watch (39)	A	A/B	A	B	B	A	B	B	A
Clytem (344)	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Herald (126)	A	A/B	A	B	A	A	B	A	A
Agam (84)	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Cassandra (178)	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Aegisthus (64)	B	A/B	●	A	A	A	B	A	A (1)
<i>Libation Bearers</i>									
Orestes (333)	A	A	A	A	A	C	A	B	A
Electra (170)	B	C	●	C	C	B	B	C	C (2)
Door (1)	●	●	●	C*	D	●	●	C	C
Clytem (50)	C	C	C	C	C	B	C	C	C
Nurse (40)	C	A/B/C	●	B	B	A/B	B	C	A (3)
Aegisthus (15)	B	A/B/C	●	B	A	A/C	B	A	A (1)
Servant (11)	B	B/D	B	B	D	A	B	D	B
Pylades (3)	B	B	B	B	B	D	B	A	B
<i>Eumenides</i>									
Pythia (64)	C	C	●	B	B	C	B	C	B (4)
Apollo (141)	B	B	B	B	B	A	C	A	B
Orestes(102)	A	A	A	A	A	B	A	B	A
Clytem (40)	C	C	C	C	C	C	B	C	C
Athena (245)	C	C	C	C	C	C	B	C	C
<i>Total lines per actor</i>									
A	<u>684</u>	<u>519-803</u>	<u>684+</u>	<u>583</u>	<u>724</u>	<u>465-520</u>	<u>519</u>	433	<u>803</u>
B	<u>582</u>	<u>322-617</u>	<u>333+</u>	<u>617</u>	<u>465</u>	<u>500/540</u>	<u>995</u>	<u>652</u>	<u>397</u>
C	<u>783</u>	<u>913/968</u>	<u>679+</u>	<u>850</u>	<u>849</u>	<u>1026/1041</u>	<u>535</u>	<u>954</u>	<u>850</u>
(D)	n/a	0/11	n/a	n/a	12	3	n/a	11	n/a

Key: singing part; ● does not consider
Pavlovskis=Garvie & Walton for LB
* considered only by Garvie



Some useful words

δίκη (*dikē*)

justice, right

ἄρα (*ara*)

prayer; curse

Electra: I lay this hostile curse upon their heads:
to us, though, send good fortune,
helped by Earth and Justice who brings victory. (144-6)

αἰτία (*aitia*)

responsibility; guilt, blame; cause

Orestes: My incitement to on this action
was Apollo's Delphic oracle, which told me
I would be exempt from guilt if I did this... (129-31)

II. The Trilogy



Trilogies

Phineus (472)

Persians

Glaucus

Prometheus*

Laius (467)

Oedipus

Seven Against Thebes

Sphinx*

Suppliants (?)

Egyptians

Danaids

Amymone*

Agamemnon (458)

Choephoroi

Eumenides

Proteus*

*satyr play



Agamemnon



Choephoroi



Euminides



Agamemnon

Past



Choephoroi

Present



Euminides

Future



Agamemnon

Past

Individual



Choephoroi

Present

oikos (household, family)



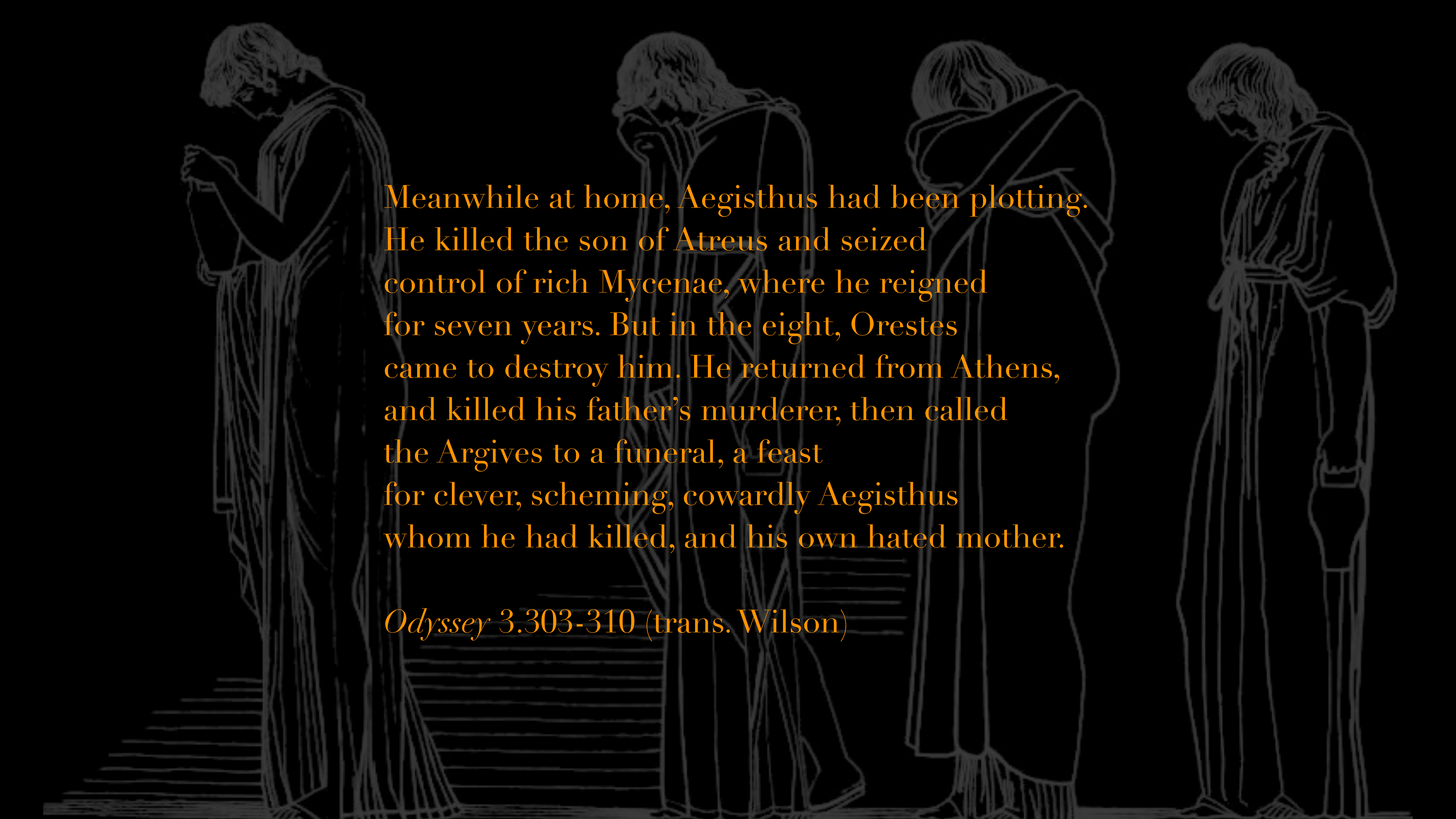
Euminides

Future

polis (city)

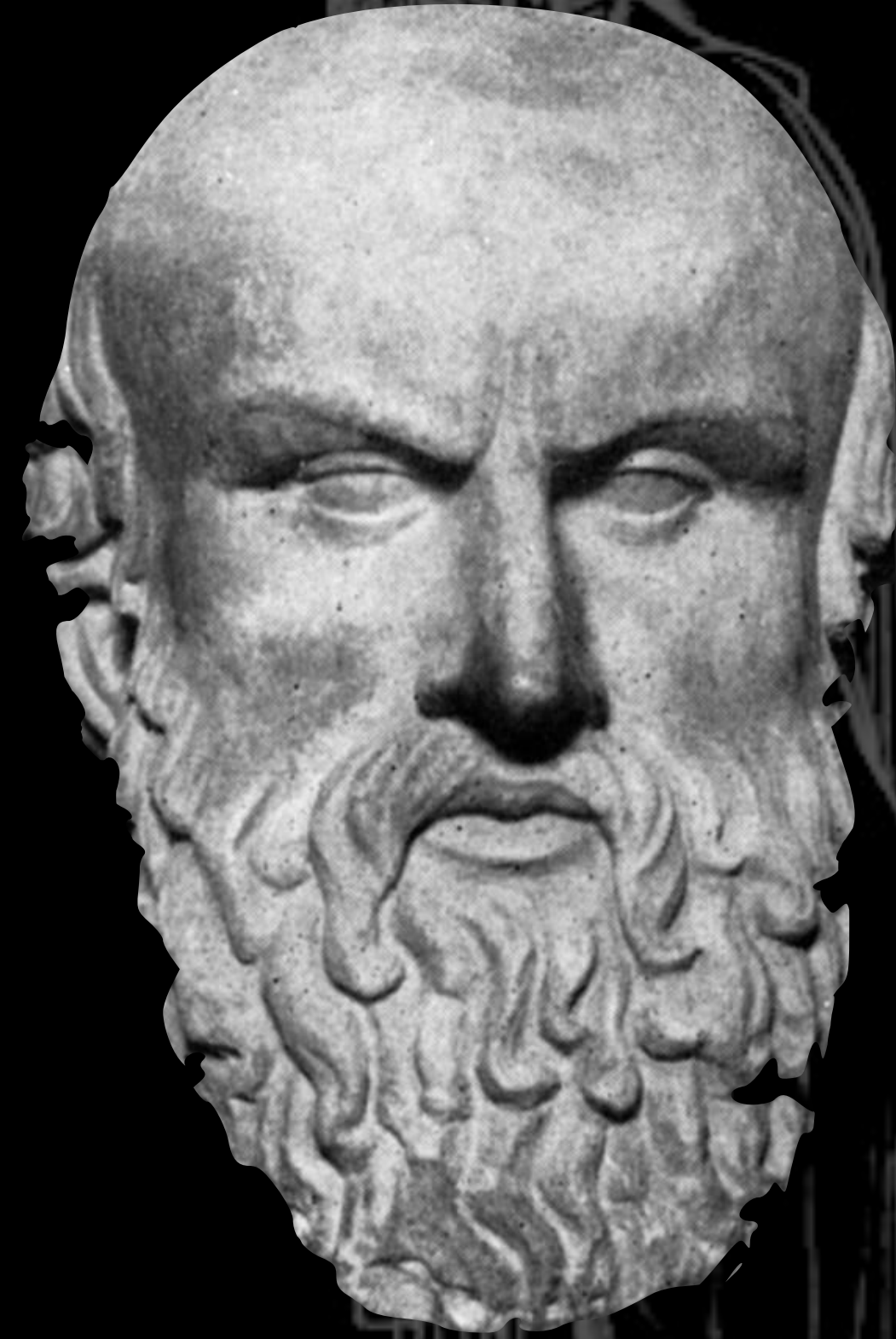
III. The Story



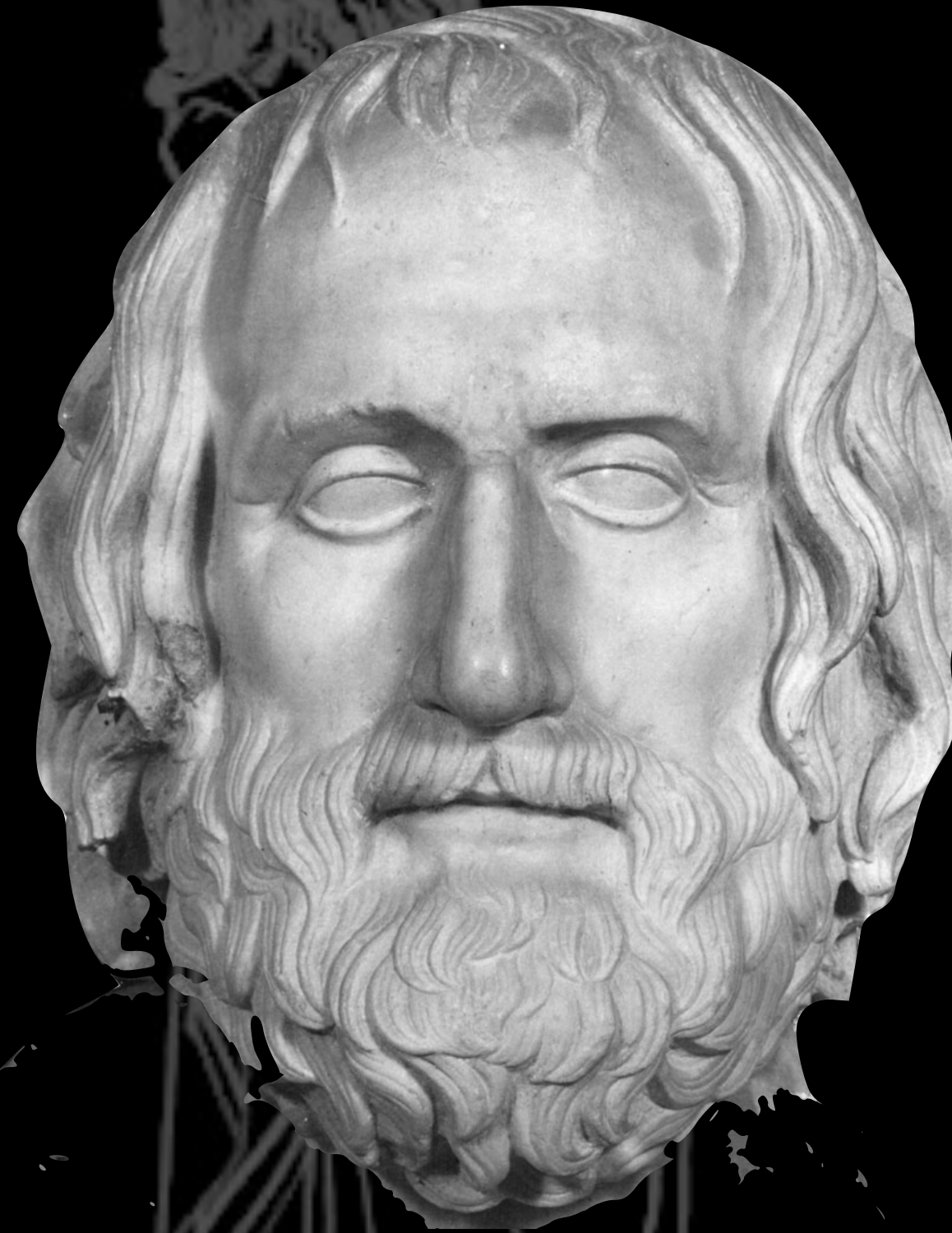


Meanwhile at home, Aegisthus had been plotting. He killed the son of Atreus and seized control of rich Mycenae, where he reigned for seven years. But in the eighth, Orestes came to destroy him. He returned from Athens, and killed his father's murderer, then called the Argives to a funeral, a feast for clever, scheming, cowardly Aegisthus whom he had killed, and his own hated mother.

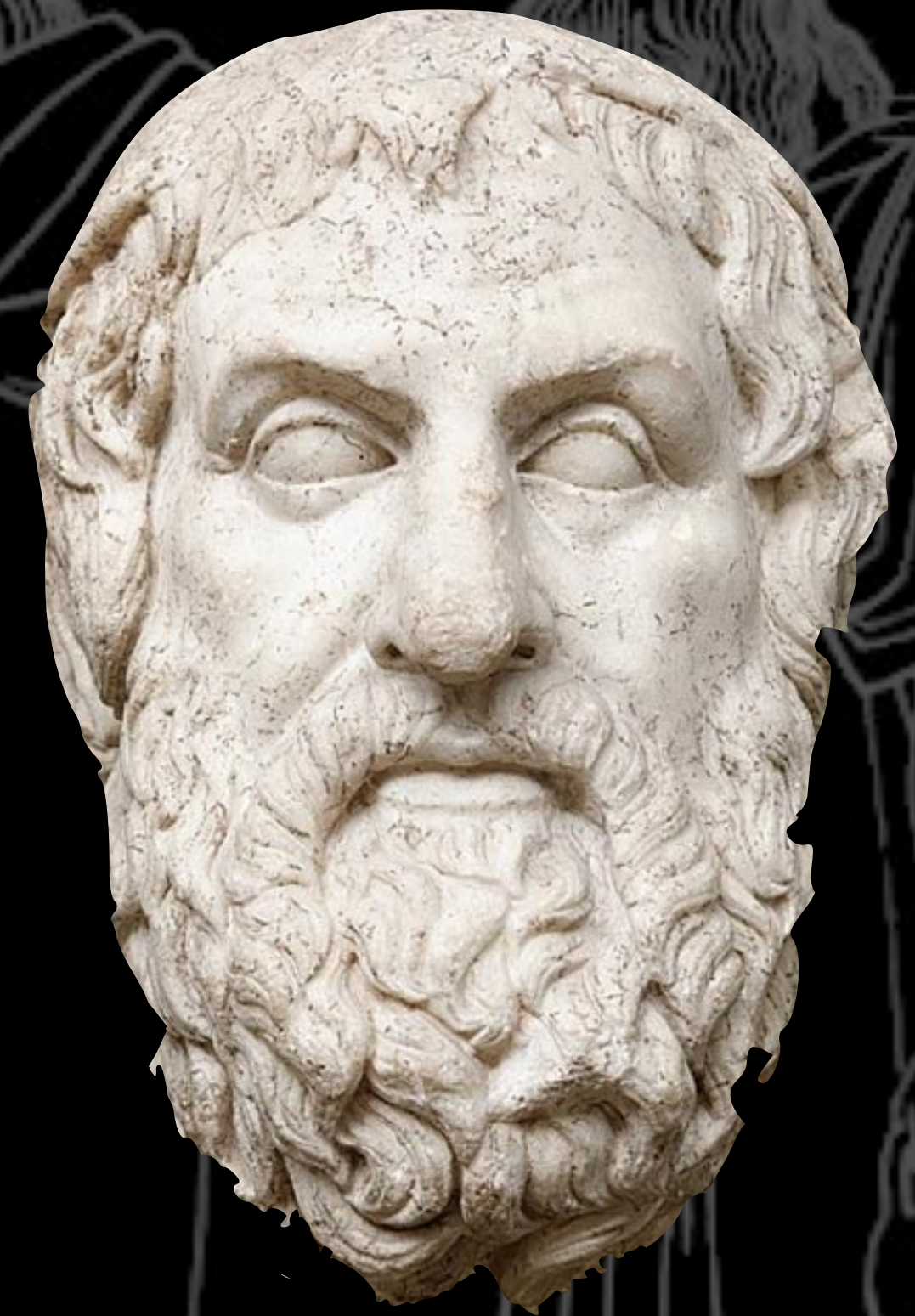
Odyssey 3.303-310 (trans. Wilson)



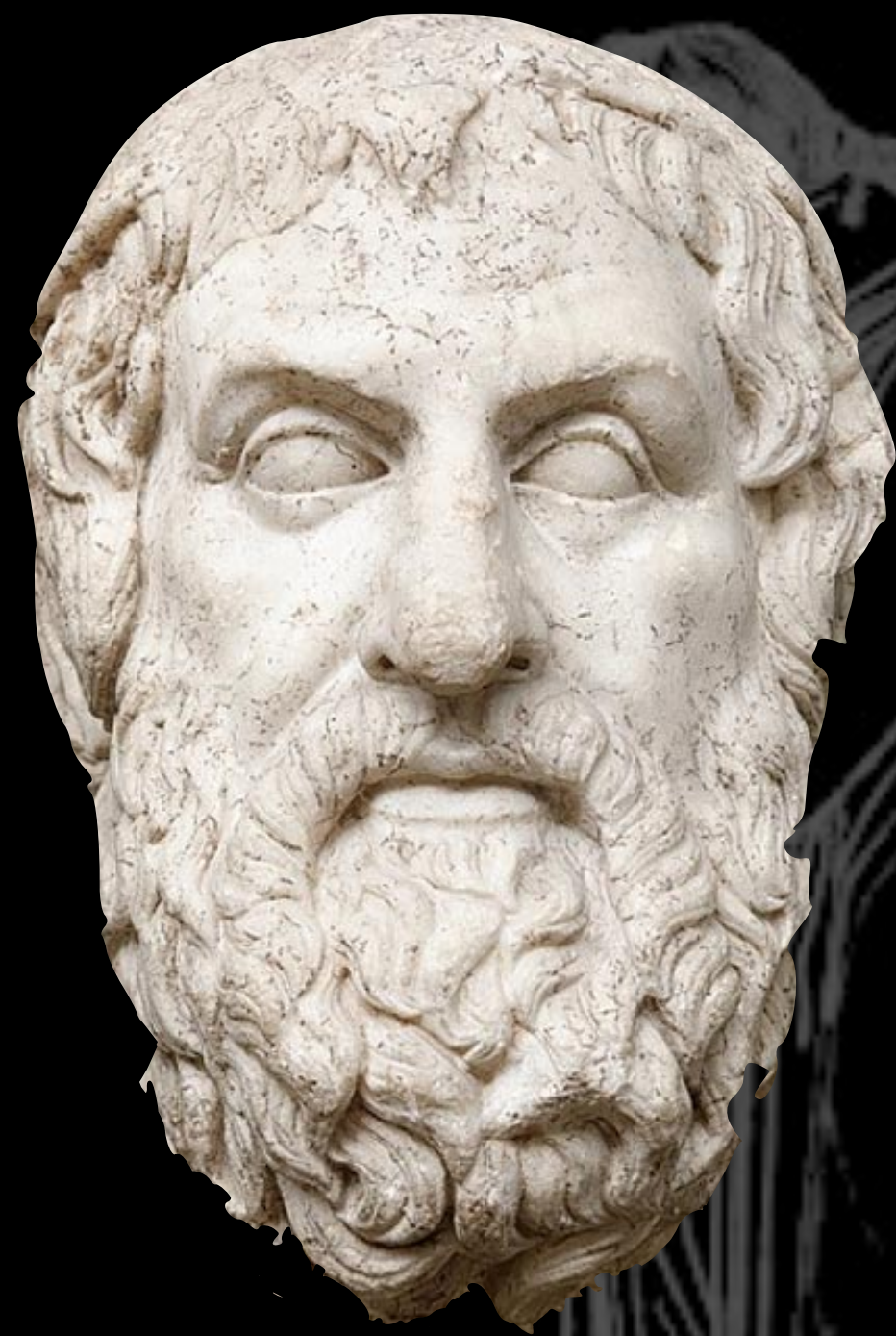
Aeschylus
Choephoroi (458 BCE)



Euripides
Electra (~418 BCE?)

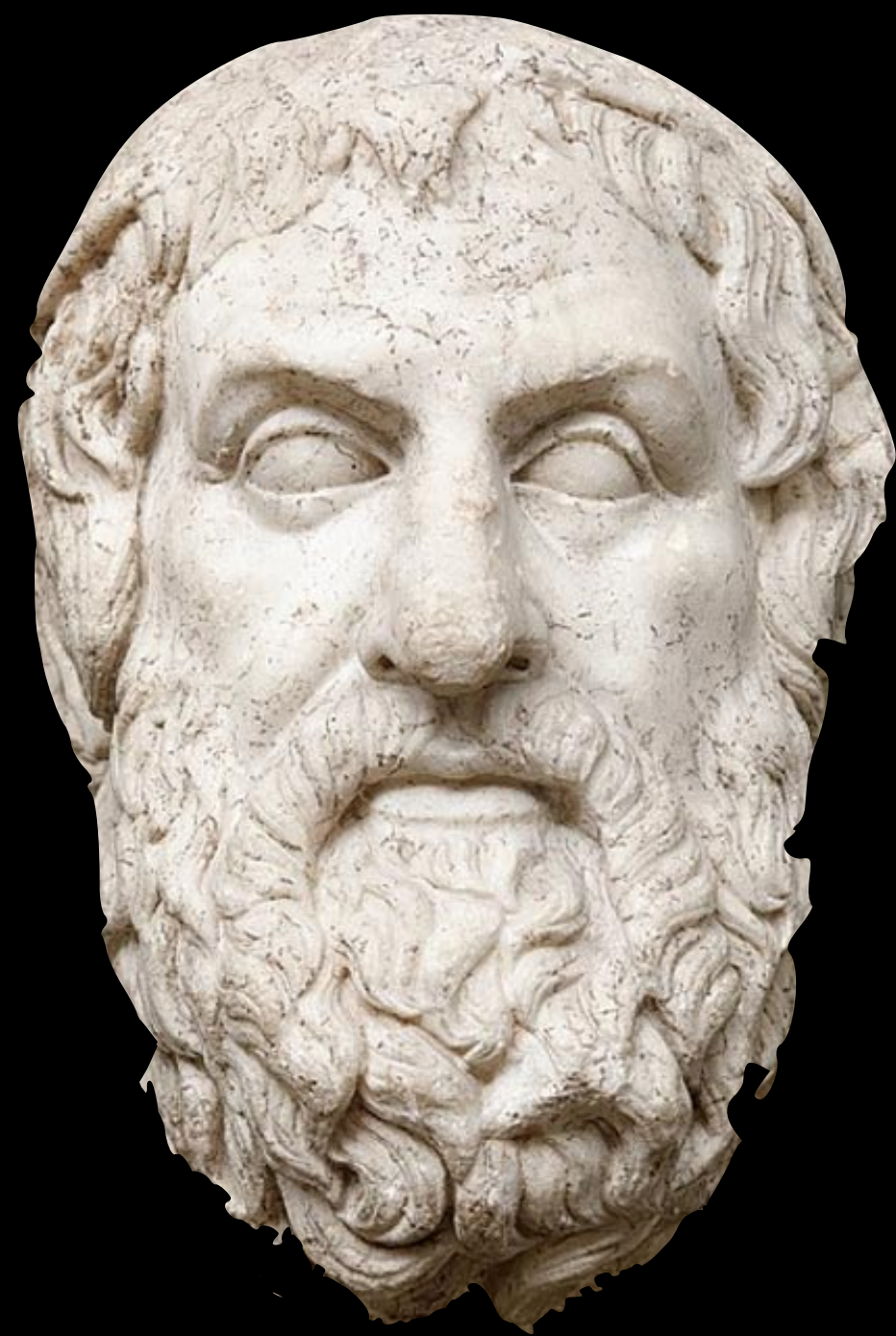


Sophocles
Electra (~413 BCE)



Sophocles
Electra (~413 BCE)





Sophocles

Electra (~413 BCE)

Electra: Do not teach me falseness to those I love.

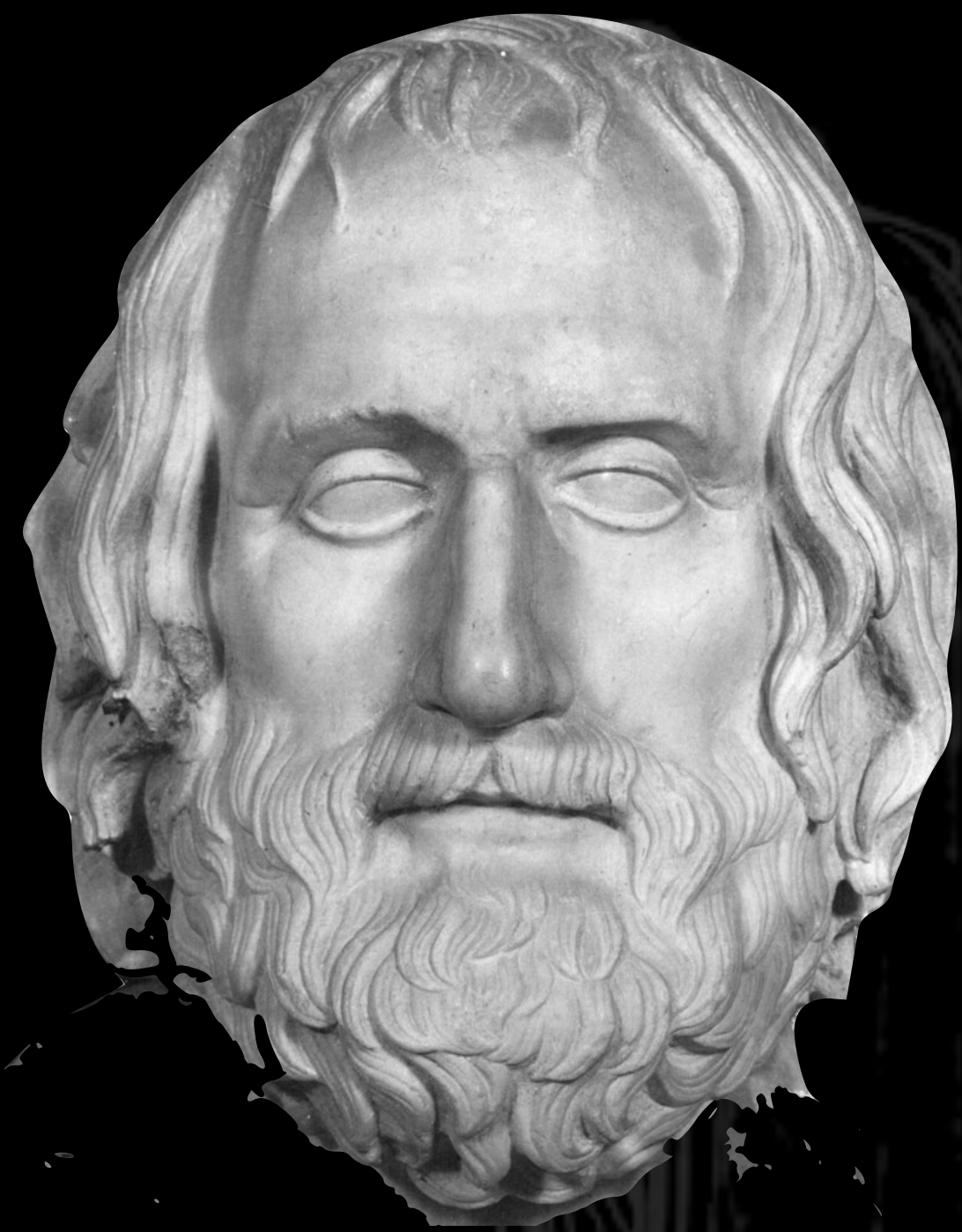
Chrysothemis: That is not what I teach, but to yield to authority.

Electra: Practice your flattery. This is not my way.

Chrysothemis: It is a good thing, not to fall through stupidity.

Electra: I shall fall, if I must, revenging my father.

(395-9)



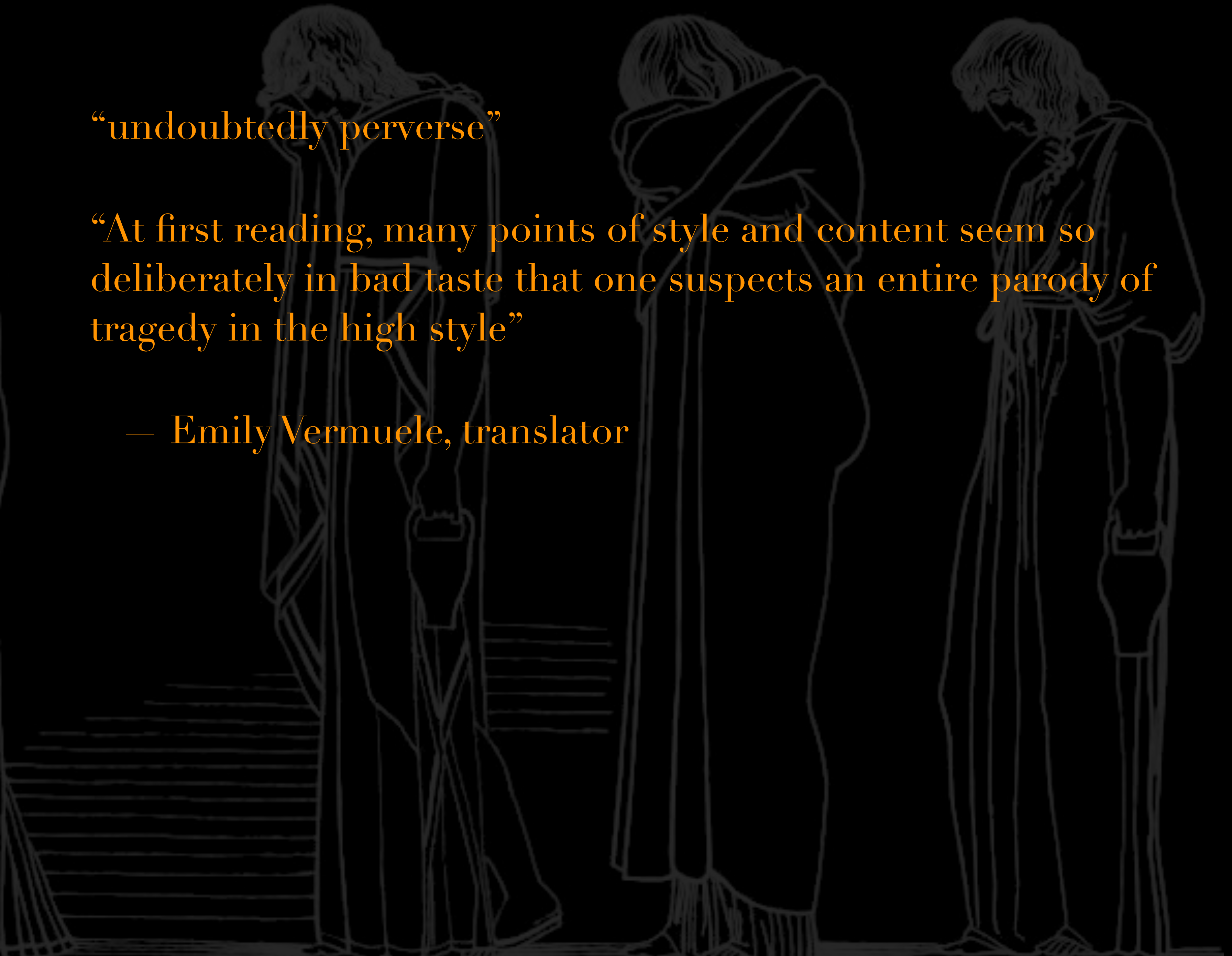
Euripides

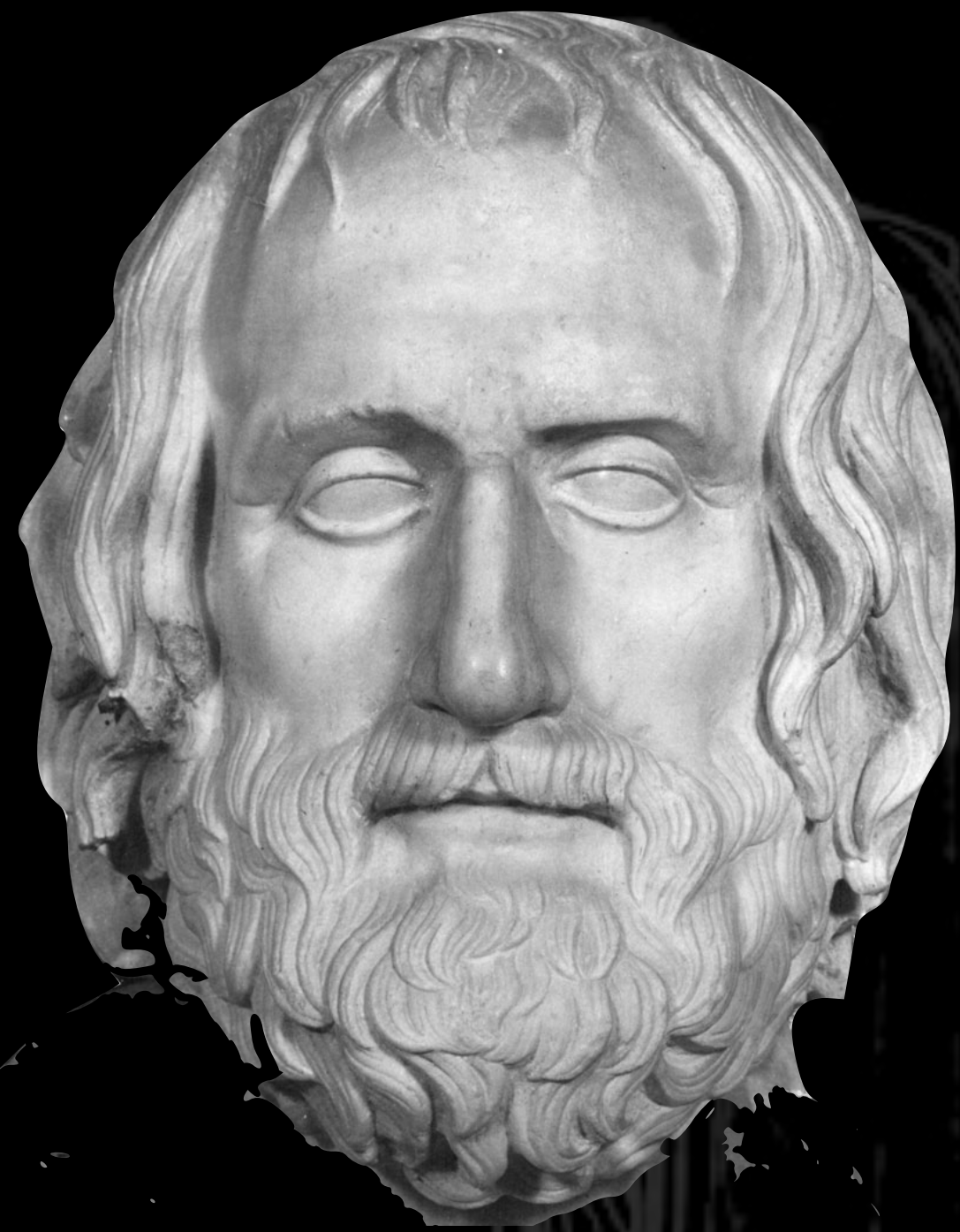
Electra (~418 BCE?)

“undoubtedly perverse”

“At first reading, many points of style and content seem so deliberately in bad taste that one suspects an entire parody of tragedy in the high style”

— Emily Vermuele, translator





Euripides

Electra (~418 BCE?)

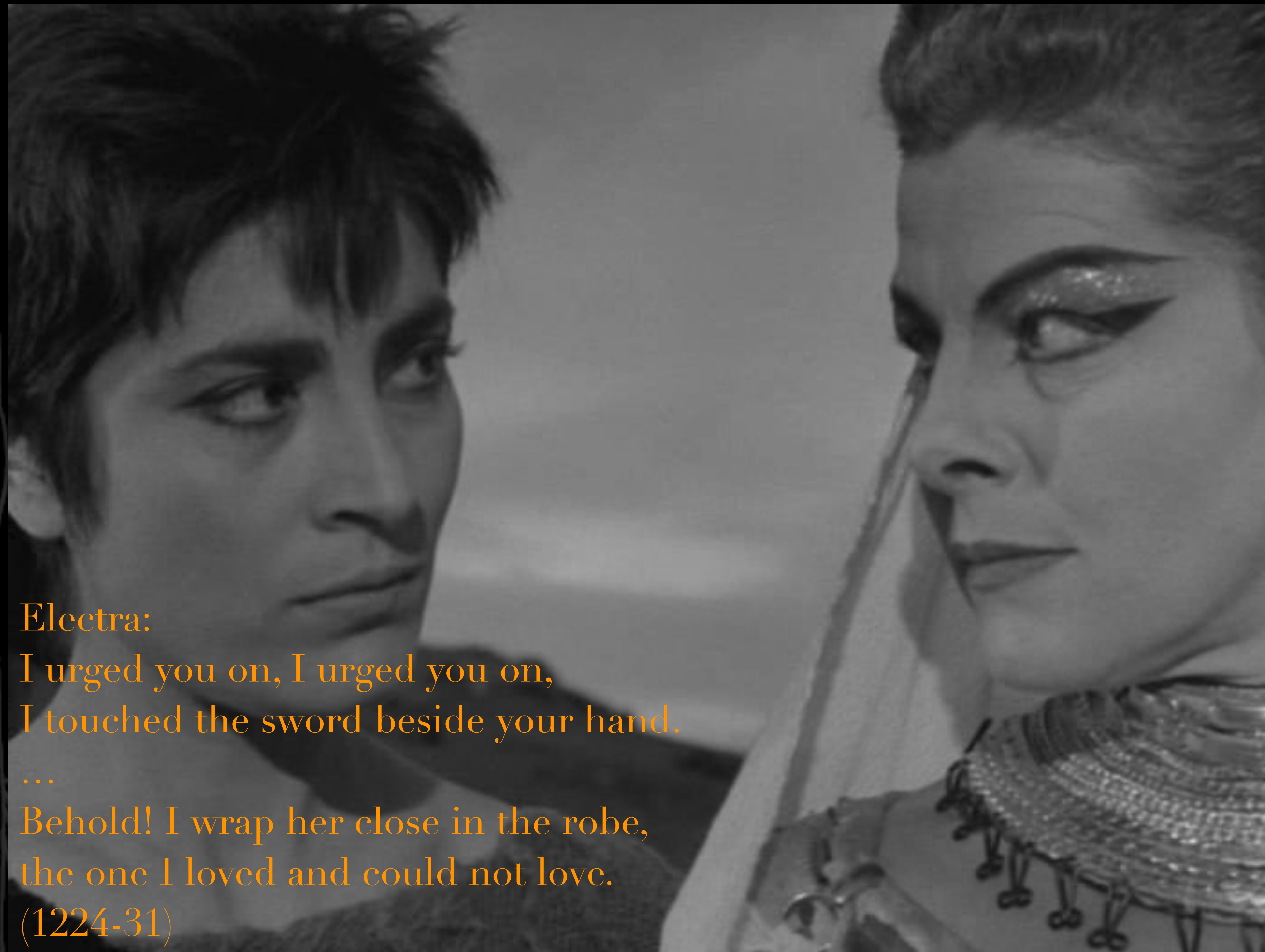
Electra:

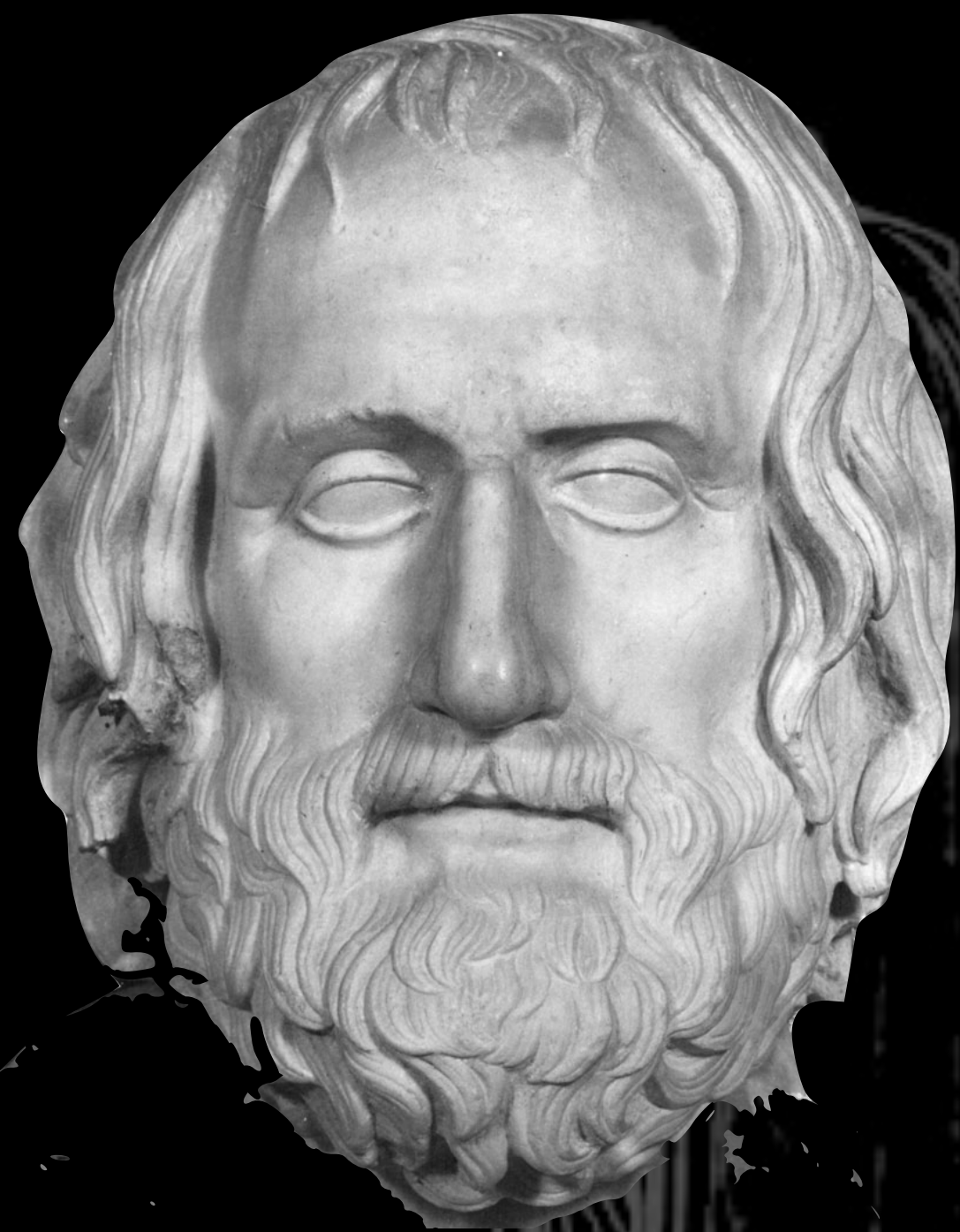
I urged you on, I urged you on,
I touched the sword beside your hand.

...

Behold! I wrap her close in the robe,
the one I loved and could not love.

(1224-31)





Euripides

Electra (~418 BCE?)

Old Man: Look at that lock of hair, match it to your own head, see if it is not twin to yours in color and cut.

Electra: ...How could a lock of his hair match with mine? One from a man with rugged training in the ring and games, one combed and girlish? It is not possible.

Old Man: At least go set your foot in the print of his hunting boot and see if it is not the same as yours, child.

Electra: You make me angry. How could rocky ground receive the imprint of a foot? And if it could be traced, it would not be the same for brother and sister, a man's foot and a girl's — of course his would be bigger.

AN ORESTEIA

TRANSLATED BY ANNE CARSON

Agamemnon by Aiskhylos

Elektra by Sophokles

Orestes by Euripides

