



The Classic Myths in English Literature and in Art Based Originally on Bulfinch's "Age of Fable"

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911 Excerpt: ...the death of Orestes. He brought with him what purported to be the ashes of the deceased in a funeral urn. After visiting his father's tomb and sacrificing upon it, according to the rites of the ancients, he met by the way his sister Electra. Mistaking her for one of the domestics, and desirous of keeping his arrival a secret till the hour of vengeance should arrive, he produced the urn. At once his sister, believing Orestes to be really dead, took the urn from him, and, embracing it, poured forth her grief in language full of tenderness and despair. Soon a recognition was effected, and the prince, with the aid of his sister, slew both Egisthus and Clytemnestra.¹ 1 Eschylus, Choephoroi; Sophocles, Electra; Euripides, --Electra, Orestes. FIG. 167. Orestes And Electra At The Tomb Of Agamemnon Fig. 168. Orestes Pursued By Furies 229. Orestes pursued by the Furies.¹ This revolting act, the slaughter of a mother by her son, though extenuated by the guilt of the victim and the express command of the gods, did not fail to awaken in the breasts of the ancients the same abhorrence that it does in ours. The Eumenides seized upon Orestes and drove him frantic from land to land. In these wanderings Pylades accompanied him and watched over him. At length in answer to a second appeal to the oracle, Orestes was directed to go to the temple of the Tauri in Scythia and to bring thence a statue of Diana which was believed to have fallen from heaven. Accordingly the friends went to the Tauric Chersonese. Since there the barbarous people were accustomed to sacrifice to the goddess all strangers who fell into their hands, the two friends were seized and carried bound to the temple to be made victims. But the priestess of Diana of the Tauri was no other than Iphigenia, the sister ...

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