FIGURES IN THE TEXT: METAPHORS AND RIDDLES IN THE *AGAMEMNON*

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"SIMONIDES CALLED PAINTING silent poetry and poetry painting that speaks."[1] This line is the earliest recorded expression of the idea that word and image are interchangeable as well as equivalent. Later, Aristotle set forth the notion that the mind holds visual images in his treatises on the mind and memory:[2]

> And for this reason as no one could ever learn or understand anything, without the exercise of perception, so even when we think speculatively, we must have some mental picture (φάντασμα) of which to think; for mental images are similar to objects perceived except that they are without matter.

The premise that "the soul never thinks without a mental picture" is essential in the construction of mnemonics, but memory is only one particular use of such constructs.[3] There is little doubt that Aristotle thought his φαντάσματα to have visual form; they are described as a kind of drawing (ζωγράφημα) that records the imprint of sense perception in the memory like a sealing on wax.[4] Since he says that humans (and some animals) all have the ability to form them, one might say that mental pictures are a society's visual archive that all its members share and use for thinking. In

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Unless it is specified otherwise, translations from the Greek are my own and texts are cited in the following editions:

West, M. L., ed. 1990. *Aeschylus, "Tragoediae."* Stuttgart.

Johansen, H. Friis and E. W. Whittle, eds. 1980. *Aeschylus. The "Suppliants,"* vol. 1–3. Copenhagen.

Lloyd-Jones, H. and N. G. Wilson, eds. 1990. *Sophocles. Fabulae.* Oxford.

1. Πλὴν ὁ Σιμωνίδης τὴν μὲν ζωγραφίαν ποίησιν σιωπῶσαν προσαγορεύει, τὴν δὲ ποίησιν ζωγραφίαν λαλοῦσαν, Plut., *Mor.* 346. Yates 1966, 28 paraphrases: "the poet and the painter both think in visual images which the one expresses in poetry the other in pictures." See also Carson 1992, 57: "He is painting a picture of things that bring the visible and the invisible together in the mind's eye as one coherent fact." I thank J. P. Small for the last reference.

2. *De An.* 432a7; translation by W. S. Hett, Loeb Classical Library.

3. *De An.* 431a17. On the role of Aristotle's theory of knowledge in the development of memory systems, see Yates 1966, 30–35.

4. *Mem.* 450a30.

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the sense that they are the product of common experiences, although not necessarily sense perception, the notion of such images bears some resemblance to that of "collective representations" postulated for ancient Greece by Carl Robert.[5]

Let us take these indications that since at least the sixth century B.C. Greek poets and thinkers believed the mind worked through visual representations as a modest point of departure for an investigation of literary imagery. Was the imaging capacity of words exploited by poets and dramatists? And did the audience share the poets' illusion and respond, somehow, to their suggestions? Zeitlin's analysis of Euripides' use of ecphrasis reveals that drama is saturated with visual suggestions that turn "hearers into spectators" and pressure them "to interpret visual signs."[6] Most significant, for present purposes, is her observation that the joining of word and image is predicated on the notion that knowledge is built on both, as the spoken word is thought to correspond in the memory to something one has seen.[7] How does the modern reader go from the awareness that there is an image in the text to visualizing the image that was available to the poet and his audience? These questions are explored here through the analysis of several passages in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* that place particular emphasis on visual clues, or present visually puzzling images.

The relationship of images to texts is an issue as crucial to historians of ancient art now as it was a hundred years ago. In particular, it has long been a matter of debate whether it is possible to understand the visual representations of a culture that is not our own without the support of its literature. Most interpreters of literature, on the other hand, have just begun to be concerned with the visual dimension of verbal imagery. It may be time to ask the question in reverse: Can you interpret written texts without recourse to visual ones? My answer is that you cannot and, in actual practice, you do not. Take, for instance, the many interpretations of the scene of the sacrifice of Iphigenia in the *Agamemnon* (228–46):

λιτὰς δὲ καὶ κληδόνας πατρῴους
παρ᾽ οὐδὲν αἰῶ τε παρθέν(ε)ιον
ἔθεντο φιλόμαχοι βραβῆς.
φράσεν δ᾽ ἀόζοις πατὴρ μετ᾽ εὐχάν
δίκαν χιμαίρας ὕπερθε βωμοῦ
πέπλοισι περιπετῆ παντὶ θυμῷ προνωπῆ
λαβεῖν ἀέρδην,
στόματός τε καλλιπρῴρου
φυλακᾷ κατασχεῖν
φθόγγον ἀραῖον οἴκοις,

βίᾳ χαλινῶν τ᾽ ἀναύδῳ μένει.
κρόκου βαφὰς δ᾽ εἰς πέδον χέουσα
ἔβαλλ᾽ ἕκαστον θυτήρων ἀπ᾽ ὄμματος βέλει

5. Robert 1881, 1–11.
6. Zeitlin 1994, 138–223; quotations from pp. 157 and 177.
7. Zeitlin 1994, 155, 160–65.

φιλοίκτῳ, πρέπουσα
τὼς ἐν γραφαῖς, προσεννέπειν
θέλουσ' ἐπεὶ πολλάκις
πατρὸς κατ' ἀνδρῶνας εὐτραπέζους
ἔμελψεν, ἁγνᾷ δ' ἀταύρωτος αὐδᾷ πατρός 245
φίλου τριτόσπονδον εὖ-
ποτμον (π)αιῶνα φίλως ἐτίμα.

Her prayers, her cries of "Father!", and her virgin youth, the war-thirsty commanders counted as nought. Her father, after prayer, gave word to the attendants to take her resolutely as she drooped forward, wrapped round in her robes, and to hold her, like a kid, above the altar, and, by guarding her fair mouth, to check a sound that would be a curse upon the house,

by force and the voiceless power of the bridle. And she, as she let fall to the ground her saffron-dyed raiment, smote each one of the sacrificers with a pitiful arrow from her eye, standing out as in a picture, wishing to speak to them by name; for many a time in her father's hall, where the men were given rich feasts, she had sung, and with a chaste voice the virgin lovingly celebrated her beloved father's blissful paean at the third libation.

[Fraenkel]

The most vexed question here concerns Iphigenia's clothes. Πέπλοισι περιπετῆ and κρόκου βαφὰς δ' εἰς πέδον χέουσα are good examples of Aeschylus' implosive language, which requires the audience to reach deep within themselves to a shared fund of knowledge. Interpretations fall into two broad categories: those proposing that the πέπλοι come off at the moment of sacrifice, either torn off or voluntarily shed; and those that hold that she remains dressed. Each understanding of the text puts forward, and depends upon, a specific visual image. Fraenkel's is as follows:[8] "Iphigeneia . . . has in the meantime freed herself from the arms that were holding her . . . and has thrown herself to the ground, and there she kneels, with upturned eyes, naked before the men—she the king's daughter heretofore so modest, so closely guarded." In contrast, Lloyd-Jones paints a picture where Iphigenia flings herself towards Agamemnon and clasps his robes pleading for her life:[9] ". . . Iphigenia has prayed for mercy and has called upon her father. She has done so, presumably, in the characteristic posture of a suppliant, kneeling with her arms clasped about her father's knees. I suggest that she is still in this position when the king's henchmen seize her, and that πέπλοισι περιπετῆ means 'with her arms flung about his robes'." Far from being a matter of words only, these translations are dependent on the logic of the image that comes to the translator's mind, once he recognizes that the emphasis placed on cloth in this scene demands that something be done with it. For the solution, he turns to his own understanding of what may be done with clothes and what behavior is appropriate for a maiden about to be slaughtered. Most interpreters have felt a need for high color here: Iphigenia has been made to pray, cry out to her father, throw herself at

8. Fraenkel 1950, 138.

9. Lloyd-Jones 1952, 133. Lebeck 1972, 81–84 takes the description of the robes hanging as an anticipation of how Iphigenia will look when she is lifted above the altar. Bollak and La Combe 1981, 295–98 propose that the robes fall around Iphigenia as she seeks refuge on the ground.

his feet or bare her body, and finally shoot the sacrificers with "piteous" glances, like arrows from her eyes.

As Anne Lebeck noted, when she compared Wilamowitz's vision of the sacrificers tearing the clothes off Iphigenia with Fraenkel's, such reconstructions are a matter of *Zeitgeist.*[10] To a greater degree than we are willing to admit, we approach the text armed with a kind of informed common sense, which combines a largely text-based understanding of Greek society with a baggage of tropes that belong to our culture and are different from those of Aeschylus' audience—in some cases a little, in others radically. This much is obvious, as is the fact that the gap can never be bridged entirely. There is something to be gained, however, by taking seriously something else we all know: that notions at the heart of a culture are expressed in pictures, dance, gestures, and clothes—in many media besides words. What use are we to make of the visual representations that survive by the thousands in the archaeological record? Do they offer access to the repertoire of mental pictures that also feed the poetic imagination? And if we remain within the realm of language, should we expect coherence from the images the text proposes?

With these questions in mind, in the following pages I tread in reverse the path followed by previous interpreters of the *Agamemnon,* moving, as it were, from image to text. It is not my intention to identify illustrations of the play in surviving monuments and use them to shed light on the text, in the time-honored tradition of studies that philologists have, by and large, dismissed as useless.[11] Indeed, although Aeschylus' poetry has me firmly in its grip, *l'explication du texte* is not where my interest lies; neither are the poet's ideas per se. Rather, I focus on the way Aeschylean imagery plays against a background of widespread nonverbal representations, to show that the capacity to be visualized is crucial to literary imagery. In particular, I argue that at a deeper level than ecphrasis metaphors have the ability to call up figures that are visually available to the audience. This thesis is developed in the first part of the article through the analysis of three metaphors: *aidos* as cover, *ate* as wind, and *dike* as light. The second half of the article deals with the Aeschylean "riddle" and the particular manipulation of metaphoric imagery it involves. In conclusion, I try to show that the recovery of visual imagery affects the reading of the play from the ground up—from the establishment of the text itself to an understanding of its conceptual underpinnings and narrative structure.

Before moving on to particular sections of the *Agamemnon,* certain premises should be made clear. One should ask how a correspondence of visual representations to verbal ones should be mapped. With the notable exception of Carl Robert, that relationship has been put as a matter of connections between two distinct, albeit related, realms. One speaks, for instance, of "semantic" analysis as something distinct from "iconographic" analysis,[12] and of exploring "the interstices between visual and verbal signs in Greek

10. Lebeck 1972, p. 190, n. 8.
11. For instance, Jouan 1984, 61–74.
12. Sourvinou-Inwood 1988, 19–20.

culture."[13] This manner of framing the question is hardly neutral, in that it shapes the inquiry into a search for bridges between self-sufficient "systems" of signification. In doing so, it precludes the option of asking whether visual and verbal signs may be, or ever are, inextricably bound to one another at the semantic level. Word and image do indeed come together in the trope of metaphor, which is defined precisely by its visionary quality, its capacity to "put before the eyes" the abstractions of logical discourse. Most scholars who have written on the subject find the idea unpalatable. Nevertheless, the possibility that the figure of metaphor involves extra-linguistic expression—visual or auditory—has been broached by several writers.[14] Through this analysis of the *Agamemnon* I hope to show that metaphor does, indeed, entail a measure of visualization. The definition of the trope adopted here is not the classical one, but that of metaphor as "interaction." According to that definition, metaphor does not consist in exchanging one term for another, but in seeing one thing in terms of another. It is the process of drawing connections between two concepts in such a way that one (the image-laden one, the vehicle) provides a grid that organizes and guides our understanding of the other (the abstract one, the tenor).[15] Knowledge of a real object to which the image may refer is not a key that will unlock the metaphor, because images represent ideas, not things. The task requires instead access to the "system of associated commonplaces" that guides the way members of a particular community think about that (real or imaginary) object.[16] Accordingly, while the figures of its metaphors reveal the principles that hold a society together, they are no more immediately accessible to the outsider than its language, because, like language, they are cultural constructs. The dense metaphors of poetry, in particular, remain impenetrable unless the reader is equipped with the correct mental image. The recovery of that figure is essentially an exercise in code-breaking, attempted here by means of strings of comparisons between visual and verbal representations.

THE CONSTRAINTS OF *AIDOS*

A first step in the exploration of the visual dimension of metaphor was taken with an analysis of the imagery of *aidos*.[17] There exist three exhaustive studies of the semantic range of the word. All three have exposed

13. Goldhill and Osborne 1994, 10.

14. The issue of the "semantic role of imagination" is squarely faced by Ricoeur 1978, 144, who attempts a definition of the "picturing function of metaphorical meaning." See also Derrida 1982, 216; Mitchell, 1986, 75–94.

15. See the formulation given by Black 1962, chapter 3 and the valuable introduction to the subject by Johnson 1981, 3–47.

16. Black 1962, 39: "Consider . . . 'man is a wolf' . . . [it] will not convey its intended meaning to a reader sufficiently ignorant about wolves. What is needed is not so much that the reader shall know the standard dictionary meaning of 'wolf'—or be able to use that word in the literal sense—as that he shall know what I will call the *system of associated commonplaces.* From the expert's standpoint, the system of commonplaces may include half-truths or downright mistakes (as when a whale is classified as a fish); but the important thing for the metaphor's effectiveness is not that the commonplaces shall be true, but that they should be readily and fully evoked."

17. A preliminary analysis was given in Ferrari 1990, 185–200. For a fuller proposal concerning the visual quality of the metaphoric image, see my *Figures of Speech,* forthcoming, chapter 3.

both the importance of this concept in archaic and classical Greek thought and the impossibility of understanding it in such a way that it can be translated with a single word.[18] *Aidos* is "honor" as well as "shame"; it is a property allied with *dike,* which all citizens must display, but it is also an affliction from which virtuous men do not suffer. From textual references we garner not what *aidos* is, but what it does as an indispensable mechanism of social order: it keeps under control those who are incapable of exercising agency—by nature, females, children, and slaves—and prevents men who have power from using it in an arbitrary and destructive manner. *Aidos* works as a constraint or inhibition. As I have argued previously, vase-paintings of figures pointedly wrapped in mantles correspond to literary imagery casting *aidos* as a curtain. I concluded that the concept was sustained and conveyed not by the word alone, but by a metaphor that cast it as cover, as in "*aidos* is a mantle" or "*aidos* is the eyelid." The term is untranslatable because its metaphoric connection to the figures that conveyed its meaning—forms of covering that hide all or part of the body and prevent movement—is not present in our cultural apparatus.[19] It is, however, to be seen, if one looks for it, in the Greek imaginary as it survives in texts and pictures. Some figures are rare, such as the one where *aidos* sits on the tongue and holds back speech.[20] The *aidos* that descends like a curtain over the eye and prevents sight is more frequent.[21] It manifests itself in visual representations (and probably did in actual behavior as well) as the lowered gaze, head bent towards the ground, so common in Athenian fifth-century art[22] (Figure 1, p. 7). By far the most theatrical display of *aidos* is made by the all-enveloping mantle, which covers a variety of characters on painted vases and in sculpture. Although it is worn by males in particular states such as grief, shame, or participation in rituals, this is most often the garb of females and boys and, in its extreme form, reaches up to cover the mouth[23] (Figure 2, p. 7).

Figures of *aidos* as gag, blindfold, and wrap drew me into the maze of metaphors of cloth in the *Agamemnon,* beginning with the description of the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis (228–47, quoted above). The prominence given to her "robes" and downcast gaze called to mind hundreds of visual representations of bashful maidens. Many of these representations—on painted vases and gravestones, in statues and literary imagery—are by

18. Schultz 1910; Erffa 1937; Cairns 1993. Erffa 1937, 9 defines *aidos* as "eine eigene Kraft, für die uns das Wort fehlt."

19. Cairns 1993, 433: "That such a central term of Greek moral and social discourse should carry such close associations with 'face' and facial or ocular interaction (blushing, the lowering of one's eyes, etc.) and with terms of value which are fundamentally aesthetic in nature (*kalon, aischron, aeikes,* etc.) provides some indication that the conceptualization of experience entailed by *aidos* and related concepts is not our own."

20. See, for instance, Aesch., *Cho.* 665–67, where the "veiled" statements produced by *aidos* in speech are contrasted to the "explicit" point to be made man-to-man: αἰδὼς γὰρ ἐν λέσχησιν οὐσ' ἐπαργέμους / λόγους τίθησιν· εἶπε θαρσήσας ἀνὴρ / πρὸς ἄνδρα κἀσήμηνεν ἐμφανὲς τέκμαρ.

21. For *aidos* and the eye, see Aesch., *PV* 132–34; Eur., *Hec.* 970–75; Xen., *Mem.* 4.2.14 and the analysis of these passages in my *Figures of Speech,* chapter 3.

22. L.-A. Touchette 1990, 86 points out that on the Orpheus Relief Euridice's bent head signifies her *aidos.*

23. Ferrari 1990, 186–91. Galt 1931 proposed that the veiling of females was practiced in ancient Greece in a manner analogous to modern Islamic custom.

FIG. 1.—Fragment of Attic vase. University of Chicago, Smart Museum of Art, inv. 1967.115.168. 450–25 B.C.

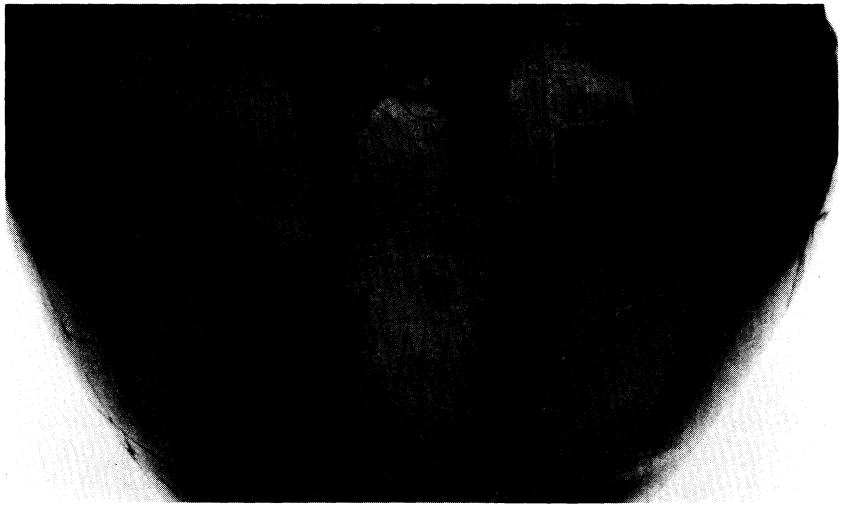

FIG. 2.—Attic column-krater. The Art Institute of Chicago, inv. 1889.2. 470–50 B.C. Gift of P. D. Armour and C. L. Hutchinson. Photograph by Robert Hashimoto, ©1996, The Art Institute of Chicago. All rights reserved.

and large contemporary with the play. When one understands them as a display of *aidos,* the πέπλοι wrapped around Iphigenia and her bent countenance acquire crucial significance: the child adheres to a strict code of behavior that should keep her from harm.[24] The cover of cloth and downcast gaze raise a shield that in lawful society protects from arbitrary violence persons deprived of agency: the needy and the weak, suppliants, and well-bred maidens. The formality and import of the gesture are stressed by παντὶ θυμῷ, "with all her heart" (233), a striking oxymoron in connection with προνωπῆ, "her brow downcast," making her passivity into a deliberate, even willful act. This may be the only indication in this scene that Iphigenia is frightened. There is a parallel to be drawn here between her posture and the instructions given by Danaus to his daughters in the *Suppliants.* He tells them to climb upon the altar holding the branch of Zeus Aidoios, to speak words of *aidos* (αἰδοῖα . . . ἔπη, 194). He also warns them to keep a vacant look in their eyes, beneath the brow, and their countenance in wise composure.[25] The description of Iphigenia in the *Agamemnon* suggests how such wise restraint may be expressed: by keeping the head gently bent toward the ground, one exhibits the *aidos* required of a suppliant. In her resolute passivity, the maiden embodies the paragon that was being proposed in its extreme form in the democratic polis about this time: the woman who neither speaks nor is spoken of, the ἀστή.[26]

These connotations of decency and the allusion to the respect owed a suppliant serve to highlight the perverse nature of the event when, next, Iphigenia's impeccable behavior becomes an instrument of her own destruction. Κρόκου βαφάς (239) is an ambivalent wording. On the surface one understands that Iphigenia's clothing is a rich, glamorous textile, "dyes of saffron."[27] The possibility of a second meaning, however, is opened by the preceding metaphor, which casts cloth as metal by calling the strap over Iphigenia's mouth a "bit." Βαφάς may then have the same sense that it has at line 612, where Clytemnestra claims that she knows pleasure from another man no more than she knows how to temper bronze, χαλκοῦ βαφάς ("plungings of bronze"). Κρόκου βαφάς is not a flourish, but a metaphor that amplifies that of the "bit" as unbreakable constraint: the robes "poured" toward the ground are "tempered" saffron because they hold her still as though they had hardened the way metal is hardened by quenching. The affective va-

24. The metaphor of *aidos* as mantle or veil is found elsewhere in Aeschylus. In *Supp.* 578–79, Io succumbing to Zeus δακρύων δ' ἀποστάζει πένθιμον αἰδῶ. In the context of the rape, what is shed is clothing, but all Io has available are her tears, which pour down like a veil, or a curtain, "a sorrowful veil of tears." On this passage, see Ferrari 1990, 197–98; Cairns 1993, 187–88.

25. *Supp.* 198–99: τὸ μὴ μάταιον δ' ἐκ †μετώπω† σωφρόνων / ἴτω προσώπων ὄμματος παρ' ἡσύχου. On this difficult passage see Johansen and Whittle, vol. 1, 155–57. Cairns 1993, 183–84 stresses that the "quiet" eye and composed countenance are means by which *aidos* is manifested. The metaphor of *aidos* as lowered eyelid is found at *PV* 134, where the Nereids' θεμερῶπις αἰδώς, "laid-down glance," is shaken by loud noise into wide-eyed alarm. To translate "steady-eyed *aidos*" (Cairns, 186) is to seriously misunderstand the image of eyes, and heads, fixed on the ground.

26. On the social position of the female citizens in classical Athens, see Just 1989, 21–25.

27. On the connotations of the color, Fraenkel 1950, 137–38. Peradotto 1969, 245 sees in the mention of a saffron-colored garment an allusion to the costume worn by the Athenian girls in the rites for Artemis at Brauron.

lence of the metaphor is untranslatable, but its sense is illuminated in a fragment of Euripides: αἰδὼς ἀχαλκεύτοισιν ἔζευκται πέδαις, "*aidos* binds with shackles not of bronze."[28]

Effectively constrained by her own *aidos,* Iphigenia lifts her eyes. Aeschylus does not allow her to plead for her life, the way Euripides does in his *Iphigenia in Aulis.*[29] It seems, on the contrary, of some concern that she should not utter a word on this occasion; that is why a strap is tied over her mouth. Λιταί, pleadings, are mentioned at the beginning of the passage, but it is not said who did the pleading (Clytemnestra? Achilles?), or when. The mention of κληδόναι πατρῴοι (228) immediately following should be taken in the most obvious sense of "renown issuing from her father" in reference to her lineage.[30] Pleadings (by her or on her behalf), rank, and innocence are the three considerations that should have saved her young life and did not. It is likely that Iphigenia maintains her laudable meekness to the end, like the kid to which she is compared, and lets no irreverent glance escape her eyes. When she looks at them, she does no more than recognize each of the sacrificers as friends, men her father used to entertain in happier days.[31] For that reason, as they prepare to cut her throat, her glance has on them the piercing effect of an arrow. For a moment, in their mind's eye, the memory of rich and pious feasts in Agamemnon's palace replaces one picture with another, as in a flashback. There she is in her rightful place in her father's house, the "ornament" of the palace, δόμων ἄγαλμα, as Agamemnon calls her when he contemplates his options (208).[32]

The following translation of *Agamemnon* 228–46 proposes yet another visualization of the sacrifice, no doubt with its own faults but one that relies more consciously on the visual side of literary imagery.

> Pleadings, her noble lineage, her virgin years held no weight for the leaders bent on war. After the prayer, her father ordered the attendants to hold her high over the altar, like a kid—(as she stood) enveloped by her πέπλοι, keeping her brow downcast with all her heart—and with a guard over her beautiful lips to hold back by force and the voiceless constraint of the bit a sound that would curse the house.
>
> Pouring shackles of saffron to the ground, she pierced each of the sacrificers with a glance of loving familiarity, standing out like a figure in paintings, as if she were going to speak to each by name, because many times she had sung in her father's dining hall, with its richly laid tables, and, inviolate, lovingly celebrated with her chaste voice the happy paean at her dear father's third libation.

28. Eur. frag. 595. The same play between the plunging of metal and the dyeing of cloth can be seen at *Cho.* 1010–13, where Orestes points to the places on Agamemnon's shroud where the sword of Aegisthos "dipped," ἔβαψεν, and the clotted blood, in time, ruined the "many dyes," πολλὰς βαφάς, of the variegated cloth.

29. No one seems to doubt that Iphigenia speaks in Aeschylus' version of the sacrifice. See, lately, Pucci 1992, 527: "Iphigenia's curses desecrate the ceremony."

30. Compare the use of κληδών at *Ag.* 927 and see Denniston-Page 1957, 145–50, on that passage.

31. On the meaning of φίλοικτος, Denniston-Page 1957, 91: "The context demands 'pitiable', which is not what the formation suggests."

32. The idea of the princess entertaining men in dining halls has given scholars pause, and it is indeed inconceivable as actual practice in fifth-century Athens. It is, however, something that is represented as occurring in the heroic past not only in this play but also in actual pictures, such as the representation of Heracles' feasting at the house of Eurytus with the fair Iole in attendance on an Early Corinthian column-krater in the Louvre, E 635; Arias, Hirmer, and Shefton 1962, pl. IX. On this point, see Fraenkel 1950, 141.

There is no crying, no thrashing about, no anger, and no pity. Except for Agamemnon's order, there is nothing to suggest that a single word is spoken. The few movements represented—the placing of the strap over the mouth, the movement of her eyes—are set in silence, making the recollection of sound at Agamemnon's feasts all the more pointed. Iphigenia's last stance sets before the eyes of the audience the very figure by which the notion of *aidos* is conveyed.[33] The matter of *aidos* is thus introduced not by name (as it is in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis,* 1089) but by imagery, which serves as a relay mechanism for those figures of "binding and entangling" that extend throughout the trilogy.[34] Although in the *Agamemnon* her name is mentioned again only after the murder of her father, Iphigenia's ghost is conjured up by evoking key elements of this scene through metaphors and allusions embedded in enigmatic statements. The "robes" in particular, which first make her *aidos* visible and then trap her, are the focal image of a series of metaphors that play upon the connotations of *aidos* in relationship to *dike* and tie her killing both to the capture of Troy and to the murder of Agamemnon.

Like his daughter, Agamemnon is caught ἐν πέπλοισιν, "in robes" (1126), and Clytemnestra announces (1380–83):

> οὕτω δ' ἔπραξα, καὶ τάδ' οὐκ ἀρνήσομαι
> ὡς μήτε φεύγειν μήτ' ἀμύνασθαι μόρον.
> ἄπειρον ἀμφίβληστρον, ὥσπερ ἰχθύων
> περιστοχίζω, πλοῦτον εἵματος κακόν.
>
> I did it in such a way, and this I will not deny,
> that he could neither escape nor fend off death.
> I enclose him in an immense wrap, like a fishing net,
> evil riches of cloth.

It is often observed that the manner of Agamemnon's death is symmetrical to that of Iphigenia.[35] The endless weave is all around him, ἀμφίβληστρον, just as the πέπλοι stretched around her body (πέπλοισι περιπετῆ).[36] Like a woman, Agamemnon is enmeshed in cloth, caught, as it were, in a foul kind of *aidos*. "You were trapped like a beast in shackles not of bronze, father"—πέδαις δ' ἀχαλκεύτοισι ἐθηρεύθης, πάτερ—mourns Electra in the *Libation Bearers,* 493 (Figure 3, p. 11).[37] Precisely the image of the net ties the mur-

33. Cairns 1993, 198–200 rightly says that the sacrifice of Iphigenia implies violation of *aidos*.

34. Lebeck 1972, 67–68: "the hunting net, the yoke, the shackle, and the fetter comprise a major system of kindred imagery." Zeitlin 1965, 463 also notes "the elaborate network of image and metaphor" in the *Oresteia.* In addition, Zeitlin places the right kind of emphasis on the "concrete" aspect of the imagery (p. 488). Zeitlin's analysis is indebted to an earlier attempt at defining how images work in Aeschylean drama by B. L. Hughes: "The issues, the themes . . . find their most complete expression not in the characters' declarations of fact but in their statements in symbol, symbol which in syntax . . . becomes image" (Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1955, iv; cited by Zeitlin, p. 463).

35. The correspondences between the sacrifice of Iphigenia and the murder of Agamemnon were set forth by Zeitlin 1965.

36. Lebeck 1972, 85.

37. The figure of the robe as manacles is fully deployed at *Cho.* 980–1017.

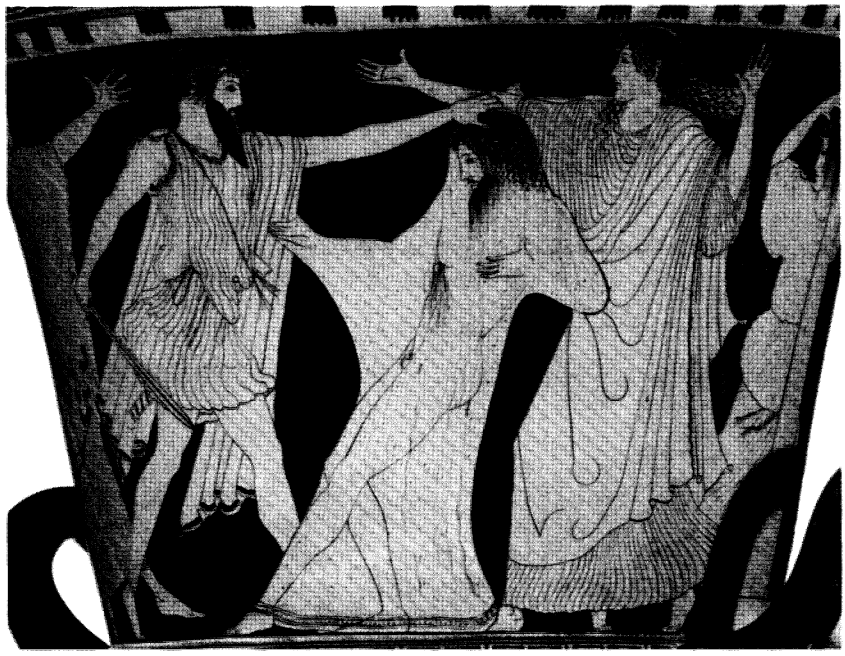

FIG. 3.—Death of Agamemnon. Attic calyx-krater. 480–70 B.C. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. 63.1246. William Francis Warden Fund. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

der of Agamemnon not only to the sacrifice of Iphigenia, but to the capture of Troy as well (355–60):[38]

ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ καὶ Νὺξ φιλία,
μεγάλων κόσμων κτεάτειρα,
ἥτ' ἐπὶ Τροίας πύργοις ἔβαλες στεγανὸν δίκτυον,
ὡς μήτε μέγαν μήτ' οὖν νεαρῶν τιν' ὑπερτελέσαι
μέγα δουλείας γάγγαμον ἄτης παναλώτου.

O king Zeus and friend Night, possessor of great ornaments, you who cast over the towers of Troy a net impassable, so that neither man nor child could escape the great dredge-net of slavery of all-capturing *ate*.

The city is caught in a net that is στεγανός—"impermeable," tightly woven—thrown by Night, who is "possessor of great ornaments." The reference to "ornaments," probably the stars, allows one to understand this image in

38. Lebeck 1972, 63.

the light of the expression ποικιλείμων Νύξ in the *Prometheus Bound,* line 24: Night of the "variegated" or "spangled" robes. The mantle of Night is a vividly patterned textile, not unlike the εἵματα thrown on Agamemnon and the πέπλοι that held Iphigenia. As it happened to them, the cover of Night, ordinarily a welcome respite, becomes for Troy a weave that binds and traps. The analogy between Troy and Iphigenia had been introduced by an image contained in the prophecy of Calchas (131–35):

> οἷον μή τις ἄγα θεόθεν κνεφά-
> σῃ προτυπὲν στόμιον μέγα Τροίας
> στρατωθέν.
>
> 131 ἄγα Hermann: ἄτα codd.

Let only no envious grudge from the gods strike beforehand and overcloud the great bit for Troy's mouth, the army on its campaign.

[Fraenkel]

The blockade of Troy is cast as a great bit, μέγα στόμιον. Just as the binding of Iphigenia's mouth was preliminary to her killing, so the siege precedes the capture of the city. Thus by the same means—bit and cloak—city and maiden are made ready for destruction.

THE WINDS OF *ATE*

The last passage contains a second metaphor, whose figure is not so readily visualized. The mention of a "clouding over," though, suggests the trouble to come, the violent winds that will prevent departure. The mention of *ate* is equally suggestive, since it brings on stage for the first time a destructive power that falls with equal violence on Troy and on the house of Atreus. Our ability to understand the point of the prophecy depends precisely on unlocking the ground metaphor by which the notion of *ate* is constructed, that is, on our ability to restore its focal image. But Calchas' language is cryptic, as a seer's should be, and there are textual problems. The reading ἄτα found in all manuscripts at line 131 has seemed unacceptable on metrical grounds. For this reason, Hermann's emendation into ἄγα has been universally accepted as one which, besides, makes better sense of the text: the idea of anger or envy from the gods is a familiar concept to readers of epic and seems an apt reference to the disaster that would fall on the army at Aulis. *Ate,* on the other hand, either as "delusion" or as "ruin," appears to have little relevance here.[39]

It is important to note, however, the connection between the word in question and the winds that the text puts forward. The figure of the darkening sky (κνεφάσῃ) both anticipates the windstorms that the goddess will send and

39. Fraenkel 1950, 79; Bollack and La Combe 1981, 159.

casts them as the consequence of an ἄτα (or ἄγα). This connection is key to the concept of *ate*. The figure of the storm, particularly a storm at sea, is the vehicle for *ate* that is employed over and over again by Aeschylus and other poets. At *Libation Bearers* 271, for instance, *ate* is δυσχείμερος—"wintry" or "stormy." In the *Prometheus Bound,* 884–86, Io's madness is a "wind," πνεῦμα, her speech breaking against the "waves" of dark *ate,* στυγνῆς πρὸς κύμασιν ἄτης. In a comparable image at *Suppliants,* 164–67, the rage of Hera is an ἄτα—a harsh wind that raises a storm:[40]

κοννῶ δ' ἄταν γαμετᾶς οὐρανόνικον.
χαλεποῦ γὰρ ἐκ
πνεύματος εἶσι χειμών.

I know the sky-conquering *ate* of the consort: for tempest arises from harsh wind.

The figure of the tempest over the sea serving as a barrier is found in the *Suppliants,* 529–30, where the Danaids, dreading the arrival of the sons of Aegyptus, ask Zeus to cast upon the purple sea ἄταν μελανόζυγ', "black-harnessed *ate*," or "the dark harness of *ate*"; that is, a tempest that will sink their ship.[41] Earlier in the same play the stormy sea itself is described as a sea of *ate* with no haven in sight (470–71): ἄτης δ' ἄβυσσον πέλαγος οὐ μάλ' εὔπορον / τόδ' ἐσβέβηκα, κοὐδαμοῦ λιμὴν κακῶν.[42]

Twice in Sophocles' plays the metaphor is fully played out. In the *Oedipus at Colonus,* 1240–48, the troubles of Oedipus in his old age are described in terms of a headland lashed by winds coming from all directions:

πάντοθεν βόρειος ὥς τις ἀκτὰ
κυματοπλὴξ χειμερία κλονεῖται,
ὡς καὶ τόνδε κατ' ἄκρας
δειναὶ κυματοαγεῖς
ἄται κλονέουσιν ἀεὶ ξυνοῦσαι,
αἱ μὲν ἀπ' ἀελίου δυσμᾶν,
αἱ δ' ἀνατέλλοντος,
αἱ δ' ἀνὰ μέσσαν ἀκτῖν',
αἱ δ' ἐννυχιᾶν ἀπὸ Ῥιπᾶν.

As a northern headland beaten by the waves is pounded by a winter storm, so fearful wave-breaking ἄται from above pound him incessantly as they converge, some from the regions of the setting sun, some from those of the rising sun, some in the region of the noon-tide ray, some from the gloomy Rhipaean mountains.

40. Here too the manuscript reading ἄτα (164) has been emended by the editors to ἄγα, in spite of the fact that ἄτα is metrically sound. Its meaning seemed obscure, particularly in view of the epithet οὐρανόνικον, "sky-conquering." "The ἄτη inflicted by Hera does not conquer *heaven,* but the unfortunate Io . . . ," Johansen and Whittle, vol. 2, 134–37. If the figure of a destructive wind is restored to the concept, however, it becomes clear how *ate* may take over the sky, indeed, how appropriate is the simile of the storm-generating wind that follows.

41. Doyle 1984, 74–75 rightly understands that πορφυροειδεῖ at 529 refers to calm over the sea, but translates: "Happy Zeus, hurl into the purpled sea the black-benched disaster." For a summary of interpretations see Johansen and Whittle, vol. 2, 414–15.

42. A comparable image is found in Eur., *Med.* 279: κοὐκ ἔστιν ἄτης εὐπρόσοιστος ἔκβασις.

The mention of the four cardinal points, in addition to κατ' ἄκρας, makes it clear that the ἄται are winds, violent winds that cause a tempest over the sea.[43] In the *Antigone,* 584–93, *ate* raises a tidal wave:

> οἷς γὰρ ἂν σεισθῇ θεόθεν δόμος, ἄτας
> οὐδὲν ἐλλείπει, γενεᾶς ἐπὶ πλῆθος ἕρπον·
> ὥστε ποντίας ἁλὸς
> οἶδμα δυσπνόοις ὅταν
> Θρῄσσησιν ἔρεβος ὕφαλον ἐπιδράμῃ πνοαῖς,
> κυλίνδει βυσσόθεν
> κελαινὰν θῖνα, καὶ δυσάνεμοι
> στόνῳ βρέμουσιν ἀντιπλῆγες ἀκταί.
>
> Once the house is shaken by the will of the god, it will lack no manner of *ate,* coming over a multitude of generations, the way a surge on the sea, when the dark deep is swept by adverse Thracian winds, stirs from the bottom murky sand and the coasts that face it ring with moans as they go under.

These images suggest that *ate* is the hurricane that produces a surge, an upheaval mingling sea and sky, resulting in the inability to see—*ate*'s characteristic "blackness" and blindness—and in destruction.[44] Accordingly, the effects it has on the mind may be said to be a tempest, as in the case of Io, mentioned above, or in that of the madness of Ajax, who "lies suffering in the turmoil of a storm."[45] As for *aidos,* the figure of the metaphor gives shape to the concept and determines its semantic range. Indeed, figure and word are so joined that the terms may be reversed and at *Suppliants* 529–30 the very real tempest the Danaids wish on their cousins is called, figuratively, *ate.*

With this in mind, let us return to the dense imagery of *Agamemnon* 131–35. Hermann's emendation of ἄτα to ἄγα was justified on metrical grounds, because the position of the word at 131 calls for a short first alpha, while the initial alpha of ἄτη is long. There is another root ἀτ-, however, with a short alpha.[46] In his analysis of ἀτύζω, Benveniste demonstrated the exis-

43. The *Ate* allegory in *Il.* 19.91–94 confirms that she operates above the ground: "her feet are delicate and they step not / on the firm earth, but she walks the air above men's heads / and leads them astray" (Lattimore). The figure of the man caught in a storm occurs at *Il.* 24.480: ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἂν ἀνδρ' ἄτη πυκινὴ λάβῃ; πυκνός is used, among other things, to qualify rain and snow. See also Pind., *Ol.* 10.37: βαθὺν εἰς ὀχετὸν ἄτας.

44. Figures of blowing winds in the *Agamemnon* are collected and analyzed by Scott 1966, 459–71. See also Zeitlin 1965, 499–501. Metaphors of "growth" (Doyle 1984, 65) are also used for *ate.* In Solon frag. 4, 35, there is mention of the "flowers" of *ate;* at *Sept.* 601, the "field" of *ate* produces a harvest of death. But a storm may also produce flowers: the storm which wrecks the Achaeans' ships leaves the sea "blooming," ἀνθοῦν, with corpses (*Ag.* 658–60).

45. Soph., *Aj.* 206–7: Αἴας θολερῷ / κεῖται χειμῶνι νοσήσας. In his 1963 commentary on the *Frogs,* W. B. Stanford compares this image to that in Aesch., *PV* 885–86, cited above.

46. Young 1964, 2–3 pointed out that the meter calls for a short alpha at Archilochus frag. 127W; accordingly, he proposed that the reading ἄτα be retained at *Ag.* 131. West 1989, p. 50, n. 127, questions the reading ἄτη in the Archilochus fragment, presumably on metrical grounds. There are, in addition, with a short alpha, the rare ἀτέω, meaning to be "crazed" or "deranged," and the more common ἀτύζω, translated with "bewilder" and the like. The first occurs at *Il.* 20.332–33: Αἰνεία, τίς σ' ὧδε θεῶν ἀτέοντα κεκεύει / ἀντία Πηλείωνος ὑπερθύμοιο μάχεσθαι; Commentators have attempted to reconcile the scansion of 332 with the presumed long quantity of the initial alpha of *ate,* lately Edwards 1991, 338: "ἀτέοντα, 'crazed' (from the root of ἄτη), is trisyllabic, with initial α and synizesis of -εο-." But Chantraine 1958, 60, to whom Edwards refers, states emphatically that that is not the case: "non contracte: sans doute ἀτέοντα Y 332." The verb also occurs in Hdt. 7.223 (ἀτέοντες) and Callimachus frag. 633 (ἀτέει).

tence of two distinct words, from two different roots: ἄτη (with short alpha), meaning "derangement" or "folly," from ἀτ-, and ἄτη (with long alpha) from *ἀϝατα.[47] The two, as he pointed out, might become confused, if the "derangement" signified by the first came to be understood as a consequence of the second, as in Hesychius: ἀτύζεσθαι· φοβεῖσθαι, ταράσσεσθαι, ἀπὸ τῆς ἄτης. Ἄτη with short alpha, that is, is a near homophone rather than a synonym of *ate,* but deceivingly akin in meaning. I suggest that Aeschylus here plays on the ambiguity brought about by the phonetic similarity of the two words and on their apparent semantic affinity in a manner suitable to the enigmatic mode of Calchas' utterance. The ἄτα (with short alpha) of line 131 is properly the "derangement" that leads Agamemnon to sacrifice Iphigenia. It sounds like ἄτα (with long alpha), the ill wind that will darken the sky with storm clouds (κνεφάσῃ): the gales, πνοαί, from the Strymon that unleash the πικρὸν χεῖμα. If the word-play is untranslatable, the sense of the passage may be (131–35):

> Before, though, may no folly sent by the god
> cloud over the forging of the great bit for Troy's mouth
> by the encamped army.

As Fraenkel saw, the notation "beforehand" that is implicit in προτυπέν is explained by what Calchas has just forecast: that Troy will be captured with all its wealth. Before they can take the city, of course, the Achaeans have to cross the sea and lay siege. In this endeavor, they will be held in check by the storm at Aulis. The play on the ambiguity generated by the word ἄτα in the last lines—between madness and the turbulence of winds—is expanded in the representation of Agamemnon's state of mind, after Calchas reveals that the storm will not cease unless Iphigenia is sacrificed. His delirium (παρακοπά, 223) is brought about by winds. At the onset of the storm the king "blows along (συμπνέων, 187) with the sudden blasts of fate";[48] when he has a change of heart he "blows" or "breathes" (πνέων, 219–21) a contrary wind.[49] This wind imagery is crucial because it introduces the theme of *ate* working its evil on the house of Atreus, repeating the crimes of the original *ate* that are the subject of the song of the Erinyes (1191–93). The connection of recklessness (τὸ παντότολμον, 221) and blowing by which Agamemnon's veering is described, is repeated in another tormented passage in the play (374–78, analyzed below, pp. 35–37), where there is mention of acts not to be dared, ἀτολμήτων (375), in reference to men who "blow" more than they ought to: πνεόντων μεῖζον ἢ δικαίως (376).[50]

The figure of wind over the sea that is embedded in so many representations of *ate* helps to explain a difficult reference to *ate* at lines 359–60.

47. Benveniste 1937, 496–99. Benveniste argues a connection between the Hittite stem *hatug-* and a Greek *ἀτυγ-, attested by ἀτύζω, from the root ἀτ-. The hypothesis of two words from different roots is also put forward by Chantraine 1968, 133 s.v. ἀτέων: "Cet ἄτη distinct de ἀάτη > ἄτη serait sans etymologie."

48. On this line see Winnington-Ingram 1983, 95–96.

49. Goldhill 1984, 20–21 notes the intense character of the metaphor and connects it to the use of the riddling mode, *griphos,* by Aeschylus. The matter of riddles in the *Agamemnon* is taken up later in this article.

50. Lebeck 1972, 38–39 connects the expression to the description of the events at Aulis, both the windstorm and the changes in Agamemnon's mind: "The storm without was mirrored by the storm within."

The subject is the last night of Troy; the cover of Night traps the city as if in a net:

> ὡς μήτε μέγαν μήτ' οὖν νεαρῶν τιν' ὑπερτελέσαι
> μέγα δουλείας γάγγαμον ἄτης παναλώτου.
>
> . . . so that no one full-grown nor any of the young could fall out of the great dredge-net of slavery of all-capturing *ate*.

The key figure here is the γάγγαμον: a dredging-net. The sense seems to be that the Trojans are being dredged up from below and cannot escape because they are trapped under Night. The genitive δουλείας, which qualifies the dredge-net, leaves little doubt that the latter stands for the final assault on the city and represents its sack and the enslavement of its inhabitants by the Achaeans. In turn, this metaphor—"the assault is the dredge-net of the Achaeans"—is grafted onto another that projects the dredge-net as a property or instrument of *ate*. The process may be represented as follows: "no one can escape the **assault that is the dredge-net of the Achaeans** of *ate*." In this manner, a correspondence is outlined between the manner of the assault and some operation of *ate* that allows both to be seen through the same vehicle, the γάγγαμον. Finding that correspondence requires some laborious unpacking.

Γάγγαμον ἄτης has the same schema as, for example, πτανοῖσιν κυσὶ πατρός (135), "the winged hounds of the father," which we understand effortlessly to say "the eagles are the winged hounds of Zeus." Although it is no less complex than γάγγαμον ἄτης, the hounds metaphor is transparent because we share with the ancient world some "familiar knowledge" about dogs and their masters. We are, besides, aware of a special connection between Zeus and eagles, reinforced here by the omen of the eagles and the pregnant hare. We confront the γάγγαμον, on the other hand, armed only with Oppian's definition of the term and having no idea of its pertinence to *ate*. The comparison is useful, nevertheless, because the two metaphors share a particular construction that expresses not a concept but a relationship, and typically involves three elements.[51] The first may be implied, as it is here. "[Eagles] are the hounds of Zeus" requires us to frame the relationship between the first and third elements (eagles and Zeus) in terms of given features of the relationship of the second (hounds) to an implied fourth (man), as in the proportional analogy: "hounds : man = eagles : Zeus." That is, we grasp the relationship of eagles to Zeus by analogy to that of dogs to man. Its impact on an audience depends on how effectively the metaphor plays upon commonplace notions about the behavior of a dog toward his master. Γάγγαμον ἄτης is unintelligible because one of those three elements is for us an unknown quantity: the first, the thing that may be said to be "of

51. This form of metaphor was defined by Turner 1992, 200 as type "*xyz*": "We understand them [*xyz* metaphors] as directing us to consider the relationship between *x* and *z* metaphorically in terms of something unspecified from the *y*-domain. For example, 'Children are the riches of poor men' directs us to consider the relationship between children and poor men metaphorically in terms of a domain containing *y*, namely, riches."

ate" and behaves in a manner comparable to a dredging-net. This may be plotted into the schema as x: "[x] is the dredge-net of *ate,*" postulating the equivalence "dredging net : fisherman = x : *ate*." What do we know about *ate* that is comparable to dredging the bottom of the sea? The key image is that of the οἶδμα in the passage of the *Antigone* (584–93) cited above: the motion and effect of a deep-reaching wave, which gathers sand as it rolls toward the shore, are not unlike those of a dredge scraping the sand at the bottom of the sea and gathering its catch. An οἶδμα is a "surge," "swelling," or "wave"; that is, a κῦμα. Κῦμα is a word often associated with *ate*: in the *Prometheus Bound,* 886, Io's speech shatters against the "waves of *ate,*" πρὸς κύμασιν ἄτης; in Euripides' *Alcestis,* 91–92, Apollo is called to appear μετακύμιος ἄτης, "among surges of *ate*." The relationship of *ate* to κῦμα is clarified in the *Oedipus at Colonus,* 1240–48, where the ἄται—the winds blowing from the four corners of the earth—are called κυματοαγεῖς, "wave-driving." The great wave raised by storm winds that stirs up and collects sand in its path belongs to *ate* in an objective sense, in that it is heaved by *ate*. The metaphor "the wave is the dredge-net of *ate*" implies the equivalence "γάγγαμον : fisherman = οἶδμα : *ate*.[52]

The compounding of two metaphors ("the assault is the dredge-net of the Achaeans" and "the οἶδμα is the dredge-net of *ate*") into one, "dredge-net of *ate*," is possible because the image of the dredge offers specific visual correspondences to both the behavior of a tidal wave and that of the rush of armed men into a city. Shared figures of scouring, carrying along, and rolling forward, allow one to see both assault and wave through a single vehicle. The metaphor made sense to Aeschylus' audience in the same way in which "the winds of war" makes sense to us. The dredge-net is the point at which the metaphors are collapsed one into the other, with the effect of equating "*ate*" with "Achaeans" and "assault" with "wave." That is as it should be, since the expedition against Troy is depicted as a tempest driven by *ate* from beginning to end. First, the unholy solution to the crisis at Aulis is brought about by *ate*, then the Achaeans who accomplish the plunder of the city are "gales of *ate*." No less than the killing of Iphigenia, the sack of Troy is the work of *ate* unleashed (818–20):

> καπνῷ δ' ἁλοῦσα νῦν ἔτ' εὔσημος πόλις·
> ἄτης θύελλαι ζῶσι· συνθνήσκουσα δέ
> σποδὸς προπέμπει πίονας πλούτου πνοάς.

Even now the captured city is recognizable by the smoke. The gales of *ate* are alive. The dying ember sends forth rich breaths of wealth.

There is at least one other instance, in the second stasimon of the *Agamemnon,* 764–71, where the metaphor involving *ate* remains opaque, unless one keeps in mind the image of the storm. The difficulties presented by

52. The image of the "net" of *ate* also occurs at *PV* 1078.

the use of *ate* here are linked to other severe problems of interpretation that affect the whole passage.

φιλεῖ δὲ τίκτειν ὕβρις μὲν παλαι-
ὰ νεάζουσαν ἐν κακοῖς βροτῶν
ὕβριν, τότ' ἢ τόθ', ὅτε τὸ κύριον μόλῃ
†νεαρὰ φάους† κότον
δαίμονά *τε τὸν * ἄμαχον ἀπόλεμον ἀνίερον,
θράσος μελαίνας μελάθροισιν ἄτας,
εἰδομέναν τοκεῦσιν.

[Bollack and La Combe]

But ancient hubris, sooner or later, when the time comes, is prone to generate hubris that thrives among the evils of mankind: a new grudge of sunlight, and the daemon who is unconquerable, invincible, unholy, the violence of dark *ate* on the roofs, resembling her parents.

Metrical and grammatical difficulties show that the text is corrupt.[53] Nevertheless an understanding that requires no major surgery is possible. From the relatively firm ground of the first three verses, stating that old hubris eventually gives birth to a new hubris, one moves to two sets of accusatives, whose relationship to one another and to the preceding hubris is unclear: the new "resentment of light" (φάους κότον);[54] and the δαίμων who is ἄμαχον, ἀπόλεμον, ἀνίερον—the uncontrolled force, θράσος, of black *ate*. The solution to the crux, I believe, can be found by looking at the workings of hubris as they are described in the *Oresteia*. The slaying of Iphigenia is an instance of hubris that generates a new hubris, which results in the murder of Agamemnon. At this point yet another hubris is produced.

What hubris generates, though, is not the simple act of killing in revenge, accomplished in due time by Clytemnestra and Orestes, but, in the first place, pollution, marked by the coming of Erinyes. The Erinyes, in turn, demand with their dirge that the gods send the avenging Erinys. Κότον and δαίμων explain this twofold nature of hubris. First hubris brings about "renewed opposition to sunlight," that is, the darkness of a house inhabited by Furies; then, at a later time, "the ancient spirit of vengeance" (1501).[55] Κότον refers to the gloom that settles upon the polluted house, placing it, as it were, under a cloud. This phenomenon is described in the *Eumenides* as "dusk," κνέφας, mist-like gloom (δνοφερὰ ἀχλύς, 378–79), and in the *Libation Bearers,* 51–52, as sunless dusk that covers the palace (ἀνάλιοι . . . / δνόφοι καλύπτουσι δόμους). The Furies themselves, "daughters of black Night" (745), live apart from the gods, under the earth in darkness (δυσάλιον κνέφας, 396). Because with the Erinyes comes darkness, the Choephori

53. See the full analysis of the problem in Bollack and La Combe 1981, 111–22.

54. The emendation of the genitive φάους of the manuscripts into φάος has become standard in editions of the play, most recently West's. The genitive may be taken, however, to modify κότον, hatred, to yield the sense "a fresh hatred of the light."

55. The *goos* calling for the punishment of the transgressors is distinct from and precedes the coming of the Erinys who carries it out at *Ag.* 55–59. At 1117–20, the Chorus immediately associate the arising of the Erinys with the cry of triumph of the band of Erinyes over the murder of Agamemnon.

sing of the lifting of the curse as an "unveiling" and "seeing daylight" (φῶς ἰδεῖν, 810; 961). Μέλαθρον has "roof-beam" and "roof" as its primary meanings and, by extension, "building." The phrase should be understood as a metaphor for the "house" of the Atreidae in the sense of "dynasty." The figure of the storm brings the metaphor into focus: the unholy boldness of the δαίμων is represented as the violence of a storm over the palace. The last image returns at the close of the *Libation Bearers,* where, after Clytemnestra has been murdered, the identification of the storm with *ate* is explicit: the Chorus lament the storm that discharged its blows over the royal palace for the third time (ὅδε τοι μελάθροις τοῖς βασιλείοις / τρίτος αὖ χειμὼν πνεύσας, 1065) and wonder when the spirit of *ate* will rest (ποῖ καταλήξει . . . μένος Ἄτης; 1075–76).

TORCH-BEARERS OF NIGHT

As much as the winds of *ate* and the cloak of *aidos,* ominous figures of light and darkness dominate the play.[56] Here too the recovery of a particular image helps understand what such figures mean and how they set forth an overarching metaphor of the *Oresteia.* A first step was taken with the identification at line 767 of the "grudge of sunlight" as the darkness into which the Furies plunge the polluted house. As characteristic as the darkness they bring is the Furies' particular kind of illumination: torches. Twice in the *Eumenides* torches are explicitly marked as a property of the Erinyes. At 385–86, the Chorus sing that they drive destinies dishonoring and dishonorable, apart from the gods, ἀναλίῳ λάμπᾳ, "by sunless torchlight."[57] In the pageantry of the procession accompanying the Erinyes to their subterranean home, torches are prominent (1021–31). Indeed, the Semnai rejoice in "the flame-fed torch" (πυριδάπτῳ / λαμπάδι τερπόμεναι, 1041–42). The

56. On such imagery see Peradotto 1964 and Gantz 1977.

57. {ἄτιμα} ἀτίετα διόμεναι λάχη / θεῶν διχοστατοῦντ' ἀναλίῳ λάμπᾳ. Wieseler's emendation on metrical grounds that MSS λάμπᾳ to λαπᾷ at 386 erases from the passage the image of the torch and introduces that of "slime." The emendation was adopted by several editors, including West 1990 and Sommerstein 1989, and rejected by others, among them, Sidgwick 1902, Mazon 1920, Murray 1938. Sidgwick notes that "the Furies are usually depicted with torches . . ." (p. 600). Those who retain the reading ἀναλίῳ λάμπᾳ, "sunless torches," explain it in reference to the infernal regions where the Furies themselves say they belong (395–96). That is not, however, what the passage as a whole suggests. The Furies are not in their home but at work in the house of the guilty, which is enveloped by the very same darkness, κνέφας, as their own native habitat (378–80, 396). Far from being under the earth, they drive, or urge on, fates that both are "dishonorable" and "do not do honor," as painful to travel for the living as they are for the dead. Λάχη is universally understood in reference to the Furies themselves, to mean that they pursue tasks that are dishonored and despised. This, however, is contradicted by the statement at 394: οὐδ' ἀτιμίας κυρῶ, "nor do I meet with dishonor." To suit the interpretation of λάχη as "task," διόμεναι was corrected to διέπομεν, wiping out the image of compelling urge so well suited to the Erinyes. This dense expression should instead be understood in reference to the person whom the Furies drive to kill in revenge: first Clytemnestra, then Orestes. The fate the Furies impose on them "does not do honor" in the sense that it violates the ties of marital and filial piety—that is, the boundaries of *aidos.* Because its consequence is disgrace, such an action is appropriately called ἄτιμον. As Zeitlin 1965, 482 puts it: "Justified vengeance for a wrong committed leads to corruption of the avenger." Ἄτιμ' has been deleted from lines 385–86, in order to reconcile their length with that of the corresponding 393–94. The adjective, however, is not simply a variant of ἀτίετα (as Sommerstein 1989, 148 says); the richness of its semantic range, which extends to "disfranchised" and "unpunished" (*Ag.* 1279), would not be lost on the Athenian audience. Its appropriateness here suggests that some other solution to the metrical difficulty must be found.

torch-holding Erinys is part of the popular imagination and not an invention of Aeschylus.[58] The contrast between daylight and fires in the night, implicit in the phrase ἀναλίῳ λάμπᾳ, outlines a crucial distinction in quality. In the *Oresteia,* "light" is not indiscriminately a good thing. While the sun serves as the "symbol of life, joy, and safety," the torch is "a symbol of vengeance, death, and destruction."[59] In the *Agamemnon* sunlight is simply φῶς, but the light of the Erinyes is "the light in the night," φῶς ἐν εὐφρόνῃ (522); unlike the "brilliant light of the sun" (658), it is "dread-gleaming," φῶς αἰνολαμπές (389).

The torch appears at the very opening of the *Agamemnon* as the beacon that announces the fall of Troy: ὦ χαῖρε λαμπτήρ, νυκτὸς ἡμερήσιον / φάος πιφαύσκων (22–23). "O hail, thou light-giver, that showest a light of day by night," translates Fraenkel. Translations such as "light-giver," "beacon," and "lantern," however, efface a telling image on which the Greek places great emphasis. The light the Watchman sees is a "torch" (λαμπάς, 8, 28), a "firebrand" (φρυκτός, 30), and also, somehow, a "torch-holder" (λαμπτήρ, 22). Implicit in these terms is the connection of the torch to the Erinys, of which the audience is aware and which provides them with the key to the cryptic imagery that opens the play. The Watchman's speech itself is a weave of double entendres. Ostensibly, he looks forward to celebrations for the capture of Troy and the return of the king. But a grim subtext—the arrival of the Erinys who avenges Iphigenia—is conveyed by turns of phrase and images that recur later in the play in the context of murder and revenge. Those who knew the story would not miss the implications of Clytemnestra's "manly disposition," knowing well what kind of hope her "expectant heart" holds (γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον ἐλπίζον κέαρ, 11). The queen greets the fire in the night by raising a cry of triumph to the torch, in thanksgiving for the house: δόμοις / ὀλολυγμὸν εὐφημοῦντα τῇδε λαμπάδι / ἐπορθιάζειν (27–29). Cassandra refers back precisely to that cry, as Zeitlin noted,[60] when she foretells Agamemnon's murder (1236–38):

> ὡς ἐπολολύξατο
> ἡ παντότολμος, ὥσπερ ἐν μάχης τροπῇ·
> δοκεῖ δὲ χαίρειν νοστίμῳ σωτηρίᾳ.
>
> And how she raised a shout of triumph, the all-daring one, as though at the turn of battle; yet pretends to rejoice that he is safe home again!
>
> [Fraenkel]

Earlier (1117–20) Cassandra's vision of Agamemnon in his grave and of Furies letting out a shout of triumph for the family (γένει / κατολολυξάτω)

58. Torch-carrying Erinyes have been securely identified on the Attic pelike in Kertsch style, ca. 380 B.C., Perugia, Museo Etrusco-Romano, illustrated in Knoepfler 1993, 72–73, fig. 55. The torch is part of the iconography of Erinyes on South Italian vases, and their hallmark in Etruscan and Roman art; see the examples collected by H. Sarian, *LIMC* III (1986) s.v. "Erinys."

59. Peradotto 1964, 388 recognizes the sinister character of certain images of light, although he does not associate them with torches.

60. Zeitlin 1966, 652.

had triggered in the mind of the Chorus the image of the Erinys arising in the palace: ποίαν 'Ερινὺν τήνδε δώμασιν κέλῃ / ἐπορθιάζειν.[61]

Like her triumphant cry, the fire-signal Clytemnestra has been waiting for is not what it appears to be. At 281–316 the queen describes with remarkable vividness its transmission from the Troad to Argos through the metaphor of the torch-race. The connotations of this figure are crucial to the meaning of fires and sacrifices in the play. In Athens, as elsewhere, torch-races were less sporting events than ritual performances. Their purpose was to transfer fire from one altar to another in important festivals, and they remained under the supervision of the Archon Basileus. The λαμπαδηδρομία at the Panathenaea, for instance, was a relay of competing teams that brought fire from the altar of Eros in the Academy to the Acropolis.[62] The elements that matter to the use of this image in the *Agamemnon* are summed up in Hermias' commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus* 231E: "The great race of the Panathenaea started from the altar of Eros: from there ran the ephebes, after lighting their torches, and the pyre of the shrines of the goddess was kindled by the torch of the winner."

In the Beacon Speech, the metaphor of the torch race is apt in some respects and not in others. Post after post receiving the signal and passing it on can be construed as the handing over of the "light" at fixed points along the course—provided we ignore as irrelevant what is different in the two events. In a λαμπαδηδρομία, for example, a single torch passes from hand to hand, while in a chain of fire-signals the fire is each time a different one. Far from being glossed over, however, the point that this fire is one and the same is brought into the foreground with perverse insistence. The torch is lit from a torch on Ida and sent to Argos by "courier fire" (282). Radiance announces its arrival at each watch-post, and each time a new "courier" is ready to receive it. The light of the torch "heralds" its coming to the lookout of Makistos (παραγγείλασα, 289) and "signals" (σημαίνει, 293) the garrison of Messapion; it "awakens" (ἤγειρεν, 299) the next relay of the fire at the rock of Kithairon; it "incites" (ὦτρυνε, 304) the post on the mountain of the roaming goats. More than that, the flame has a life of its own: it is not only sent and received, it travels (πορευτοῦ λαμπάδος, 287), it leaps (ὑπερτελής, 286), it arrives (ἐξικνούμενον, 303), and it "hurls down" (ἔσκηψεν, 302; 308; σκήπτει, 310). Its features are stressed with jarring concreteness: it is a "big torch" (μέγαν . . . πανόν, 284) and "vigorous" (σθένουσα, 296); it looks forward to "pleasure" (πρὸς ἡδονήν, 287).[63] Like a person, it has a pedigree, being the descendent of the fire on Mount Ida (311). In addition, unlike the runners in a torch-race, "courier-fires" compete against no one. As Fraenkel said, "a form of the metaphor could be devised in which that difference could be treated as unimportant and even

61. The ὀλολυγμός is the cry of glorious revenge at *Cho.* 386–89: ἐφυμνῆσαι γένοιτό μοι †πευκή- / εντ'† ὀλολυγμὸν ἀνδρός / θεινομένου γυναικός τ' / ὀλλυμένας. See also 942. On the connotations of female cries in the *Oresteia,* see Haldane 1965, 37–40.

62. *Ath. Pol.* 57.1. The literary sources on the λαμπαδηδρομία are conveniently given by Sterrett 1901, 393–419. For recent bibliography, see Kyle 1992, 96–97.

63. Peradotto 1964, 389: "it becomes, as it were, a living being. . . ."

even pass unnoticed."[64] But, as he points out, this has not been done in the *Agamemnon.* Clytemnestra concludes precisely by proclaiming a winner, as though victory had been the goal all along: νικᾷ δ' ὁ πρῶτος καὶ τελευταῖος δραμών (314), "winner is the one who ran first and last." Her enigmatic line fits neither vehicle nor tenor of the metaphor, since in a relay race no single runner can be both first and last. This is patently a riddle.

The imagery of the torch-race is fully played out in the Beacon Speech, but does not begin there. It is first proposed in the Watchman's speech with the word λαμπτήρ, "torch-bearer," which casts the beacon as a λαμπαδηφόρος coming into view.[65] The riddle, in fact, begins here. The phrase ὦ χαῖρε λαμπτὴρ' νυκτὸς ἡμερήσιον / φάος πιφαύσκων (22–23) is purposely ambiguous. Νυκτός may be taken in two equally possible ways: as dependent on φάος or as dependent on λαμπτήρ.[66] The first reading, "Hail, torch-bearer who show the light of day in the night," suits the appearance of things: joy and deliverance at the news of Agamemnon's return. The second, "Hail, Night's torch-bearer who announce the light of day," depends on the understanding that the torch belongs to the Erinys, who is literally "Night's"—the child of Night (*Eumenides* 416). The torch heralds dawn because with the Erinys comes justice; the darkness brought about by the sacrifice of Iphigenia should finally dissipate.[67] The metaphor of just revenge as dawning light is key to the very staging of the murder of Agamemnon, which happens at daybreak (279).[68] Those features of the torch-race that do not fit the expressed subject—the chain of beacon-fires—are perfectly suited to this underlying meaning.

This hidden meaning surfaces next in the description of the events that take place between the arrival of the torch and Agamemnon's entrance. The Watchman alerts Clytemnestra; she welcomes the torch with loud cries and immediately begins making sacrifices; high-pitched female voices (whose?) join hers from every shrine (594–95). The Chorus tell us what goes on by describing Clytemnestra as though she were in sight and within earshot (84–96).[69] They see the queen "starting burnt sacrifice," that is, lighting the offerings set up on an altar or altars (85–86).[70] They see the darkness ablaze with fires and torches whose flames reach the sky. This vision powerfully

64. Fraenkel 1950, 168.

65. Fraenkel 1950, 16–17 proposes that the word is used "for anything that gives light," but his own analysis indicates that it means anything that holds light, such as braziers and lanterns.

66. See the discussion in Fraenkel 1950, 17; as Gantz 1977, 29 points out, "Since both constructions are possible it seems likely that both were intended. . . ."

67. This conceit is expressed in the *Libation Bearers* by references to Orestes as one who brings the light of day (collected by Peradotto 1964, 391).

68. The "kindly light of the day that brings justice" (ὦ φέγγος εὔφρον ἡμέρας δικηφόρου, 1577) that Aegisthus greets after the deed is, however, a false dawn. It is not φῶς but φέγγος, "brilliance," and εὔφρον, like the night. Peradotto 1964, 390: "what he sees as daylight is really the sunless night into which he and the house of Atreus have sunk."

69. Is she on stage? As Fraenkel 1950, 51–52 says, it is unlikely "that a leading character enters the scene for the first time and then leaves it again without having uttered a word." On the other hand, the Chorus speak as though she were at hand: they ask her a series of questions (85–87) and then demand an answer (97); they ask her why she "starts burnt offerings." The purpose of this charade, I think, is to introduce the image of the queen as she lights the fire, without introducing true dialogue. As Bollack and La Combe 1981, 93–94 propose, this is a "fictional" dialogue.

70. With Verrall I retain the manuscript reading θύος κινεῖς and understand it to mean that Clytemnestra "sets the sacrifice going" by lighting the fire. Moreover, I take περίπεμπτα in connection with τίνος ἀγγελίας,

re-introduces the torch-race by evoking its culminating event—only this time, it has nothing to do with the "beacon." In the actual races, victory was summed up in the kindling of altar fires by the first runner to reach the goal; that is, the last runner of the winning team. As he would do, Clytemnestra lights pyres on altars with the "light sent from afar" (300). By implication, she is thus cast as the victorious runner of the relay race. This figure directs us to the real tenor of the metaphor and opens an entirely different view of the very same series of apparently harmless events. With the torch comes the ὑστερόποινος Ἐρινύς (59). As in a relay-race, she comes into view and is sighted by the Watchman. As had been done at the other watchposts, he "signals" (σημαίνω, 26) the next and last carrier, Clytemnestra. The queen arises like the moon (ἐπαντείλασαν, 27)—that is, like an Erinys or torch-bearing Hecate—and in her hand the flame from Mount Ida successfully alights on the altars of Argos.[71] The connotations of victory implicit in this imagery anticipate here the solution to the riddle posed near the end of the Beacon Speech. On the one hand, the "first and last runner" should be the wondrously alive torch, since the only participant who covers the entire course in a relay race, and may be said to "run," is the torch itself. But Clytemnestra too is the winner, since she ran the last lap arriving first at the altar torch in hand.[72] The vicious twist of this riddle is that, of course, the two are one and the same. When she receives the torch, Clytemnestra becomes the avenger, ὁ παλαιὸς δριμὺς ἀλάστωρ who, she reveals after the slaughter, assumes her shape (1500–1504).[73] The same progression marks the coming of the avenger in the *Libation Bearers,* 535–37. When Orestes reaches Argos, Clytemnestra is shaken out of sleep by the frightening dream of the serpent at her breast. At the same time, the house is illuminated "by the setting ablaze in the palace, for the sake of the mistress, of many torch-bearers (λαμπτῆρες) that had been blinded in the darkness." In the same way, flames had lit up all over the city in response to Clytemnestra's sacrifices in the *Agamemnon* (595–97). That is, as the dream announces the arrival of the avenging Erinys in the person of Orestes,

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because messages, not sacrifices, are usually "sent around": "What have you learned? Trusting the divulgations of which message do you start sacrifice?"

71. Ἐπανατέλλω has specific connotations that have troubled commentators, being used of the rising of the stars, the sun, and the moon; see Bollack and La Combe 1981. The scholia understood the verb in that sense here: ὡς ἐπὶ ἄστρου ἢ σελήνης. The particular figure of the moon intended, I believe, is Hecate, who is both associated with the Erinyes and represented holding one or two torches. See H. Sarian, *LIMC* VI (1992) s.v. "Hekate," esp. pp. 985–86, 1016, and nos. 247–60.

72. Connotations of individual victory are unmistakable in the picture on a bell krater in the British Museum, 98.7–16.6, *ARV*^{2}, 1333.1; Van Straten 1995, fig. 142: Nike ties a sash around his arm as the λαμπαδοφόρος stands by the altar holding the torch with which the fire has been lit. At 488 Clytemnestra refers to the "beacon" as the "first fire." The possibility that τελευταῖος at 314 looks forward to the charged use of τέλειος later in the play can only be mentioned here. On the latter, see Zeitlin 1965, 475–80.

73. The possession of Clytemnestra by the daemon may be represented as fire in her heart. Before the arrival of the torch her heart is "expectant" (ἐλπίζον κέαρ, 11); then the Chorus wonder who, like the queen, would let his "heart be fired by a flame's unexpected message" (φλογὸς παραγγέλμασιν / νέοις πυρωθέντα καρδίαν, 480–81); and Clytemnestra reminds them later that they were wrong to think that, like a woman, she was "possessed at heart" (ἦ κάρτα πρὸς γυναικὸς αἴρεσθαι κέαρ, 592). The same thought may be expressed in the difficult passage at 1470–72. The malignant nature of the torch is highlighted in the Beacon Speech by loaded words: it is sent on with unrestrained force (305), and it "hurls down," σκήπτει, a verb used of thunderbolts and avenging daemons, e.g., Eur. *Med.* 1333.

a multitude of torches suddenly lighting up in the house signal the presence of the Furies. These torch-holding Erinyes are evoked in Clytemnestra's welcome to her husband (889–91), where she recalls nights spent weeping because Iphigenia remained unavenged. "The torch-bearers that concerned you remained ever unattended," she says, τὰς ἀμφὶ σοὶ κλαίουσα λαμπτηρουχίας / ἀτημελήτους αἰέν (890–91).[74]

The image of the Erinys bringing the fire from Troy introduces the theme of "sacrifice corrupted" that was identified by Zeitlin. The Chorus wonder (87–91) at the fact that Clytemnestra honors both celestial and infernal gods at the same time, as must never be done. While the purpose of a torch-race is to bring new, purifying flame to the gods' shrines,[75] Clytemnestra's λαμπαδηδρομία brings to Argos the dark fire (ὀρφναίου πυρός, 21) that torched the shrines of Troy. The pyres and torches that receive that fire have an extraordinary fragrance. The Chorus say they have been treated with "the meek, guileless persuasions of chaste unguent, royal balm from the inner chambers" (πελανῷ μυχόθεν βασιλείῳ, 94–96); Clytemnestra calls them "fragrant, sacrifice-consuming (θυηφάγον) flame" (597). The quality of the fires is brought up again at a crucial moment in the unfolding of sacrificial imagery, just before the slaughters (1306–12). From inside the palace comes a rich scent, which the Chorus insist is frankincense burning on the hearth. But, as she goes inside, Cassandra recognizes the stench of death: the house "breathes blood-dripping murder," it reeks of the grave, ὅμοιος ἀτμὸς ὥσπερ ἐκ τάφου πρέπει (1311). In characteristic Aeschylean progression, this last reference to the smell of Clytemnestra's fires projects a revealing light on the preceding two. One finally understands that the fragrant flame is one that "feeds on sacrifice" because the royal fluid from the recesses of the palace (where maidens are normally confined) is the blood of Iphigenia, "meek, guileless, and chaste."[76]

AINIGMATA

In the Beacon Speech and throughout the trilogy, the torch embodies the kind of justice that the Erinys brings. But the metaphoric import of the image is made enigmatic by the fact that a "literal" reading is foregrounded in each case. Thus one is, at first, invited to take the torch from Ida as a friendly signal, and the torch that Clytemnestra holds when she appears on stage as no more than the means to light fires. Aeschylus' use of *ainigmata* is well known. Fraenkel, who traced the recognition of a riddling mode in the trilogy to Casaubon, named it *griphos* to indicate "the riddling expression . . . followed by the explanation that solves the conundrum."[77] Since

74. Fraenkel 1950, 403–4 rightly understands λαμπτεροῦχος (890) to mean "lamp-holder" and, connecting it to λαμπτήρ at line 22, takes it as a reference to the light-signal from Troy—although not to the Erinyes.

75. Burkert 1985, 61–62.

76. Gantz 1977, 30 understands "royal blood" to refer more broadly to the several bloodsheds in the house of Atreus.

77. Fraenkel 1950, 31; 135–37. He notes, however, that such "anxiety to append an unambiguous solution . . . runs counter to the nature of the *griphos* and impairs its effect" (p. 9).

then the word has become a label for Aeschylean metaphor. But the riddle is not simply a particular kind of metaphor. It is a complex discursive mode with its own structure and rules, which include a particular manipulation of the trope of metaphor.[78] Aeschylus is a master of the genre. Let us take as an example of these so-called *griphoi* the metaphor of the eagles at lines 135–38, which was analyzed above with regard to its structure:

οἴκ(τ)ῳ γὰρ ἐπίφθονος Ἄρτεμις ἁγνά
πτανοῖσιν κυσὶ πατρός
αὐτότοκον πρὸ λόχου μογερὰν πτάκα θυομένοισιν,
στυγεῖ δὲ δεῖπνον αἰετῶν.

For out of pity pure Artemis bears a grudge against the winged hounds of her father that slaughter for a sacrifice the poor trembling hare with her young before the birth; and she loathes the feast of eagles.

[Fraenkel]

Fraenkel comments: "The eagles are here indicated by way of a *griphos,* but in Aeschylus' well-known fashion . . . the explanation follows at the end of the sentence with αἰετῶν."[79] In the sense of "eagles," however, "hounds of her father" is not a special form of riddling metaphor. It is just a metaphor, and one that hardly needs a gloss. There is, it is true, something that vivid metaphors and riddles share, in that both entail an element of surprise and need to be worked through. According to its classical definition, metaphor involves a "suspension of belief," because it presents the hearer with an unexpected image and requires him to sort out which of its elements makes an apt vehicle for what it strives to "put before the eyes."[80] But the hearer is not left wondering whether the mode of discourse is literal or metaphorical.

That is precisely the mark of the riddle, as may be seen in Cassandra's *ainigmata,* for instance in the vision of the net (1114–17):

ἐ ἔ παπαῖ παπαῖ, τί τόδε φαίνεται;
ἦ δίκτυόν τί γ' Ἅιδου;
ἀλλ' ἄρκυς ἡ ξύνευνος, ἡ ξυναιτία
φόνου.

Ah, ah! alas, alas! What is this that comes in view? Some net of Hades? No, the snare that shares his slumber, the accomplice in the murder.

At a first reading one is inclined to take ξύνευνος in its literal sense: the person who shares Agamemnon's marital bed, that is, Clytemnestra. She would be the one called "the accomplice of his murder." Within this frame

78. The structure of riddles was discovered by Petsch 1899, 48–50. There is a substantial literature on the folk-riddle. For an overview, see the essays in Köngäs-Maranda 1976, and Pepicello and Green 1984.

79. Fraenkel 1950, 82.

80. For a discussion of this "suspension of belief," see Ricoeur 1991, 216–56. Aristotle, *Rh.* 1405b, said it best: "And, generally speaking, clever enigmas furnish good metaphors; for metaphor is a kind of enigma, so that it is clear that the transference is clever"; translation by J. H. Freese, Loeb Classical Library.

of reference, one has to fit the corollary metaphor: "Clytemnestra is a net." But the hearer finds himself unable to visualize a wife as either net or cloth; moreover, throughout the play Clytemnestra is cast as the murderess—not an accomplice. The "riddlee" is momentarily stumped.[81] Where metaphor produces surprise, the riddle generates frustration, which leads one back to question the image. The images that make sense in this context are not the ones that seemed obvious within the initial frame of reference: not the bedroom, but the tomb; not a wife, but a shroud. The solution lies in recognizing the shift, characteristic of the riddle, from a literal to a metaphorical mode and vice versa: εὐνή is to be understood metaphorically as that permanent resting place, the grave.[82] The "net" is literally the endless cloth in which Agamemnon was caught and which was, therefore, Clytemnestra's accomplice. That is, the πέπλοι by which the deed was accomplished embrace him shroud-like in his grave. In the same sense the πέπλοι wrapped around his corpse are later described by Aegisthus as "the woven robes of the Erinyes" (1580), and at *Libation Bearers* 998–99, the robes are again mentioned as a shroud.

The passage that contains the metaphor of the winged hounds holds a riddle as well, although not one solved by guessing that the eagles are the hounds of Zeus. Commentators have long recognized the ambiguity of the image, which fits the Atreidae as much as the eagles, since the Atreidae too were dispatched by Zeus (60–62), and are explicitly identified by Calchas with the eagles (123–25).[83] But at line 136 ambivalence gives way to the uncanny. Sacrifice (θυομένοισιν) is inappropriate for both the "literal" subject of the metaphor (the eagles) and its vehicle (the hounds), because men, not animals, perform rituals. The victim is then described in words that may, by a stretch of the imagination, be applied to the hare, but suit Iphigenia much better. Αὐτότοκον may be a contrived way to say "together with her young," but the usual sense of such formations is "one's own," "one's own child." Λόχος is suggestive of λόχιος and λοχεία, but there is no demonstrable instance of it meaning "childbirth";[84] it means "ambush," "army," and generally "company." As in the play between ἄτη (folly) and ἄτη (tempest) at line 131, allusive homophony marks the transition to a new frame of reference.[85] Then the mention of sacrifice raises a "block" that can

81. Fraenkel 1950, 504 admits "I know of no self-evident solution of the puzzle," after rejecting, in my view, the correct explanation (n. 3): "I have thought of referring ξύνευνος to the use of the garment later for covering Agamemnon's dead body (1492, 1580 f.), but that would point to a time too far ahead of the events which fill Cassandra's vision at the moment." It is, of course, a prophetess' prerogative to be able to see into the future without following strictly the course of events.

82. In Soph. *El.* 436, Electra refers to Agamemnon's grave as εὐνὴ πατρός. At *Cho.* 318, Orestes calls his father's grave εὐναί. On metaphorical ambiguity in riddles, see Pepicello and Green 1984, 104–19.

83. The ambivalence of the metaphor has been understood as an "openness," which is then foreclosed or "determined" by the mention of the eagles. See the bibliography cited by Goldhill 1984, 19–20.

84. Fraenkel 1950, 82 cites as a parallel the use of the word at *Supp.* 677. The meaning "childbirth" there, however, is far from secure, and the phrase might be translated as "Artemis Hecate watch over the company of women," an allusion to the rituals at Brauron and other sanctuaries of the goddess in Attica.

85. This is a standard feature of riddles; see Hamnett 1967, 381–82: "An ambivalent word, concept or item of behaviour can be considered as belonging to any of two or more frames of reference, according to the interpretation brought to bear upon it, or indeed to several or all such frames at once. It can therefore operate as a point of transition between those different frames of reference. . . ." On "allusive" homophony in riddles see Pepicello and Green 1984, 29–35; Chiaro 1992, 38–39.

be overcome only by switching from a figurative reading of the expression to a literal one. These "winged hounds" behave neither like hunting dogs nor like eagles; they behave like the Atreidae themselves:

αὐτότοκον πρὸ λόχου μογερὰν πτάκα θυομένοισιν,

who sacrifice for themselves before the army (πρὸ λόχου) their own child (αὐτότοκον), frightened and cowering.[86]

In the wake of this *ainigma*, the phrase "feast of eagles" retrieves and expands, rather than delimits, the metaphor of the Atreidae as Zeus' eagles and hounds. No feast follows the sacrifice of Iphigenia. The banquet mentioned here refers to the plunder that follows the sacrifice of Troy.[87]

Solving the riddle contained in Calchas' interpretation of the omen is the key to understanding that the prophecy reaches well beyond the taking of Troy. For, if the victim of the "winged hounds" of Zeus is Iphigenia, it is difficult to see how the very same sacrifice can be called in the next stanza "another sacrifice," θυσίαν ἑτέραν (150–51).[88] The logic of the prophecy itself points to Agamemnon as the next victim. Calchas' utterance is structured around the opposing wills of Zeus and Artemis: to the verdict that Troy must perish (126–30) corresponds the grudging consent of the goddess (140–45). Each revelation is then followed by a prayer that Artemis may not send the storm, the first referring to the winds metaphorically (131–35), the second descriptively (146–50). The prophecy is thus composed of two symmetrical sections,[89] each containing additional information about Artemis' displeasure. While the first (135–38) gives the reasons for her anger (the plunder of Troy), the second announces how she will take her revenge, should Troy fall. With the sacrifice of Iphigenia, she sets in motion the chain of events that leads to the death of Agamemnon (150–54):

θυσίαν
ἑτέραν, ἄνομόν τιν', ἄδαιτον,
νεικέων τέκτονα σύμφυτον, οὐ δει-
σήνορα· μίμνει γὰρ φοβερὰ παλίνορτος
οἰκονόμος δολία, μνάμων Μῆνις τεκνόποινος.

. . . yet another sacrifice, one without the sound of pipes and without a feast, a born maker of strife with no fear of man: for there awaits child-avenging Wrath, unforgetting, fearsome, ever-arising, a treacherous housekeeper.

This "other sacrifice" is specifically marked as not only ἄνομος, "without music,"[90] but also as ἄδαιτον, "of which none might eat" (LSJ, s.v.). Sarah

86. Pucci 1992, 516, pp. 532–33, n. 11 observes that the middle voice, θυομένοισιν, expresses the self-serving motivation of the Atreidae.

87. Peradotto 1969, 248 notes that the pregnant hare is an apt metaphor for a city under siege, teeming with life within the walls.

88. With Fraenkel 1950, 91, most commentators take the θυσίαν ἑτέραν in reference to Iphigenia, e.g., Goldhill 1984, 24. Lebeck 1972, 34–35 interprets ἑτέραν as having "not one but three connotations. It is 'another' sacrifice after the omen and 'another' after the sacrifice of Thyestes' children . . . it is the sacrifice following that of Iphigenia as well: the murder of Agamemnon, repeatedly described by sacrificial imagery." On this last murder as sacrifice, see Zeitlin 1965.

89. Fraenkel 1950, 88.

90. Lloyd-Jones 1952, 96.

Peirce points out to me that the word has a technical ring. Its sense corresponds to ἄγευστος, used of sacrifices to chthonic powers, such as Hades, Hecate, and the Erinys.[91] This points specifically to the killing of Agamemnon, which occurs before daybreak (as a sacrifice to infernal divinities should) and is performed for ἄτη and the Erinys (1432–33). There is also a telling correspondence between νεικέων τέκτονα at lines 153 and 1406, where Clytemnestra calls her right hand δικαία τέκτων, maker of justice. The *Menis* who waits at home for Agamemnon is the daemon invoked by Iphigenia's sacrifice, and she wears the mask of Clytemnestra.[92] By sending the tempest over Aulis, Artemis forces the king to choose between revenge and the riches of Troy on the one hand, and his child on the other. In either case, he will lose something, for the only effect Iphigenia's sacrifice obtains is to insure that Agamemnon will pay with his life for the destruction of Troy.[93]

To a greater extent than has been realized, this enigmatic mode of discourse is deployed throughout the trilogy and with special intensity in the *Agamemnon*.[94] Indeed, spectators are warned at the beginning of the play, by the Watchman (36–39):

> τὰ δ' ἄλλα σιγῶ· βοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσσῃ μέγας
> βέβηκεν· οἶκος δ' αὐτός, εἰ φθογγὴν λάβοι,
> σαφέστατ' ἂν λέξειεν· ὡς ἑκὼν ἐγώ
> μαθοῦσιν αὐδῶ κοὐ μαθοῦσι λήθομαι.

> I say nothing of the rest: a great ox stands on my tongue. The house itself, if it could talk, would speak most clearly; I, on the other hand, speak willingly to those who have intelligence, while I escape the understanding of those who do not.

The possibility of saying something without seeming to do so is introduced here by the contrast between two manners of telling the same tale: the first straightforward, most clear (or most obvious, σαφέστατα); the other cryptic, restricting understanding to persons equipped with special intelligence (μαθοῦσιν).[95] While Aeschylus' public had the benefit of clues embedded in the staging of the action, for us the presence of a riddle in the text is often

91. Stengel 1920, 105.

92. Fraenkel 1950, 92–93, argues against the idea that the *Menis* should be understood as Clytemnestra and takes it to be a reference to the Erinyes. One identification does not exclude the other, in view of the fact that Clytemnestra identifies herself as "the ancient fierce spirit" who takes vengeance.

93. Winnington-Ingram 1983, 90: "What was necessitated by his [Agamemnon's] choice at Aulis was his death at the hands of Clytemnestra."

94. Anne Lebeck was the first to observe that the *ainigma* is more than a stylistic device in the *Oresteia:* "The significance of a recurrent image unfolds in successive stages, keeping time with the action of the drama. . . . In its early occurrences the image is elliptical and enigmatic. It is a γρῖφος or riddle whose solution is strung out over the course of the individual drama or the entire trilogy. . . . Prolepsis and gradual development of recurrent imagery, along with the corollary, movement from enigmatic utterance to clear statement, from riddle to solution, dominate the structure of the *Oresteia.* They govern the movement of thought within the single lyric, the relation between successive lyrics . . . and finally that between each separate play" (Lebeck 1972, 1–2).

95. Dougherty 1993, p. 59, n. 35, points to Athenaeus 10.455 f. (citing Antiphanes), for the particular use of μανθάνειν in the sense of "getting" the meaning of a riddle. I thank Christopher Faraone for this reference. Lebeck 1972, 28–29, notes the frequent use of μανθάνειν made in Cassandra's prophecy.

recognizable by metaphors that spin perversely out of control.[96] Paradoxically, scholars who have a profound acquaintance with the *Agamemnon* find these dense passages most suggestive, as they instinctively perceive several meanings at once that are both irreconcilable among themselves and rich in resonance. That is the case with the simile of the vultures, with which the Chorus begin their account of the expedition to Troy (40–59):

δέκατον μὲν ἔτος τόδ' ἐπεὶ Πριάμῳ μέγας ἀντίδικος
Μενέλαος ἄναξ ἠδ' Ἀγαμέμνων
διθρόνου Διόθεν καὶ δισκήπτρου
τιμῆς ὀχυρὸν ζεῦγος Ἀτρειδᾶν
στόλον Ἀργείων χιλιοναύτην
τῆσδ' ἀπὸ χώρας ἦραν, στρατιῶτιν ἀρωγήν,
μέγαν ἐκ θυμοῦ κλάζοντες ἄρη,
τρόπον αἰγυπιῶν οἵτ' ἐκπατίοις ἄλγεσι παίδων
†ὕπατοι† λεχέων στροφοδινοῦνται
πτερύγων ἐρετμοῖσιν ἐρεσσόμενοι,
δεμνιοτήρη πόνον ὀρταλίχων ὀλέσαντες·
ὕπατος δ' ἀΐων ἢ τις Ἀπόλλων ἢ Πὰν ἢ Ζεὺς
οἰωνόθροον γόον ὀξυβόαν τῶνδε μετοίκων
ὑστερόποινον πέμπει παραβᾶσιν Ἐρινύν.

This is now the tenth year since Priam's great adversary at suit, King Menelaus and Agamemnon, the stalwart yoke of the Atridae, paired in the honour of two thrones and two sceptres derived from Zeus, put out from this land an Argive armament of a thousand ships to give fighting help, shouting from an angry heart the cry for a mighty war, like vultures that, in the extreme (?) for their children, high above their bed circle round and round, rowing with the oars of their wings, having lost the couch-keeping labour they had spent over their nestlings; but one in the height, Apollo, it may be, or Pan or Zeus, hearing the shrill cry of the birds' lament, and (feeling great compassion for) the denizens in his realm, sends on the transgressors her who brings punishment though late, Erinys.

[Fraenkel]

This simile is long, complex and, on the surface, incoherent. In an ample, epic opening the birds of prey are introduced as a metaphor for the Atreidae. Midway through, however, the mention of children and of a grief-stricken household redirects the reader toward the death of Iphigenia.[97] The warriors' cry is likened to that of vultures, as is done, for instance, at *Iliad* 16.428–30: "They, as two hook-clawed beak-bent vultures / above a tall rock face, high-screaming, go for each other, / so now these two, crying aloud, encountered together" (Lattimore). A frame of reference is thus established that by its subject as well as its style "announces the occasion"[98]: the heroic world

96. For instance Pucci 1992, 526 (about the imagery of Iphigenia's sacrifice): "a chaotic mingling of figures"; Denniston-Page 1957, 81: "The mixture of metaphors is reckless." As Fraenkel 1950, 464 says, "A poet has now and then a hard time of it with his learned commentators."

97. Lebeck 1972, 8–9 notes that the mourning of the "metics" suggests Iphigenia and that there is a "discrepancy between the analogue and the situation which it is chosen to describe." The same point is made by MacLeod 1982, 133.

98. Köngäs-Maranda 1971, 58.

of war. In this manner, the audience is led to expect a set of correspondences between the launching of the expedition and the behavior of birds of prey. Then, as the simile unfolds, these expectations are frustrated at every turn. The interpreter who continues to work within that initial frame is forced to stretch the meaning of words beyond credibility and, eventually, to abandon the search for illuminating connections between the image and the subject to which it ought to refer. The passage is, in fact, so rich in dissonance as to suggest a different strategy. Instead of trying to reconcile at all costs the opening metaphor with what follows, or take refuge in a broad notion of polysemy, an effort will be made here to bring the incoherences into the foreground and expose their full disruptive power. A pattern will then be apparent, showing that there is no coherence because none was intended, and that the expectations of the audience are systematically frustrated, leaving those who "don't get it" in helpless confusion. A cunning mind, on the other hand, would realize that the true meaning of the utterance lies beneath the surface. The awareness that there is a hidden story in which the troubling elements fit to perfection is the first step towards understanding.

After casting the kings' cry to war as the cries of vultures, the metaphor extends to movement: the Atreidae putting the fleet to sea lift an expedition, suggesting an upward movement corresponding to that of the birds, soaring highest above their nest; and the birds fly like ships, on the oars of their wings. After this point, the theme of the launching of the fleet begins to slip out of the metaphoric grid established by the image of the vultures grieving for their lost chicks. To see the rage of the Atreidae as equivalent to the despair of the birds means seeing Helen as a helpless nestling—a puzzling thought, if you reflect that just below (62) she is unflatteringly called a "woman of many men," πολυάνωρ γυνή. The dispatch of a single Erinys by some god may refer both to the host that will descend on Troy and to the Erinys who will shout in triumph over Agamemnon's corpse (1117–20; 1235–36). The next image, however, presents real obstacles: the cries of the birds, which served at the beginning to evoke the "cry for a great war," have become a choral lament for the dead, οἰωνόθροον γόον. In conjunction with the reference to vultures, the mention of a *goos* unmistakably appeals to the simile describing the reunion of Odysseus with his son at *Odyssey* 16.216–19, but that scene—two men weeping uncontrollably—introduces here surprising, unwarlike connotations.[99] With its primary sense of "lament for the dead," the use of *goos* calls for an explanation, since Helen has not died (nor will she for a long while). So far, the only one to have died is Iphigenia.[100]

The connotations of the *goos* in fifth-century Athens are strong and specific. They have the power to affect deeply an audience who confronted

99. Fraenkel 1950, 29 notes that in the *Odyssey* "the birds . . . only lament in pain."

100. Fraenkel 1950, 36: "In Aeschylus I find only a single passage (*Prom.* 33) where the lament is not connected in some way with a dead body or with death." He considered and then dismissed (p. 32) the possibility that the phrase refers to Iphigenia: "Naturally it occurs to no one that the Atridae have lost children. . . ."

FIG. 4.—Prothesis. Attic funerary plaque. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. 54.11.15. Rogers Fund, 1954.

the image with the experience of actual death rituals, besides the memory of literary and visual representations. Firstly, the absence of an actual death is not a minor concern. Lamentation is offered in the presence of the dead at the wake and at the grave. In visual representations of the prothesis and burial the deceased is the centerpiece—the object towards which the wailing is directed, around which the mourners move and dance.[101] As a rule, that is, there is no *goos* without a corpse.[102] Secondly, although in epic poems men may sing the *goos* (as Achilles for Patroclus at *Iliad* 24.513) in late archaic and classical Athens the singers of the *goos* are women, shown around the bier, disheveled, tearing their hair and clawing their faces[103] (Figure 4, p. 31). The image that would first come to the mind of the audience at the mention of a *goos* may well resemble the sacrifice of Polyxena on a sarcophagus of the early fifth century: as the maiden's throat is being slashed, her sisters throw themselves on their knees, fling their arms in the air, tear their hair, and cry.[104] Unlike the *threnos,* which

101. Late Geometric representations of the wake and the procession to the cemetery are collected in Ahlberg 1971; a summary analysis of the iconography of mourning is given at pp. 292–304. For representations of funerals on late archaic and classical vases and monuments, see Shapiro 1991, 629–56. The formal lamentation began at the prothesis and continued with the formal ecphora through the burial; see Alexiou 1974, 4–23. Legislation attributed to Solon, aimed at curbing the dramatic display that accompanied aristocratic funerals, allows us a glimpse of the importance of the *goos* and the role of the women of the house in these pageantries; see Humphreys 1980, 98–101.

102. It is true, as Seth Schein points out to me, that in *Il.* 6.497–502 Andromache leads a first *goos* for Hector, although he is neither dead nor even in the house. This, however, may be the exception that proves the rule, if it is a play upon a familiar image to convey a sense of Hector's certain death. "Lamenting a person before his death was also an offense in antiquity as it is in modern Greece," observes Holst-Warhaft 1992, 103.

103. Alexiou 1974, 6; Holst-Warhaft 1992, chapter 4.

104. The discovery was made at Karabiga (the ancient Granicus). I am grateful to Brian Rose for a provisional verbal description of the scenes; the sarcophagus is to be published in *Studia Troica* 6 (1996).

is sung by men, the uncontrolled shrill wailing of the *goos* carries feminine connotations that are hard to reconcile with the heroic tone of the war-cry that had been proposed at the start of the simile of the vultures. These are reinforced by the use of θρέομαι—a word used exclusively of female voices—in the compound οἰωνόθροον.[105] To make matters worse, the *goos,* which was the task of the near and dear, the kin of the dead person,[106] is here instead sung by "metics," alien residents. How are we to understand that word here? Birds of prey may be understood as "denizens of the sky" and so as metics in the realm of the gods,[107] but that concept is not applicable to the Atreidae without some strain. Moreover, in the context of a *goos*, the οἶκος to which reference is made should be that of the dead person, not of the gods. Adding to the impression that the metaphor is out of control, the Chorus call the "metics" "these" with the deictic οἵδε, as though they were near and one could point to them—in Argos, that is.[108]

A certain coherence becomes visible beneath this jumble when one reflects on the use that is made in the trilogy of the figure of the metic. The characterization of the mourners as aliens residing in the palace of the Atreidae, of their singing as female voices shrieking, and of their song as one that calls for vengeance is an apt description of the Choruses of the *Libation Bearers* and the *Eumenides.* Indeed, the next mention of "wailing metics in the palace," θρεόμενοι μέτοικοι δόμων, is at *Libation Bearers* 970–71.[109] The Chorus themselves, the Choephori, are aliens too, slave women brought to Argos from a "besieged city" and now coerced to do the bidding of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.[110] Instead, they instruct Electra to invoke revenge. In more ways than one, they are the full-blown incarnation of the *goos* singers so briefly and cryptically mentioned in the simile of the vultures: aliens in the house, who perform a passionate dirge calling for an avenger to come. There are other remarkable points of correspondence: in the *Agamemnon,* the μέτοικοι sing for a god to hear them (Apollo or Pan or Zeus) and send an avenging Erinys—who is then embodied in Clytemnestra (1498–1504). In the *Libation Bearers,* the call for an avenger (121) is answered by Apollo with the dispatching of the Erinys, who materializes in Orestes (575–78; 649–51). The Choephori also explain the purpose of

105. Alexiou 1974, 11–14, 102–3, particularly pp. 225–26, n. 6, with reference to significant passages. On the use of θρέομαι in tragedy, see Garvie 1986, 316.

106. Alexiou 1974, 12–14 stresses the difference between "the *threnos* of the professional mourners, which was a proper song," and "the *goos* of the kinswomen, which was merely wailed," and proposes that the *goos* was the specific task of the next of kin. See also Seaford 1994, 84–85.

107. Fraenkel 1950, 36–37: "The birds . . . are μέτοικοι in the heavenly πόλις."

108. The use of the demonstrative pronoun to refer to the vultures has been found so troubling that the wording was amended from τῶνδε to τῶν δέ (Hermann). Fraenkel 1950, 37–38 gives a full discussion of the problem.

109. While there is no agreement on who these "mourning aliens" may be, several commentators have suggested that the Chorus refer to themselves as μέτοικοι; see Garvie 1986, 315–16. Garvie notes that "the word applies best to the Erinyes, who had taken up residence as unwelcome aliens in the palace. . . ." The word applies as well, as I argue directly, to the Choephori, in that they are Erinyes-like.

110. Although most commentators believe that the Chorus are Trojan captives, they give no hint as to their origin. They characterize their servitude as inevitable and god-given. Garvie 1986, 53 remarks that "Since the Chorus will later appear as conventional representatives of Argos itself it is odd that Aeschylus should here stress their status as prisoners-of-war (75–77)."

the lament over the slain (323–31): as the dead are mourned, the guilty are revealed and the mechanism of justice by revenge is set in motion.[111]

In appearance and behavior the Choephori are also a good match for the Erinyes: both the invisible Chorus of the *Agamemnon* and the Chorus of *Eumenides*. Many have noted that their loyalty to Agamemnon and the fierceness of their grief are extraordinary.[112] No less so is the authority with which they speak and are addressed, and their zeal in helping Orestes. Like Furies, they are dressed in black and unpleasant to see: old women in rags with faces disfigured by bloody gashes.[113] They call for the same kind of Justice that animates the Furies in the *Eumenides* (306–14; 400–404) and take on as ferocious a tone, for instance at lines 267–68: "May I some day see them dead in the pitchy splattering of flame." Like the Erinyes who sing the dirge for Iphigenia, the Choephori are a "troop" that look forward to their triumph over the corpses of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.[114] Whoever they are, it is fair to say that the Choephori function like Furies. The figure of the metic has connotations essential to that role. Consider how the Erinyes appear to Cassandra in the *Agamemnon* (1186–93), a cacophonous choir that has drunk blood and asks for more:

> τὴν γὰρ στέγην τήνδ' οὔποτ' ἐκλείπει χορός
> ξύμφθογγος οὐκ εὔφωνος· οὐ γὰρ εὖ λέγει.
> καὶ μὴν πεπωκώς γ', ὡς θρασύνεσθαι πλέον,
> βρότειον αἷμα κῶμος ἐν δόμοις μένει,
> δύσπεμπτος ἔξω, ξυγγόνων Ἐρινύων·
> ὑμνοῦσι δ' ὕμνον δώμασιν προσήμεναι
> πρώταρχον ἄτην, ἐν μέρει δ' ἀπέπτυσαν
> εὐνὰς ἀδελφοῦ τῷ πατοῦντι δυσμενεῖς.
>
> I say that from this house there never departs a choir that sings in concert and yet with no pleasant sound, for not pleasant are its words. Aye, and it has drunk—and grown bolder thereby—of human blood; and it abides, that revel rout, within the house, not to be turned away, the rout of the Erinyes bred in the race. And they sing their song, besetting the chambers, sing of the mind's blindness that began it all, and each in turn they vent their loathing for a brother's bed, hostile to him who trampled on it.
>
> [Fraenkel]

The point that the infernal band has made its nest in the palace and will not be turned out must be important if it is made three times in eight lines: οὔποτ' ἐκλείπει (1186), ἐν δόμοις μένει (1189), δύσπεμπτος ἔξω (1190). They are unwelcome aliens in the house—metics, in a sense. The metaphor is

111. Seaford 1994, 91–92.

112. Garvie 1986, 54 explains their behavior by comparing it to that of other faithful slaves, such as Briseis in the *Iliad,* or Tecmessa's in Sophocles' *Ajax.*

113. *Cho.* 24–31. For the age of the Chorus, see *Cho.* 171.

114. Compare *Cho.* 386–89: ἐφυμνῆσαι γένοιτό μοι †πευκή-/ εντ'† ὀλολυγμὸν ἀνδρός / θεινομένου γυναικός τ' / ὀλλυμένας to *Agamemnon* 1117–18: στάσις δ' ἀκόρετος γένει κατολολυξάτω θύματος λευσίμου. The Choephori are also called a στάσις at 114, 458, as are the Furies at *Eum.* 311. At *Eum.* 604–5 the Erinyes say that they did not pursue Clytemnestra. Nevertheless, Orestes (*Cho.* 276–84) is stirred into action by the threat of Erinyes arising from the blood of his father. Garvie 1986, 173 compares the Choephori to the Furies, as the latter are represented at *Ag.* 1186–93 and *Eum.* 321–34.

apt. The Furies are quintessential metics, since their job is to migrate from their place under the earth and settle wherever murder of kin has occurred. This figure is fully played out at the very end of the *Oresteia,* when Athena offers the Erinyes a place in her land, if they will change their ways. Their transformation into Semnai—from hateful intruders in the οἶκος to welcome guests in the polis—is complete when they trade their black robes for the red dress of the Athenian metic (*Eum.* 851–52, 916, 1010–11, 1018–31).

The phrase "the piercing lament of these metics" triggered comprehension in Aeschylus' audience, following as it does subtler hints, created just before in the simile by ambiguous expressions. The chicks are παῖδες, although the meaning of παῖς is otherwise limited to human offspring.[115] Ὕπατοι λεχέων στροφοδινοῦνται can be taken to mean that the vultures circle high above the nest in desperation, as they do in the *Odyssey* simile. But the ostensible correspondence that was set up at the beginning with the departure of the Argive fleet ἀπὸ χώρας introduces the idea of moving away, which cannot be reconciled with that of circling in place. If the metaphoric connection to the departure of the fleet is to be maintained, the phrase should be understood as "wheeling turning away from the nest."[116] But this understanding conflicts with the image of birds circling in despair over their empty nest. The second instance of a phrase whose meaning changes radically with a change in discursive context is δεμνιοτήρη πόνον ὀρταλίχων ὀλέσαντες (54). Cut away from a specific context, the phrase is capable of two distinct meanings: either "having lost the labor of nurture spent over their nestlings" or "having destroyed the labor of nurture spent over their nestlings." The first reading may be fitted (albeit implausibly) in the initial frame of reference, concerning the loss of Helen. The second, however, fits the logic of what follows and points to a different story. If death has visited the nest, it is natural that there should be a *goos;* if revenge is invoked, this is murder unpunished.

Lexical ambiguity and metaphorical ambiguity, the sense of sliding onto a terrain where the images no longer make sense, are key features of the riddle.[117] The vultures metaphor has, in fact, the characteristic structure of the riddle: an opening frame of reference (the gathering of the host); descriptive elements, both literal and metaphorical (the war-cry, the oared wings); the "block," or elements that are in conflict with the preceding (the *goos,* "these" metics); and a concluding frame of reference, different from the initial one, in which the conflict is resolved (the sacrifice of Iphigenia and the revenge of Clytemnestra).[118] Solving the puzzle depends on the ability to recognize that certain features—the pains "on untrodden ground,"

115. Denniston-Page 1957 note that this use of παῖς "is abnormal" and rightly compare it to the use of ἶνιν at 717. This is not a coincidence, since the lion cub parable where the last term appears is as much of a riddle as the vultures simile. See the analysis of the parable in Knox 1952.

116. I take παίδων / . . . λεχέων (47–48) as a genitive indicating movement away from the nest, following Young 1964, 1.

117. Arist., *Poet.* 22: "By merely combining the ordinary names of things this cannot be done, but it is made possible by combining metaphors. The very nature indeed of a riddle is this, to describe a fact in an impossible combination of words. . . ." On the riddles of Greek oracles, see Dougherty 1993, chapter 3.

118. Petsch 1899, 48–50.

the *goos* of the metics, the Erinys—are a "block." They refer to a different subject: not the rape of Helen leading to the destruction of Troy, but the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the choir of Furies, and the imminent murder of Agamemnon. In order to respond to the clues given in the "block," the audience must realize that at that point the context has become unstable, as regards both the subject at hand and the mode of discourse. With a switch in the terms of the metaphor, the vultures are described behaving just as the Atreidae did.[119] In moving from the initial frame to the final one, the ambiguous items mentioned above (the use of παῖς for non-human children, the double sense of ἀπόλλυμι, for instance) are points of transition, being applicable to one as well as the other, that produce a moment of hesitation between two equally viable solutions.

Altogether, the seemingly dissonant elements of the simile align themselves in a continuous counterpoint that overwhelms the opening theme. The Atreidae call for war, their cry like that of vultures, and set off from the land of Argos, ἀπὸ χώρας. Then a keen listener will be aware of a reversal in the mode of discourse—from metaphorical to literal—as the vultures are cast as Atreidae, rather than the Atreidae as vultures. Like the Atreidae, the vultures are turning far away from the nest, παίδων ὕπατοι λεχέων στροφοδινοῦνται. They have destroyed "the labor of nurture spent over the nestlings" (Clytemnestra's labor) by sacrificing Iphigenia. This killing, yet another murder in the family, brings on the Furies, just as in the *Libation Bearers* "assaults of Furies" issue from Agamemnon's blood (283–84) and Clytemnestra's (1048–58). These install themselves in the house, foul guests who will not leave, and raise their terrifying *goos*.[120] It is hardly by chance that the metaphor of the Furies as metics, introduced so near its opening, is also the one with which the trilogy ends. Other images set out in the riddle of the vultures are echoed later in the *Oresteia.* After the murder, Clytemnestra recalls the mourning over Iphigenia (1526), and the curiously specific figure of the bird who kills his own surfaces again at the end of the trilogy in Athena's banishment of civil strife (*Eumenides* 866): ἐνοικίου δ᾽ ὄρνιθος οὐ λέγω μάχην, "I forbid the fight of the bird within the house."

The same movement, leading into obscurity from an apparently clear commentary on the causes of the war occurs at *Agamemnon* 369–84. Here too the oracular form of the riddle is at work. Just before, the Chorus had

119. Taylor 1943, 130: "The positive and negative descriptive elements constituting the essential structure of the riddle form the basis for classification and study of the genre. The details of the positive descriptive element imply the answer but mislead the hearer because they are understood figuratively rather than literally. . . . The negative descriptive element can be recognised immediately because it seems to be impossible. In other words, a true riddle consists of two descriptions of an object, one figurative and one literal, and confuses the hearer who endeavors to identify an object described in conflicting ways."

120. The mention of the *goos* appears all the more sinister in view of the oaths to which Clytemnestra refers after she has killed him (1431–33): καὶ τήνδ᾽ ἀκούεις ὁρκίων ἐμῶν θέμιν· / μὰ τὴν τέλειον τῆς ἐμῆς παιδὸς Δίκην / Ἄτην Ἐρινύν θ᾽ ἥσι τόνδ᾽ ἔσφαξ᾽ ἐγώ. Zeitlin 1965, 476–79 argues that the phrase echoes legal terminology—literally: "Yes, you understand (or have heard) the righteousness of my oaths"—and that these are the oaths Clytemnestra swore after the killing of her daughter and before Agamemnon's return. She tells the Chorus now that by her action she has accomplished what she promised. When did she take the oaths? As Alexiou 1974, 1978–79 points out, the funeral, where the *goos* is performed, is traditionally the place where revenge is vowed, over the corpse.

expressed the view that the destruction of Troy was the will of Zeus; it resumes that train of thought at line 385, with the mention of Peitho in reference to Paris and the abduction of Helen. The sense of the passage in between is unclear on the surface, beginning with the thought that, while someone may say that the gods do not punish men who destroy beauty, the pious man knows that they do. Then, after a very obscure phrase mentioning progeny (ἔγγονοι) and ruin, wealth and pride, there is admonishment against excess, followed by the prediction of doom for the rich man who has no regard for Justice (369–84):

οὐκ ἔφα τις
θεοὺς βροτῶν ἀξιοῦσθαι μέλειν
ὅσοις ἀθίκτων χάρις
πατοῖθ´· ὁ δ´ οὐκ εὐσεβής·
πέφανται δ´ †ἐγγόνους
ἀτολμήτων ἄρη†
πνεόντων μεῖζον ἢ δικαίως,
φλεόντων δωμάτων ὑπέρφευ
ὑπὲρ τὸ βέλτιστον. ἔστω δ´ ἀπή-
μαντον, ὥστ´ ἀπαρκεῖν
εὖ πραπίδων λαχόντι·
οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἔπαλξις
πλούτου πρὸς κόρον ἀνδρί
λακτίσαντι μέγαν Δίκας
βωμὸν εἰς ἀφάνειαν.

Someone said that the gods do not deign to punish mortals who tread on the grace of virgins; but that man does not do the gods honor. It is apparent that there will be rewards for acts not to be dared towards one's children,[121] even as they swell with pride greater than is just, even as the palace overflows beyond measure, beyond what is best. Let what is not harmful be enough to satisfy the man who has acquired a wise heart. For wealth offers no defense to a man who in his arrogance tramples the great altar of Justice into oblivion.

The reference is apparently to Paris and Helen but so riddled with ambiguities that it remains obscure. What is, who is, χάρις ἀθίκτων, and who treads on it? It should be the same man who has crushed the altar of Justice under his foot: Paris, who violated the laws of hospitality. But when the image recurs, several times in the trilogy, the trampling foot belongs to Agamemnon, the conqueror of Troy: τὸν σὸν πόδ´ ὦναξ, Ἰλίου πορθήτορα (907). The metaphors that cast Troy as Iphigenia in their common destruction produce here a pointed ambivalence. While the conquering foot refers to the destruction of Troy, the term ἄθικτος, which is frequently used in the sense of "virgin," brings back the picture of Iphigenia as she sang for her father and his guests: ἀταύρωτος, inviolate, in her virgin years.[122] And the mention of overblown men and a palace overflowing with riches is puzzling with regard to the Trojans, although not at all in reference to Agamemnon.

121. I take ἐγγόνους as an accusative of relation, specifying the persons with regard to whom action was taken.

122. Conacher 1987, 19.

As in the simile of the vultures, the ground has shifted: the Chorus are no longer concerned with the punishment of Paris. Their language hints at Agamemnon's willingness to sacrifice his child and the welcome that waits for him in Argos. Ἄρη (plural of ἄρος, "gain" or "help") is a play on the homophony with ἀρή, "ruin":[123] Agamemnon's reward for ἀτόλμητα—that is, the "all-daring" decision to kill Iphigenia (παντότολμον, 221)—is death at the hands of the "child-avenging *Menis*" who waits for him at home (155). The mention of Justice is an allusion to that "Justice accomplished" invoked in Clytemnestra's oath, τὴν τέλειον τῆς ἐμῆς παιδὸς Δίκην / Ἄτην Ἐρινύν (1432–33). The same ambiguity in the purpose of *Dike* has, in fact, been recognized in her greeting to Agamemnon: "Quickly, let there be a path spread with purple, so that Justice may lead him into his unhoped for home." Her words are spoken as though they referred to the rightful revenge of the Atreidae for the abduction of Helen and her husband's safe return, against all hope. But the audience understand that justice has yet to be done and that the purple path he walks leads him to his grave.[124] The final frame of the riddle accommodates the references to arrogance and excessive wealth. As Clytemnestra says (962), the house of Atreus "knows not how to be poor." In the boasting and display that mark the carpet scene, the spotlight is again on Agamemnon's foot. Invited to step on the beautiful tapestry and into the palace, Agamemnon hesitates and resists his wife's taunts (933–38):

Κ. ηὔξω θεοῖς δείσας ἂν ὧδ᾽ ἔρδειν τάδε;
Αγ. εἴπερ τις, εἰδώς γ᾽ εὖ τόδ᾽ ἐξεῖπον τέλος.
Κ. τί δ᾽ ἂν δοκεῖ σοι Πρίαμος, εἰ τάδ᾽ ἤνυσεν;
Αγ. ἐν ποικίλοις ἂν κάρτά μοι βῆναι δοκεῖ.
Κ. μὴ νυν τὸν ἀνθρώπειον αἰδεσθῇς ψόγον.
Αγ. φήμη γε μέντοι δημόθρους μέγα σθένει.

Kl. Would you, in an hour of terror, have vowed to the gods to do this?
Ag. Yes, if any man with full knowledge had prescribed the performance of this ritual.
Kl. What do you think Priam would have done, if he had achieved this?
Ag. I think for sure he would have walked on tapestries.
Kl. Have no *aidos* then for the reproach of men.
Ag. And yet the voice of the people has great power.

[Fraenkel]

Clytemnestra outlines a correspondence between her request and the conditions that led to the sacrifice of her daughter: dread of the storm, unquestioning acceptance of Calchas' interpretation of omens, greed for Priam's

123. The possibility that ἄρη may be the nominative plural of ἄρος, "gain" or "profit," is not listed in Dawe 1965. The word has been understood either as Ἄρη, "war-spirit," or ἀρή, "ruin," and connected to πνεόντων; see Fraenkel 1950, 195–98. Ἄρος has been reliably restored at *Supp.* 885; see Johansen and Whittle, vol. 3, 216–17. Hesychius defines the word as "help" (ὄφελος), but also "reservoir for the collection of rain water" and "unintentional damage." Chantraine 1968, 112 connects it to ἄρνυμαι, which means to exact a penalty as well as to win a reward. Connecting these apparently disparate meanings may be the idea of "consequence" as outgrowth or surplus. Denniston-Page 1957, 102 come close to the sense I suggest in taking the word to mean "harm" as penalty.

124. Denniston-Page 1957, 148: "The hidden meaning is: 'that Retribution (for Iphigenia) may lead him to a home far different from the one he expected'."

wealth, and unwillingness to face the hostility of the army by abandoning the expedition against Troy. The foot eventually comes down, reluctantly and unshod, on the precious cloth. He feels *aidos*—the king explains—at the idea of wasting the possessions of the house by walking over them, destroying with his foot textiles worth the price of silver. Throughout this scene, the implied references to Iphigenia direct the audience to reflect on the distinction between true and false wealth: the ἄγαλμα of the house has been destroyed without regard for her *aidos,* but that concern is freely expended over tapestries.[125] Agamemnon acts out the distinction made by the Chorus between the righteous households, whose riches are its children, and gilded mansions where tainted wealth is prized (761–81).

IN CONCLUSION: *AIDOS, ATE,* AND THE *GRIPHOS*

This study grew out of research about the way visual imagery operates in ancient Greek culture and the hypothesis that its power to communicate lies, at least sometimes, in the fact that the image is directly keyed into language by the mechanism of metaphor. Through the analyses of *aidos* and *ate,* I have argued that a word is capable of putting on stage an intellectual construct, and does so by calling up to the mind of the audience the *visual* figure that gives that construct comprehensible form. While some metaphors are shared by many societies, others, such as "*ate* is a storm wind," are culture-bound and not intuitively accessible to the outsider. The word may survive translation to another time and place, and the image may too, but the sense that they are joined is lost in the process. It can be recovered in some cases through patient collation of verbal and visual imagery. Because Aeschylus relied on metaphor's power of visual suggestion to an extraordinary degree, the erasure of the metaphorical connection leaves blanks in our reading of the *Agamemnon.* For this reason parts of the text have seemed unintelligible. That in several places the restoration of the image sheds light on the text is a small but significant gain.[126] Students of tragedy will measure the usefulness of this approach by what has been gained toward an understanding of the play. One can point to results as regards its conceptual underpinnings and what may be called the architecture of the *Oresteia.* By the last I mean the use of figures of light to articulate an overarching metaphor that frames the trilogy, and the use of enigmatic diction as a narrative and dramatic device.

Aidos, embodied in Iphigenia and projected through her upon the city of Troy, adds specificity to the way in which the murder of Agamemnon is the counterpart of her "corrupted" sacrifice. Just as that sacrifice was a perversion of the ritual, so his own death caught in the web of the robe is a perversion of the rightful practice of *aidos*. But the true significance of *aidos* in the *Agamemnon* has to do with its relation to the central concern of the *Oresteia: dike.* In poetry as well as in philosophical texts the partner-

125. Winnington-Ingram 1983, 91–94.

126. I have found manuscript readings acceptable at *Ag.* 56 (τῶν δέ), 131 (ἄτα), 374–75 (ἐγγόνους, ἄρη), 767 (φάους), and *Supp.* 164 (ἄταν).

ship of *Aidos* and *Dike* is stressed with particular regard to the workings of lawful society.[127] Its civilizing function gives *aidos* a distinctly social dimension. When he crosses the boundary of decency, Agamemnon does more than go against the natural order of things by perverting the affection a parent should have for his child. He commits a crime against a cardinal rule of society, which says that the innocent and helpless are protected so long as they behave. The social function of *aidos* calls for a social dimension of *dike,* but the only justice available in the pre-polis world of the Atreidae is revenge enforced by the Erinyes, the kind of justice that proceeds from bloodshed to bloodshed without redemption. In the *Libation Bearers* it seems, for a moment, that the exercise of *aidos* might prevent the next murder. When Clytemnestra begs him to spare her, with an appeal to the *aidos* he should have for the breast that nourished him, Orestes wonders what to do: μητέρ' αἰδεσθῶ κτανεῖν; (899). But he must act under the constraints of a society where *dike* and *aidos*—the revenge he owes his father's ghost and the honor due his mother—lead in opposite directions.[128] Allowing Clytemnestra to live might halt the flow of blood, but only for a while, since the Erinyes of Agamemnon would continue to demand their due. Each in his own wretched way, Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and Orestes are compelled to violate *aidos* in their pursuit of *dike*. The solution to Orestes' dilemma—how to reconcile the demands of *aidos* with those of *dike*—is the subject of the *Eumenides.* In Athens the hoary justice of Zeus is transformed by the intervention of younger gods, Athena and Apollo. Personal revenge is replaced by social mediation, with the institution of a civic body for the trial murder cases, the Areopagus, governed by *aidos.*[129] Although the word *aidos* is never mentioned in the last play, it is implicit in the figure of Orestes as suppliant, and therefore αἰδοῖος, and in the advice of the Erinyes to mankind (*Eumenides* 538–41):

εἰς τὸ πάν [δέ] σοι λέγω
βωμὸν αἴδεσαι δίκας·
μηδέ νιν
κέρδος ἰδὼν ἀθέῳ ποδὶ λὰξ ἀτίσῃς.

All in all I tell you to honor the altar of Justice and never, your eye set on profit, dishonor it by treading over it with impious foot.

This unjust man of unseeming wealth recalls the one mentioned in the *Agamemnon,* 370–84, at the close of the *ainigma* that begins and ends with

127. In the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter aidos* and *charis* are said to reside in the eyes of kings when they render judgment; in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus,* 1267–69, *Aidos* shares the throne of Zeus. The point is made more explicitly in Plato's *Protagoras,* 322C, where *aidos* and *dike* are the very instruments sent by Zeus to bring order in the community of men. How *aidos* functions as an instrument of order is explained in Pl. *Leg.* 11.917. In *Aj.* 1065–66, Menelaus states that no army could be disciplined without the guard (πρόβλημα) of fear and *aidos.*

128. The point is made by Erffa 1937, 92–93.

129. Lebeck 1972, 146 states clearly the nature of the change: "Their [the Erinyes'] narrow conception of *Dike* expands in the course of the play to become congruent with that of the polis, until at last they substitute the tie of citizenship for that of kinship and for punishment of kin murder punishment of civil strife." See also Seaford 1994, 92–105.

the vision of the foot trampling and destroying: first the χάρις ἀθίκτων, then, as here, the great altar of Justice.[130]

Because she is often painted as an ill wind but seldom addressed by name, *Ate* has received remarkably little attention in commentaries on the *Oresteia.* She has, nevertheless, a central role, being the matriarch of a dynasty of *atai* leading to the *ate* that compels Agamemnon to kill Iphigenia and impiously sack Troy, then to the *ate* that drives Clytemnestra to murder, and on to Orestes' "blameless *ate*."[131] One might say that *ate* is the opposite of *aidos*. Where the one prescribes order by setting boundaries never to be crossed by either the powerful or the disadvantaged, the other is the agent of chaos, who erases demarcations and incites violent transgression. Just as *aidos* is key to the new order established by Athena in the *Eumenides, ate* belongs to the old way of justice, which Clytemnestra summed up in her oath by Dike Ate Erinys. This ancient form of δίκη can only be accomplished under the spell of *ate* by the exercise of θράσος, which brings about more polluting bloodshed.[132] Θράσος is a property defined in opposition to *aidos* as ἀναίδεια.[133] It is first mentioned in the Chorus' sententious reflection over the madness of Agamemnon at Aulis (222), then in the allusion to Clytemnestra at line 770—the boldness of black *ate* over the palace. The queen herself, when she boasts of the murder, is θρασύστομος (1399). While she acknowledges, albeit ironically, the *aidos* she owes her husband (600), her project represents the quintessential offense against *aidos:* "What audacity: the female the slayer of the male!" (1231). The outcome of her revenge is not order but the coming of other Erinyes and renewed gales of *ate*. In the *Eumenides,* the former Erinyes break the vicious circle precisely by excluding the work of *ate* from the polis (980–83):

> μηδὲ πιοῦσα κόνις μέλαν αἷμα πολιτᾶν
> δι᾽ ὀργὰν ποινάς
> ἀντιφόνους ἄτας
> ἁρπαλίσαι πόλεως.
>
> Let no dust that has drunk dark citizen blood in anger thirst after *ate*'s murderous revenges, in the polis.

Nor is wind imagery missing from this scene. Athena asks that "the blasts of winds, come down from the sky, may blow in the sunlight as they approach earth" (905–6). The enthroned Eumenides respond by banning destructive winds from the land (938–40).[134]

Finally, the premise that one must reckon with the visual side of literary imagery allows a fuller appreciation of Aeschylus' extraordinary use of the riddle. "Riddle," however, even if one calls it *griphos,* is a poor word for

130. Lebeck 1972, 163.

131. *Cho.* 830. Scott 1966, 468: "Since the images of the wind accompany the crime and vengeance of the various members of the house of Atreus, I suggest that it is meant to mark the long chain of destruction. Avenger destroys and is himself avenged—and the wind joins in each step." These words are an apt description of the work of *ate*.

132. *Cho.* 400–405.

133. Cairns 1993, 151.

134. The image of the blistering wind at *Eum.* 939 (φλογμούς) should be compared with that of the derangement of Ajax at Soph., *Aj.*, 195: ἅταν οὐρανίαν φλέγων.

what Aeschylus is doing, in part because it calls to mind the humble folk-riddle, in part because it has the connotations of a conjuring trick. As a hermeneutic mode the riddle operates in the *Agamemnon* in a rather grander manner. It is, first of all, the means by which dramatic mimesis is deconstructed. The audience are made aware from the start that they must decipher what they see and hear, as they are given powerful visual and verbal clues that Clytemnestra is not Clytemnestra but the avenging Erinys and that the feast she prepares for Agamemnon is his murder. By such means the action on stage comes to be viewed as a play within the play. No small part of the tragedy is the spectacle of men unable to see through the speciousness of appearance, and to divine the meaning of so many clues cleverly laid before their eyes.

The enigmatic mode that is explicitly adopted for the prophecies of Calchas and Cassandra is that of oracles. The Elders recur to the cryptic form of the riddle to allude to the killing of Iphigenia and the pollution that permeates the house of Atreus, while what they seem to describe are the origin of the Trojan war and the departure of the Atreidae. As Lebeck saw,[135] the Chorus have "prophetic power"; it comes from the same source as Calchas' and Cassandra's: from the gods (104–6):

> κύριός εἰμι θροεῖν ὅδιον κράτος αἴσιον ἀνδρῶν
> ἐκτελέων· ἔτι γὰρ θεόθεν καταπνεύει
> πειθώ, μολπᾶν ἀλκάν, ξύμφυτος αἰών.
>
> I have power to tell of the auspicious command ruling the expedition, the command of men in authority: for from the gods power of persuasion born of old age inspires a bold song.

No satisfactory understanding of the last line has been achieved, but the statement that the authority that enables them to make revelations (θροεῖν) about past events comes from a god or gods is explicit enough. Fraenkel observed, and then dismissed as insignificant, the oracular connotations of the wording,[136] but the figure of the inspiration as a πνεῦμα that produces song is common for poetic inspiration and the mantic powers of the Pythia and conveys—literally or metaphorically—possession of the seer by a divine spirit. Moreover, the language used has points of correspondence with that in the prophecy of Cassandra: θροεῖν is just the word used to describe the cries of her utterances (1141), and her unveiled prophecy "blows" (πνέων, 1181) towards sunrise.

Unlike the vision of Calchas, "the best of seers, who knew all things that were, the things to come and the things past" (*Iliad* 1.70), the Chorus' vision is restricted in a manner suited to their extreme old age, that is, confined to past events that they did not witness but are able to relate in detail. They have authority to speak about the power of men who have reached their goal or their end, ἐκτελέων.[137] In practice, they describe the crisis at Aulis and its solution—up to a point, for the actual slaughter is

135. Lebeck 1972, 30–31.

136. Fraenkel 1950, 64–65. Pucci 1992, 104–6 stresses the divine quality of the Chorus' inspiration.

137. As Bollack and La Combe 1981, 125 note, this word means that a growth has come to an end, a sense that suits Agamemnon's present situation nicely.

something that they were not given to see and cannot tell (248). Toward the future, the Chorus retain "the heart of a soothsayer," τερασκόπου, but the future is not revealed to them, although they have perceptions in the form of signs, δεῖγμα, unbidden visions that prophesy gratuitously (975–79). The Chorus hope against their premonition (πρὸς ἐνδίκοις φρεσίν, 996) that Agamemnon will be spared the punishment he so richly deserves; after all, it has been a long time since that fateful day at Aulis. But they know in their heart that he will die. They are unable, however, to prevent the murder because they have not been given from the gods the clear vision into things to come that would enable them to "shout it out loud," θροεῖν.[138] They are left to mutter in the dark, their heart in pain, their mind on fire (1025–33):

εἰ δὲ μὴ τεταγμένα
μοῖρα μοῖραν ἐκ θεῶν
εἶργε μὴ πλέον φέρειν,
προφθάσασα καρδία
γλῶσσαν ἂν τάδ' ἐξέχει·
νῦν δ' ὑπὸ σκότῳ βρέμει
θυμαλγής τε καὶ οὐδὲν ἐπελπομέ-
να ποτὲ καίριον ἐκτολυπεύσειν
ζωπυρουμένας φρενός.

And if my appointed share did not prevent me from taking a greater share from the gods, my heart taking over my tongue would make these things manifest. But now it mutters in the dark in pain and without hope of timely solution, while my mind is ablaze.

Μοῖρα is the share of mantic powers the gods assigned them, which does not enable them to "unravel," ἐκτολυπεύσειν, their ominous forebodings into a warning that might save the king's life. For the same reason, while they sense the truth of Cassandra's visions, they admit their inability to understand what they mean and say that her *ainigmata* leave them perplexed by their obscurity (1112–13).

Cassandra has a clear vision of what is to come and suggestive glimpses of the foul history of the house. Upon entering, she smells the pollution that pervades the place (1090–93), perceives the ghosts of the children of Thyestes by their cries and dream-like forms (1096–97; 1217–22), and hears the song of the Erinyes (1185–93), and she predicts in detail her own death and Agamemnon's. Two oracular discourses—one about the causes of the tragedy, the other about its outcome—meet at the hub of the play, right after the "carpet scene." The coming of the prophetess—the telling of the future—had been anticipated by the Chorus at the end of their narration of the sacrifice of Iphigenia (251–54):

τὸ μέλλον ⟨δ'⟩ ἐπεὶ γένοιτ'
ἂν κλύοις· πρὸ χαιρέτω·
ἴσον δὲ τῷ προστένειν·
τορὸν γὰρ ἥξει ξύνορθρον αὐγαῖς.

138. The difference between prophecy and premonition in Aeschylus' tragedies is explained in Sansone 1975, chapter 3. While the φρένες govern both mantic practices and divine-inspired prophecy, θυμός and καρδία register premonitions, which they are, however, unable to decipher.

> And the future—when it comes thou mayst hear of it; let it be greeted in advance—but that is equal to being lamented in advance, for it will arrive clear together with the rays of dawn.
>
> [Fraenkel]

The same image of the rays of the rising sun is evoked by Cassandra when she makes her prophecy "clear," ἡλίου πρὸς ἀντολάς / πνέων, "blowing toward sunrise" (1180–81), causing a new surge of pain πρὸς αὐγάς.

The oracular mode makes for extraordinary manipulation of narrative time because of its capacity to evoke events deep in the past and to announce what the future holds without regard for the natural course of events. While the ostensible point of view given the audience is the present of Clytemnestra's welcome, there are two embedded narratives—the sacrifice of Iphigenia and the murder of Agamemnon—to which reference is made throughout the play, as if in series of flashbacks and fastforwards. Prophecy also allows extreme use of visual suggestion, because it is marked by its reliance on arresting figures, language that is image-laden, ἐξεικασμένα, and does not signify plainly, ἀληθῶς (1244). And it engages the audience in a special way. I am drawn to Köngäs-Maranda's perceptive distinction between myth singing and riddle performance among the Lau of the Solomon Islands:[139]

> In epic singing, the audience has to be attentive for long periods of time without truly participating. They respond, sometimes with shouts of enthusiasm, but they are listeners rather than active participants. In both cases the creative work is done by the performer . . . : the audience can only react. But the reaction in myth singing consists mostly of seeing that the performance follows the rules of composition and the esthetic rules, whereas the person who answers a riddle must examine the image to spot his clue, to find what is wrong, and to correct the statement with his answers, as it were. He cannot create, but he is working.

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139. Köngäs-Maranda 1971, 57–58.

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