

of whose marriage he has heard, and to seek her co-operation. —He now sees a woman, apparently a slave, approaching, and proposes to seek information from her. This is Electra, returning with her water-jar from the spring. In a lyric lament she speaks of Agamemnon's fate and her brother's exile. Orestes, listening, soon learns who she is, for she introduces her own name.

The Chorus enters. It consists of fifteen maidens from the neighbourhood, who hold a lyric dialogue with Electra. They invite her to a festival of the Argive Hera, but she excuses herself, on the ground of her sorrow, and also of her poor attire. They offer to lend her better clothes, but she replies by reminding them of the unavenged wrongs which she is mourning¹.

Electra now perceives that two armed strangers are near her cottage, and is disquieted. Orestes does not reveal himself, but says that he has come to bring her news of her brother. Having heard his tidings, she speaks of her own fortunes. If Orestes returned, she would help him to slay their mother (vv. 278 f.). She describes how Aegisthus insults Agamemnon's tomb, and mocks at Orestes.

The farmer now reappears, and is somewhat disconcerted at first, but quickly recovers himself, and gracefully offers hospitality to the strangers. Orestes accepts the invitation, after moralising on the nobility of nature which may lurk under a rustic exterior. The two guests having gone in, Electra reproves her husband for having invited them, when he knew the poverty of the household. He must now go, she says, and look for a certain old man in the neighbourhood, who is capable of bringing some better fare for the visitors. This old man, it seems, had been an attendant of Agamemnon when the latter was a boy (v. 409). The farmer obeys, and goes forth—to be seen no more.

¹ This Parodos has been made famous by the story in Plut. *Lysander* 15. After the surrender of Athens in the spring of 404 B.C., the Peloponnesian leaders were deliberating on its fate, when they chanced to hear this ode sung, and were softened towards the city which had produced such a poet. (παρὰ πόντον τινὸς Φωκέως ἄσαντος ἐκ τῆς Εὐριπίδου Ἠλέκτρας τὴν πάροδον, ἧς ἡ ἀρχὴ Ἀγαμέμνονος ὦ κόρα..., πάντας ἐπικλασθῆναι κ.τ.λ.)