

KLYTEMNESTRA IN THE AGAMEMNON OF AESCHYLUS

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**ABSTRACT**

In the last eighty years a great deal has been written about the character and symbolic significance of Klytemnestra in Aeschylus' trilogy, the Oresteia. These studies have contributed much that is useful to the understanding of Klytemnestra's character and her role in the trilogy. However, by concentrating on her position in the Oresteia, some aspects of her role in the first play (the Agamemnon), of which she is the protagonist, have been neglected because they are not absolutely relevant to the themes of the whole trilogy. Equally, the significance of some aspects of her character and role in the Agamemnon have frequently been blown out of proportion in that play simply because they become important later in the trilogy.

This thesis attempts, by careful consideration of the text of the Agamemnon alone, to arrive at a balanced view of Klytemnestra's character and role in that play. Her personal characteristics, and her relationship with the themes developed and images used in the Agamemnon, are discussed in the order in which they are revealed in the text.

Appendix A traces the development of the Oresteia myth in literature and art before Aeschylus, and discusses the changes he made in the story as he received it.

Appendix B analyses the arguments surrounding Klytemnestra's stage movements in the Agamemnon, and suggests a sequence of entrances and exits which satisfies most of the points raised.

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## INTRODUCTION

To interpret properly Klytemnestra's role in the Agamemnon one should keep two principles in mind. First, she is a person<sup>1</sup>, not merely an expression of a political or social theme. Second, she is not the point of the play. Neither of these principles has been a matter of common agreement among critics; in fact, one or the other is usually ignored, by omission or deliberate neglect. For this reason, I would like to discuss my reasons for holding them before going on.

In the Oresteia, Aeschylus attempts to resolve abstract questions of justice and divine will, which he explores through the conflict of male versus female, oikos versus society, and parent versus child. These issues are expressed one way or another in all three plays, but they become clearest in the Eumenides, where they are isolated from human activities and judged rather than enacted. (The fact that many characters in the Eumenides are divine is indeed a sign that the issues in that play have become more abstract than they were in the first two plays of the trilogy.) In the Agamemnon, however, the characters are human, and the issues are not as well-defined or as abstract as they later become. It is a mistake to treat them as if they are.

It is equally a mistake to treat the issues developed and resolved in the Eumenides as the only questions of any importance in the Agamemnon. The conflict and trial in the Eumenides stands on a basis of personal, human, concrete actions and events which

was established in the Agamemnon. The events of the first play are not simply examples of the work of forces revealed and issues addressed in the third. Rather, the events of the Agamemnon are the reality from which the Eumenides' abstract, intellectual principles are derived. The personal and the concrete form the core of the Agamemnon. In the Eumenides the personal and concrete aspects have been partly stripped away; but to ignore them in the Agamemnon for that reason, or to dismiss them as unimportant, is to miss a large part of the thrust of the first play.

Thus, the characters found in the Agamemnon are not merely the vehicles of a theme, however much the trial in the Eumenides might tempt one to think they are. They cannot be lined up as neatly as one might wish to do on one side or another of the conflicts defined in the Eumenides. They are not simply devices to move the plot, or the elaboration of the conflict, forward. The lines

You make trial of me as if I were a silly woman;  
but ... whether you praise or blame me, it's the  
same. This is Agamemnon, my husband, and a corpse;  
the work of this right hand, a just craftsman. So  
things stand.

(Ag. 1401-1406)<sup>2</sup>

are not delivered by an abstract symbol of matriarchy, a passive vehicle of the workings of justice, or an example of early feminist thought. They are spoken by a specific, powerful, self-aware, blood-spattered woman standing over a bleeding corpse. They were spoken, moreover, before an audience which had not the

advantage later critics did of knowing what was going to happen in the Eumenides later on and interpreting accordingly.

This is not to say that the plays of the Oresteia are not connected. Of course they are; and of course the issues resolved in the Eumenides are first raised in the action and discussion of the Agamemnon, in which they are indeed important, if not as clear-cut as in the later play. But not all of the information given or questions asked in the first play are treated in the third; and those which do have been reduced and simplified.

It is necessary to say this because it has so often been forgotten. Winnington-Ingram's article (1948: passim), in which he proposes that Klytemnestra be seen as a rebellious feminist who resents male power, fits her portrait in the Eumenides in some ways, but suits the Klytemnestra of the Agamemnon hardly at all. Zeitlin's theory (1978: passim) that the Oresteia is one of a capacious genre of myths concerning the overturn of matriarchal rule again suits only the third play of the trilogy. Her theory arises from themes strongly stressed in the Eumenides, Winnington-Ingram's from more minor pointers in the text; but neither theory can be read back into the Agamemnon and held to "fully explain" Klytemnestra, or the action of the first play. As Aya Betensky (1978:11) points out, to make of Aeschylus no more than a feminist, an economist or a housekeeper trivializes the plays. One must ignore a good deal of the text of the Agamemnon in order to make the Klytemnestra of that play no more than a symbol of something else. She is perhaps "depersonalized" (Betensky, 1978:



12), and certainly one-dimensional, in the third play of the trilogy, but not in the first. In the Agamemnon, Klytemnestra is the character through whom various themes and forces are focussed; she is not herself only an expression of one (or more) of those themes.

The other principle, equally important, is rather the reverse of the first. Klytemnestra is so striking and dominant a character in the Agamemnon that one is sometimes tempted to find the rest of the play no more than a reflection of, or a reaction to, her. As Gould (1978: 59) expresses this view, "the structure of the play is such that its other figures are seen in the half-shadow of her aura". Her portrayal is so vivid, in fact, that it can lead the unwary to think that Aeschylus' primary purpose, in the Agamemnon at least, was to build up a strong human character and allow the plot and action to develop more or less as a consequence of her nature; but the subjects of the choral odes - the gods, the past, justice, and hubris, and only occasionally the Queen - should tell us otherwise. Certainly the character of Klytemnestra dominates and carries the burden of the action in the first play; and, equally certainly, the play is not about her, nor is her psychology the focus of Aeschylus' attention. Klytemnestra's personal character, or "psychology", helps to humanize and make particular the general issues Aeschylus treats in the Agamemnon. Equally, the focussing of the themes and forces in the play through her character and actions helps to make that character stronger and more vivid. The reader should not

dismiss either of these factors as trivial. Her personal character does exist, and is to some extent independent of the action: one can imagine a less complex and colourful creature performing the same acts and acting as an *exemplum* of the same issues as Klytemnestra does. But the forces revealed later in the play which only indirectly concern Klytemnestra and which do not depend entirely on her character for their expression demonstrate Aeschylus' concern with issues other than his protagonist's psychology. Aeschylus did not invent the plot or the themes he addresses in the Agamemnon in order to illuminate different facets of her psychology. Klytemnestra is a vivid and unique individual, but her character is subordinate to the theme of the play.

In this discussion of Klytemnestra in the Agamemnon, an attempt will therefore be made to keep to the middle ground. This can be done by sticking closely to the text of the play, asking those questions which the text prompts us to ask and avoiding the invention of thoughts, past events, or doings behind the scenes to which the text never alludes. By examining her speeches and actions, the way other characters see and react to her and the imagery associated with her, step by step from beginning to end of the play in the order in which the lines were originally presented, I will attempt to present a balanced and comprehensive view of Klytemnestra and her role in the Agamemnon.

The text of the Agamemnon is itself notoriously difficult and in some places hopelessly corrupt. Great efforts have been

made in this century to reconstruct it in its entirety, for instance by Fraenkel (1950) and by Denniston and Page (1957). The products of such attempts, however careful and scholarly, are of course always slightly suspect, as they must to some extent depend on what the editor feels that Aeschylus is likely to have written. In both the above-mentioned editions, however, the editors have made every effort to keep the influence of their own prejudices to a minimum in their decisions on the text of the play, and the results of their efforts are as trustworthy as such things can possibly be. In this thesis I have relied without comment on the edition of the Agamemnon published in 1957 by John Denniston and Denys Page. Any deviations from their text will be noted.

KLYTEMNESTRA IN THE AGAMEMNON

Aeschylus drastically changed the earlier versions of the myth of the Oresteia in his telling of the story of the death of Agamemnon<sup>3</sup>. Before Aeschylus, Klytemnestra was seen as a shadowy, secondary character who stood in the background of the hereditary feud between the king and his cousin Aegisthus. The reader is early warned that she will not occupy the same position in this play. In lines 10-11, the watchman explains that he is on the roof watching for the beacon-fire from Troy because "thus rules (κρατεῖ) / the man-counselling (ἀνδρόβουλον) expectant heart of a woman". "κρατεῖ" is thus the first action associated with Klytemnestra. "ἀνδρόβουλον", a rare word probably coined by Aeschylus for this line (Fraenkel 1950: n. ad loc.) has several possible connotations, but must convey at least the idea of masculine intelligence or planning. The position of this word beside γυναικός ("γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον") casts immediately into relief one of the principal themes of the play, the opposition of male and female, as well as the principal oddity of Klytemnestra's own character - that she is a woman, but has qualities of mind which properly belong to a man. It is not necessary to translate "ἐλπίζον" (11) as "ambitious", as Winnington-Ingram (1948: 130) does, to understand that an unusual woman rules the household to which the watchman belongs. Winnington-Ingram (1948: 130) goes too far in seeing a clear reference to Aegisthus in line 18. The watchman is unhappy with his position, fearful,

and mourns the misfortune of a house which is not as well cared-for as it was (15-19); but no more can be understood from his words at this time than that all is not well under the roof this woman rules.

The watchman now hails the beacon. The strange woman, who is now (26) identified as the wife of Agamemnon, is bidden to raise a "woman's cry of joy" (*ὀλολυγμὸν*, 28), because Troy has been taken - if, the watchman adds, the beacon is correct. His speech concludes in fear, doubt and silence. He hopes he may see his master again, but does not trust that he will (34); and he will say nothing more of what is wrong with the household. Some know already and understand his hints; to others, he refuses to clarify the matter. (37-39).

Of course the watchman hints here at the presence of Aegisthus as his mistress' lover, as the reader later - much later - discovers; but in the course of the play many problems of this house will be disclosed, and the watchman's vague fears hint at all of them. All that has been revealed at this point in the play is that a woman commands in the household and that something is badly wrong, so wrong that even the good news from Troy, if it is true, is not sufficient to dispel the gloom.

The chorus enter at line 40. They speak of the departure of the Argive fleet for Troy, ten years ago. Agamemnon and Menelaus are described as the "strong yoke of the Atreidae" (*ὄχυρὸν ζεύγος Ἀτρεΐδων*, 44) and treated as a unit, with common concerns.

They are described as vultures mourning the loss of their young (49-54), whose cries are heard by a god who pities them and sends the "late-avenging Erinys" (ὕστερόποιον ... Ερῶν , 59-60) on the transgressor. In the same way Zeus Xenios sends the Atreidae, as Erinyes, against Alexander, the transgressor, over a "many-manned" or "much-married" (Πολυάνορας , 62) woman who will be the cause of many deaths. The woman is of course Helen, the daughter of Leda and Tyndareus, though she is not yet named. Thus the first image used in the ode concerns an Erinys who avenges, though late, the loss of children; and while it is used only of the Atreidae here it should be remembered. Metaphors in Aeschylus should never be assumed in advance to hold a single or a simple meaning.

They now (83-103) turn towards the palace and apostrophize its inhabitant, who is not yet on stage<sup>4</sup>. The first reference to Klytemnestra was as the wife of one of the Atreidae. Now the chorus' address "daughter of Tyndareus" (Τυνδάρειω Θύγατερ , 83-84) links her with the other Tyndarid, her sister Helen, wife of the other Atreid and just now described as faithless and the cause of war.<sup>5</sup> The address is formal and respectful, calling her by patronymic, name and rank as Queen.

The chorus ask here by what message she has been persuaded (τίνος ἀγγελίας περσοῖ , 86-87) to order sacrifices throughout the city. The altars of all the gods are ablaze with offerings (88-90); torch-flames everywhere rise up to heaven, "medicined" or "anointed" (φάρμακκομένη , 94) with "soft, non-deceptive

persuasions" (*μαλανάς ἀδόλοισι παρηγορίας*, 95) of holy ointment from the inner store of the palace (94-96). These lines are significant. Their primary meaning is clearly that sacrifices are being performed everywhere, which consume very valuable offerings (i.e., the precious ointment kept in the inmost store of the palace for use on special occasions). Some special event must have occurred, some news have been received, to prompt such extravagance; at least, so the chorus infer (85-87). But *φάρμακομένη* means also "adulterated" or "poisoned"; and as Goldhill (1984: 17) shows, "*μαλανάς*", with its connotation of womanish or Oriental luxury, stands almost in contradiction to "*ἀδόλοισι*". "*δόλος*" is commonly associated with feminine or barbarian characteristics. Persuasion, *Πειθώ*, is important throughout the play, usually associated with Klytemnestra. Already Klytemnestra, having been "persuaded" by a message, is shown as adulterating with perhaps deceptive "persuasions" the blazing torches whose kindling she commanded and which the chorus have seen as symbols of hope (99-103). This renders ambiguous the significance of these triumphantly blazing torches: The ambiguity is stressed by the chorus' own doubt of the torches' meaning; they end their address on a note of uncertainty, unsure that they should trust the sacrificial fire as the watchman was unsure of the beacon, both in existence by command of Klytemnestra.

It should be noted (Zeitlin, 1965: 463) that Klytemnestra has been shown as a sacrificer in this scene, in that she ar-

ranged the sacrifices throughout the city. The motif of sacrifice will appear throughout the play.

The chorus now turn from their apostrophe to the palace and break into strophic song. The first strophe (104-121) speaks of the omen of the two eagles which attack and eat the pregnant hare. The antistrophe (123-129) gives Calchas' interpretation of this event. The Atreidae are the eagles; the hare is Troy; the omen thus predicts that the Greeks will capture Troy. But Artemis pities the hare with her young and may hold up the campaign. The epode (140-159) elaborates the prophecy: Artemis is kind to the young of all creatures - lions are specifically mentioned. Calchas prays that she may not keep the Danaans in port with an adverse wind, in anger at the eagle's feast and eager for another sacrifice, a lawless one (*ἀνόμων*, 150), "inborn worker of feuds that does not fear a husband (or "a man")" (*νέκυέων Τέκτονα σύμφυτον, οὐ δεισήμενον*, 151-2); for there abides a "terrible, ever-recurring, deceitful housekeeper, unforgiving child-avenging (or child-avenged) Wrath" (*φοβερά Παλίνορος οἰκονόμος Σοφία, μύχμων Μῆνις Τεκνόποιος*, 152-155).

There follows (160-183) the puzzling hymn to Zeus. For our purposes it need only be mentioned that he is described as the ultimate victor in any contest (no matter what human seems to win), as those with understanding know. Zeus is also associated here with *φρήν*, intellectual understanding, and cognate words (*φροντίδος*, 165; *φρενῶν*, 175; *τὸ φρονεῖν*, 176; *σωφρονεῖν*, 181.) He has already been allied with the Atreid kings in their quest



for vengeance for a woman. "φρήν" generally seems to be a characteristic associated with males in this play.

At 184 the chorus return to the narrative. Gales sent by Artemis hold the ships in port, as Calchas had feared. The storm, which wears away the "flower of the Argives" (άνθος Ἀργείων, 297-98), can be halted by a more grievous remedy (than the disease?) - the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter, δόμων ἄγαλμα, at her father's hands. After deliberation, Agamemnon decides to commit the act. At the moment of his decision, the wind of his φρήν veers and blows ill, like the gales from the Strymon; his thinking (τὸ φρονεῖν) becomes παντότολμον. He sacrifices his daughter in aid of a "woman-avenging" or "woman-avenged" (γυναικοποιῶν, 226) war. Thus comes about the second sacrifice narrated in this play.

Calchas' prophecy has so far, then, been fulfilled. What of the rest of it - the child-avenging, housekeeping Wrath which does not fear a husband? Will the war be avenged by a woman? The powerful man-minded woman whom the watchman spoke of comes to mind; she is the mother of the sacrificed girl, and has so far kept to the house in the play. The chorus warn "τέχνα δὲ κάλχανος οὐκ ἄνδρες" (249), and show a general fear of the future (251-253).

Klytemnestra now appears in the doorway of the house. The chorus refer to her respectfully as the "μόνοφρουρον ἔρκος" (257)

of the land and assure us (or themselves) that her wishes for the outcome of these things are benign (255).<sup>6</sup>

It is significant that the chorus specifically state that they revere her *κράτος*, which derives, they explain, from the fact that she is the wife of an absent male ruler (258-260). The word used for "male" here (*ἀρσεν*) is the medical, biological and grammatical term meaning "male principle" (Goldhill, 1984: 34). They acknowledge her authority only because it derives from male power, which shows again the opposition between male and female which has already been seen in the play. They express no loyalty to her personally; in fact, their care in explaining that what they respect they show for her is based only on her position is so pointed as to appear almost rude. As Denniston, Page (1957: n. ad loc.) point out, "... it is not thus that the senators address Atossa in the Persians" (at Pers. 150-158). That greeting could be explained away as Oriental extravagance; but the Argive elders themselves greet Agamemnon quite differently, when he arrives, assuring him of their heartfelt friendship and good will (805-806). That greeting shows that they are capable of displaying affection towards a ruler; but here, they are polite, if that, and no more. They repeat their questions about the sacrifices, asking if Klytemnestra has heard good news, or sacrifices in hope of it. They add a polite formula to the effect that she need not answer if she does not wish to. Their tone is formal, very respectful, and holds no warmth towards her.

Klytemnestra's first two lines cite a proverb which involves a maternal figure; she hopes that morning, "from (or "taking after") its mother night" (*μητρὸς εὐφρόνης πάρα* , 265) may bring good tidings. Several critics have commented with perception on this line: Goheen (1955: 133) that it shows Klytemnestra, from the beginning, as thinking of everything in terms of motherhood and generation; Betensky (1978: 13) that the Erinyes, already mentioned, are later revealed to be the daughters of Mother Night - the morning is thus allied to the Avenging Ones; Peradotto (1964: 388) that in saying that this day "takes after" (or is born from) the night, Klytemnestra could well mean that it will be dark, no real day at all. Conventional imagery makes light a symbol of hope and life: the watchman, however, was doubtful of the significance of the beacon-light which Klytemnestra commanded; the chorus have doubted the sacrificial torches which she commanded and also adulterated; and now she herself perverts the hopeful dawn light's significance in saying that it is from a dark mother. One need not accept all of these interpretations to understand that her opening lines, however looked at, are ominous. She then tells the chorus that the Argives have taken Troy.

Goldhill (1984: 36 and ch. 1, *passim*) has developed an interesting and useful interpretation of the ensuing scene and some others in the play, which involves the relationship between symbol and meaning, speaker and listener and verbs of "seeing"

(or "seeming") and "saying". These distinctions are particularly relevant to a discussion of Klytemnestra in these scenes.

Klytemnestra in this play is frequently shown as an adroit manipulator of symbols, both words and others. This is shown partly by the fact that she defines the significance of symbols. For instance, she defines the symbol of the beacon light as having the meaning (or "significance") that Troy has been destroyed. The beacon, like any other symbol, could potentially have any meaning at all. The chorus recognize the ambiguity of meaning inherent in any symbol and accordingly doubt that the meaning Klytemnestra has defined for the beacon is its true significance - there is for them a gap between symbol and meaning. Klytemnestra, who invented the symbol to begin with (she ordered the chain of beacons) and defined its significance, sees no gap between the symbol and its significance; there is no ambiguity, no potential other meaning, inherent in the beacon as far as she is concerned.

The distinction between verbs of seeing and saying is parallel to that between symbols and meaning. A symbol "is" what one sees, but "means" what it says. For instance, the beacon "is" a large fire on a mountain, which one sees in the night; it "says" that Troy has been captured - or so Klytemnestra tells us. For the chorus, then, true knowledge comes of accurate interpretation of what a symbol "truly" (or "clearly") says. But a symbol, by its nature, can have any significance - can "say" anything; and what it "truly says" need have no connection with what it "seems" to be. The chorus, therefore, cannot know the truth,

unless they find an interpreter of symbols whom they can trust neither to make mistakes in interpretation nor to lie.<sup>7</sup> Klytemnestra, as will appear throughout the play, attaches meaning more or less arbitrarily to symbols, with more regard for what will suit her purposes - for "fair seeming" - than for their true significance, that is, for what they "truly say". The chorus sense this aspect of her character, and accordingly do not trust her interpretations without question.

Because what a symbol "says" (= "means") is the only truth there is to find, however inaccessible it may be, verbs of "saying" are associated with true understanding, φράν . φράν is a masculine characteristic, as noted earlier; knowledge acquired through "seeing" or "seeming" is considered feminine in this play.

When meaning and symbol are thus divided there will also exist a gap between listener and speaker. The listener cannot trust the words of the speaker to hold true meaning; words are also symbols and so can be arbitrarily defined. This gap is closed by means of "πειθώ". "πειθώ" is defined by Goldhill (1984: 36) as that quality of the speaker or of the "ἔπος" of the speaker which engenders "πίστις" and understanding in the listener. Thus, there is a strong relationship between πειθώ and πίστις . Klytemnestra, through her skill at manipulating symbols - or possibly simply as an innate characteristic - is portrayed as the possessor of a great deal of πειθώ .

The chorus' first reaction to Klytemnestra's statement is (268) "How do you say? Your word (ἔπος) has escaped me on account of my ἄπειρος." They have not found either in Klytemnestra or her words any πεισῶ which would render her statement trustworthy; consequently her message has "escaped" their understanding. Klytemnestra repeats her statement that Troy is in the hands of the Greeks - "do I speak clearly (τορῶς λέγω)?" (269). The chorus this time accept her words for the moment; Klytemnestra (who can read meaning in appearance) comments (271) that their loyalty is indicated (κατηγορεῖ - spoken, told of) by their eyes (which have filled with tears). The chorus think better of their initial belief and ask (272) if she has some trusty proof, or token (πικτοῖ) ... τέκμαρ) of what she says. Has she perhaps trusted to a persuasive vision (φάσματ'... εὐπειθῆ) of a dream (274)? That is, has she been convinced merely by "seeing" and being too easily persuaded (both feminine characteristics)? Klytemnestra rejects this; she would never accept the opinion of a slumbering φρήν (275). She implies that she possesses the quality of an alert φρήν, a masculine characteristic. The chorus persist in their misjudgement of her; their next line (276), however it should be interpreted, is clearly no compliment<sup>8</sup>. They ask if she has fattened herself (ἐπίαντον) on an "ἄπρεπος" (i.e. unconvincing? unfledged?) report. Klytemnestra responds as if offended, saying that they fault her as if she had the φρήν of a young child (278). Clearly, Klytemnestra is rejecting proof by appearance (φάσμα) in favour of that acceptable to the (Goldhill, 1984: 37).

The chorus back away at her evident annoyance and seem to accept her statement with their next question, "since when was the city destroyed?" (278) Klytemnestra's answer once again uses maternal imagery - "since the night which just now gives birth to this light" (τῆς νῦν τεκούσης φῶς τὸδ' εὐφρόνης , 279). The chorus ask what messenger (ἄγγελος , 280) could arrive so quickly. "ἄγγελος " and "ἄγγέλω " both imply speech; and Klytemnestra answers "Hephaistos" - a god who could, in person, speak - "who sends bright light from Ida" (281). The chorus, expecting a spoken message, have been disappointed.

In the beacon speech which follows (281-316), Klytemnestra traces for the chorus the journey of the beacon-light from Troy to Argos, as the τέυμαρ they have asked that Troy has in fact been captured. She uses words of showing and saying interchangeably - παραγγείλαα (to pass the news, give the password), 289; ἄγγέλου , 294; σημαίνει , 293; etc. - because for her, who defined the meaning of the beacon, there is no difference. The beacon itself, a light-signal, is essentially something which cannot speak; it can only be seen. To Klytemnestra, however, it speaks as well as shines. She ends her description of its journey saying that "this is the proof and token (σύμβολον ), I tell you, my husband sent as a password (or "passed on as news" - παραγγείλ - αντος , 316) from Troy to me (315-316). To her, the unbroken passage of the light is proof; she is certain of its meaning. The chorus are not so sure.

A few other points in this speech should be noted before continuing. Its tone throughout is of knowledge and power. As Betensky (1978: 14) points out, it shows Klytemnestra in full command of resources and information - of details of geography which she is able to use to her own ends, of fires "like the sun" (288) or the "bright moon" (298) which leap vigorously from mountain to mountain, shoot over the sea, kindle with unceasing strength (305) and bring the news at last to Argos - all apparently at her command, by her arrangement, and under her control. Even Hephaistos has done her bidding. The confidence of the Queen is shown in her description of the brightness and strength of the beacons. It is not necessary to see in this speech supernatural or prophetic powers; only a Queen in control of every aspect of her world, who knows, therefore, what is happening in it. Her powers of visualization and her eloquence are great; but one need not for this reason make a seer of her.

Here as well she uses images of fertility in her description; the light which alights on the roof of the Atreidae is "not parentless" (οὐκ ἄπατρον, 311) - its parent is the beacon on Ida. If children take after their parents (as the chorus will later explain they do), one might be concerned to know what sort of light, born in the destructive fires of a burning city, has arrived. The symbolic connotations of her use of light have now increased. We had heard beacons kindled and watched for at her command and of torches blazing in presumably joyful sacrifice, adulterated by her "persuasions"; we have now heard in Klytemnes-



tra's own words of day born from night and light from destruction.<sup>9</sup>

This speech seems to portray Klytemnestra in full control of her world. But it has connotations of which even Klytemnestra is unaware at this point in the play. The passage of light from beacon to beacon, remaining strong as it advances (δοένουσα ... οὐδέ πω μαυρομένη , 296; ἀφθόονα μένει , 305) and occasionally burning even more fiercely than ordered (πλέον καίουσα γῶν εἰρημένων , 301) can be seen as an allegory of the seemingly unbreakable and uncontrollable chain of vengeance and murder which, the reader will discover, is the history of the house of Atreus, in which each crime is kindled by the one before and itself kindles new slaughter. (Gantz, 1977: 31). The beacon speech is the first hint of this motif in the play. But Klytemnestra will show no awareness of such a chain of crime for much of the play; she will see her acts as simple retribution for the only crime the reader has so far been informed of, the sacrifice of her daughter, and not as part of an uncontrollable and unending sequence. In Klytemnestra's own speech, then, is the first sign that there are forces operating in the play of which she is not aware. At this point, however, she appears to be in perfect control of events.

The chorus doubt that the passage of the beacon, which she has traced for them, really signifies the destruction of Troy. They say that they will later pray to the gods (in thanksgiving?) but first, would she repeat her astonishing story from the beginning? They address her, moreover, as γύναι (317); previously

they have called her only "Queen" or by her name. This is surely a reaction to her trust in what they consider a mere visible symbol, a *φάσμα*, rather than a spoken message; this gullibility they see as a feminine characteristic. Once more, in short, they misjudge her.

Klytemnestra's second speech in effect "decodes" the beacon and gives a vivid picture of the "true meaning" behind it, which they will find more trustworthy. She repeats, again, her statement that Troy has fallen to the Greeks, and goes on to describe the scene in the conquered city. It is again unnecessary to ascribe supernatural powers to her in order to understand her speech. She begins "*οἶμα* ", surely a clue that this is a possible version of events at Troy, not a true vision (Kassandra does not begin this way). Her description is in fact a general one, which would suit events likely to follow the capture of any city. She extrapolates from the knowledge she has, that Troy has fallen, to an image of the logical consequences, which she visualizes vividly and in detail. The powers involved here are only those of imagination and eloquence, not second sight. The chorus do not possess a like ability to visualize and are overwhelmed; they believe her decoding of the beacon and accept her description, for the time being, as the true meaning of the symbol. Her *πείθω* - in this case based on her eloquence (that is, her manipulation of words) and imagination - has conquered. The connection between symbol and meaning remains tenuous, as is shown by the fact that in truth, she cannot and does not know exactly what is

happening at Troy; but her *Πεισώ* has bridged the gap and erased doubt from the chorus' minds.

Lines 340 ff. of her speech raise further questions. It has been noted that Klytemnestra manipulates and arbitrarily defines the meaning of symbols, as she does with the beacon. When one "attaches arbitrary meaning" to words, it is commonly called lying. (In fact, Umberto Eco (1979) defines a symbol simply as anything that can be used to lie.<sup>10</sup>) It is tempting to interpret lines 340 ff. as hypocrisy, or lying, particularly as lying would be easier for someone with the abilities Klytemnestra has already shown in the manipulation of symbols. Throughout the play, in fact, it is hard to tell if she means, or how she means, what she says. Here, in a speech which raises again the idea of reciprocal action and reversal which first appeared in the *parodos*<sup>11</sup>, Klytemnestra piously expresses the hope that the army has not "ravaged what they should not" (*Προσεύ* & *μη χρή* , 342) - the Trojan shrines - and thus offended the gods, for fear of a disaster befalling them on the homeward journey. It is odd that she brings up the possibility of disaster following on impiety here, when she is describing the overwhelming and long-awaited victory of the Argives; it closes her description on a note of fear and possible doom rather than triumph, although she is describing a presumably joyful event - the victory of her husband and King after many years of war. She adds (345-346) that if the army has not offended the gods, the suffering - *πῆμα* - of the (plural) dead may be aroused (*ἐγρηγορὸς* , Denniston Page 1957: n. ad loc.) even

if no sudden disaster should befall. She is speaking ostensibly of offenses against the gods and sufferings of those killed at Troy. The audience, however, would remember the only impiety and only death they have as yet been told of - the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Klytemnestra's use of maternal imagery earlier, and her description of Trojans mourning dead family members in this speech (327-329)<sup>12</sup>, would contribute to remind the audience that the sacrificial victim was her child as well as Agamemnon's.

The pattern of hope that something may not happen, which immediately does happen, has already been seen in Calchas' prayer, and memory of this would lead the audience to fear the same here. They would be further unsettled by her forebodings of disaster in a speech describing victory, and by the allusions in her mention of impiety, and of the sufferings of the dead, to an act in which she might be expected to feel a strong personal interest. All of this in the context of a speech which also raised the idea of reciprocal action could only be disturbing. It would lead, altogether, not only to a fear that her unexpressed hope of avoiding disaster was likely to go unfulfilled, but also to a strong suspicion that it was not sincere.

On this doubtful and foreboding note she ends her description, saying "such things you hear from me, a woman" (τοιαῦτα τοι γυναικὸς ἐξ ἑμοῦ κλύεις , 348) - answering both their address of γύναι (317) and the disbelief it implied. Her last two lines (349-350) mirror the last two lines of the watchman's and chorus' speeches in their rather formulaic hopes for good. They sound

conventionally apotropaic and designed to reduce the impact of her previous ten lines. However, they are ambiguous in Klytemnestra's mouth. She says that she hopes everything will prevail well (εὖ κρατοῖη , 349) and be seen clearly (μὴ διαγορρόπως ἰδεῖν , 349), for she prefers the enjoyment of many good things (πολλῶν ... ἐσθλῶν , 350). What should prevail, and what the alternative is to which she prefers good things, is left unexplained. The obvious inference which the chorus is intended to draw is that she prefers good to the evils she has just described and that she hopes the victory at Troy will prevail (i.e. that the good fortune of the Argive army will last) and become visible at Argos. Klytemnestra has not, however, said either of these things and does not necessarily mean them.

They answer her "woman, you speak like a wise and temperate man" (κατ' ἀνδρα σωφρον' εὐφρόνως , 351). Both "σωφρονία" and "εὐφρόνως" are related to φρήν; thus they react to her decoding of the beacon and her image of the "truth" behind it by giving her credit for the masculine intellect they did not previously seem to think she had. They have been convinced by her speech, saying that they have the trustworthy (πιστά , 352) proofs they wanted and will now address the gods in prayer, which they had delayed before.

Their acquiescence to her second speech, when they were not convinced by her first, is at first puzzling; there is nothing intrinsically more trustworthy about her description of Troy than there was about her description of the transmission of

the beacons. But the beacon speech only described the visual symbol, which the (male) chorus found insufficient proof; the Troy speech, because it tells (or purports to tell) what the beacon "says", is the sort of proof they will accept. In fact, they have only Klytemnestra's word that her description of Troy is what the beacon "truly says"; but her *πείθω*, stemming from her vivid and colourful use of language, has caused them to forget this and trust her. The chorus has thus, after accusing her of gullibility, themselves accepted a proof which is by their own standards insufficient - showing that they themselves are gullible. In this first interchange between male chorus and female ruler, the female has demonstrated possession of *φρόν* and the males have shown evidence of an easily-persuaded (i.e., feminine) nature. Throughout the play, Klytemnestra will consistently prove to be more masculine than the males with whom she is associated.

So far Klytemnestra has been shown, through the watchman's speech, as a woman of masculine intellect, who wields power and whose household is unhappy under her rule. The watchman is a member of the household and perhaps knows her better than the male chorus, which acknowledge her power but is inclined to dismiss her as a silly woman. Their reason for both is sexual; they acknowledge her power because it derives from a male and dismiss her intellect because she is a woman, and *φρόν* is a masculine characteristic which women don't have. They also think of her as too easily persuaded by things only seen, symbols; gullibility

and trust in signs without verbal meaning are feminine characteristics. Klytemnestra herself, on the contrary, is shown in her own speeches as persuasive, not persuaded, a manipulator of visual symbols rather than manipulated by them and skillful with words as well. She claims *φρόνη* for herself, and by the end of her first appearance the chorus have agreed that she possesses it. The opposition of male and female has been seen also in the war undertaken by men to avenge a woman and perhaps in the sacrifice of a young woman by her father. The notion of action repaying action has already been raised in the discussion of the war.

Klytemnestra uses images of motherhood and fertility in her speeches. She has been shown as controlling outright, or adulterating, light, the principal image so far in the play; she has also been associated with sacrifice, the principal event as yet narrated. She is thus strongly connected with some of the major images and themes so far developed.

What natural imagery has been used so far has all been negative, and has sometimes been inverted and "unnatural". The "flower" of the Argives was worn down; a storm weakened the fleet; light, usually hopeful, has had ambiguous meaning; fertility has come from dark and destructive sources. The movement in every speech including Klytemnestra's has been from hope and joy to doubt and foreboding.

In the context of the play, then, Klytemnestra has so far been shown as a female with authority and intelligence in a world

in which both are masculine traits and in which there is significant opposition of the sexes. She is unnatural, and appears to control many aspects of a dark, unhappy and fearful world which is also in some respects unnatural. Personally, she has been shown in her speeches as forceful, imaginative and confident in her powers. The other characters have shown fear and respect for her, but no liking or personal loyalty.

The chorus begin the first stasimon singing to Zeus and Night, which have thrown over Troy the great net (*δίκτυον*, 358; *γάγγαμον*, 361) of "all-capturing 'Αρη" (361). The ensuing ode speaks of the evil consequences to the *oikos* of hubris, infatuation (*Ἄρη*) and war. The first strophe (367-384) speaks of the dangers of excessive wealth in a household, which results in "more than just" (*μεῖζον ἢ δοναίως*, 376) pride. There is no shelter for a man (*ἄνθρωπε*, 382) who from excess of wealth "kicks the great altar of Justice into obscurity" (*εἰς ἀφανείαν*, 383-384). The antistrophe (385-402) describes *Πεισώ* directly. She is "wretched" (*τάλαϊνα*, 385) and the "child of intolerable forward-planning Folly" (*προβούλου παις ἄφρονος Ἄτης*, 386); moreover, she uses force (*βιάται*).<sup>13</sup> There is no remedy against *Πεισώ* (386). The harm she does is impossible to hide. An example of such harm is the theft of a woman from the Atreid household (*δόμον Ἀτρείδου*, 399). "*γυναικός*" (402) is in a prominent position at the end of the strophe, emphasizing the specifically sexual role involved; the individual, Helen, is unimportant. The coupling of the



Atreidae in one household links their concerns and fortunes, as we saw in the parodos. It also gives Agamemnon reason to be offended at the theft of Menelaus' wife.<sup>14</sup>

The second strophe (404-419) speaks of the damage done by the seduction (or persuasion) of the unnamed woman. "ἄρλιν ἔλπεω" (408), as Agamemnon was "πάντοτολμον" (221), she left her household, leaving war to her countrymen and bringing destruction as dowry to Troy. In her abandoned household there is silence, misery and dishonour. Through longing for her, a φάσμα (415) seems to rule the house - an image, δόξα (421) or ὄψις (425) which appears only in dreams and vanishes. Such vain dream-images have been mentioned before and will be again. Her daring has brought grievous suffering and death to other Greek households as well as her own (429-436). Throughout these verses the woman is never named; only her female role in the oikos and the misery caused by her transgression of it are considered here. (Goldhill 1984: 45).

Turning from this woman, the chorus next sing of the deaths at Troy, the ashes sent home "in exchange for men" (443) and "for the sake of another man's wife" (448). The opposition of the sexes is again apparent here. The final strophe passes (456-474) to the possible anger of the gods at the πολυτρούων (461), and the slow (χρόνῳ, 464) vengeance of the Erinyes against one without Justice, whom they will wear away by reversal of fortune (παλιντυχεῖ, 465) to dimness (ἄμυρον, 465)

and eventually invisibility (*αἰθερος* , 467) - that is, death. It is dangerous, they add, to be praised excessively.

The last stanza of the chorus' song applies so unmistakably to Agamemnon, if he has indeed been successful at Troy, that the chorus grow frightened. If such dangers await the successful warrior - the *πολυκρόνῳ* - it would almost be better if the news were false, and Troy were not taken after all. But the news can only be false if Klytemnestra has, in fact, interpreted the symbol (i.e., the beacon) incorrectly; and they turn (in relief?) to grounds for believing that she may well have done so - that she is, after all, a woman, and therefore likely to be gullible. (It is characteristic of Klytemnestra's *πεισώ* that it seems to be most effective when she is present; in her absence, distrust of her words can return.) On those grounds, they retreat to their original disbelief in the beacon and dismissal of her intelligence. (Thus, once again, the movement in a speech or song has been from certainty and joy to doubt and fear.) Who, they ask, is so childish (*παιδῆνος* , 479) or so struck out of their *φρήν* (479) as to be inflamed at heart by a fire (*πυρσέεντα καρδίαν* , 481) and then distressed by a change of message (or an exchange [of flame] for words - *ἀλλάγα λόγου* , 480-482)? They once again feel that a visual message is not sufficient to the *φρήν*; words are necessary. They imply also that Klytemnestra, whose heart is inflamed by the beacon, is childish and without *φρήν* - exactly what she earlier accused them of thinking. They continue, making the sexual opposition implied in these lines perfectly clear - "it is

fitting to the rule of a woman to agree to give thanks because of (πρό, 484) appearance; for the definition (ὅρος) (i.e. of the meaning of a symbol) established by a woman, fast-travelling and too persuasive, spreads out (transgresses its bounds)." In other words, "The limit set by a woman on the meaning of a visual symbol is too loose and quickly expands to include other persuasive meanings beyond its original definition" - as one saw in the difference between Klytemnestra's first and second speeches.<sup>15</sup> They end, "but stories spread by women perish fast-dying" (486-487).

The last fire of the sequence of beacons, we have now been informed, is that kindled in Klytemnestra's heart by the "passed-along message of flame" (φλογὸς παραγγέλματι, 480). If the chain of beacons represents the unending chain of murder and vengeance in the house of Atreus, as Gantz (1977: 31) suggests, then the flame in Klytemnestra's heart may well represent the murder presently being contemplated by her, which - unbeknownst to her - is not only a unique act of vengeance depending on her will, but also the latest in a long string of connected crimes. This again indicates that forces outside Klytemnestra may well be influencing her, at least in the opinion of the chorus; Klytemnestra herself has shown no sign that she is aware of them. (Gantz, 1977: 32.)

The herald now arrives and the chorus say<sup>16</sup> "soon we'll know if these light-bearing torches were true, or whether the pleasant light like a dream beguiled the φρένας." They are will-

ing to trust the messenger precisely because he is not ἄνδρος (496); he does not "signal" (σημαίνει , 497) with smoke from a fire, but instead will declare the news in speech (λέγων , 498). Their distrust of mere visual knowledge and its opposition to φῶς and spoken messages, is once again fully expressed; their renewed distrust of Klytemnestra is implied. Their discussion in the first stasimon of women who transgress their household role and the general theme of payment for past crimes (which by the final antistrophe is applied specifically to Agamemnon) may contribute to this distrust. Certainly they are uneasy about the future and hesitant about trusting the Queen. However, they continue to underestimate her abilities and there is no sign that they have thought of combining in one object their fear and their distrust.

The herald's first speech (503-537) describes Agamemnon as bringing light in the night-time (φῶς ἐν εὐφροίῃ , 522) to those at Argos, just as the beacon did earlier. The message, then, will probably be the same. And it is: Troy has fallen, but the image used is odd. Agamemnon has "dug over" Troy with the mattock of "Zeus justice-bringer" (528) and thoroughly worked the ground; but this procedure, which would at any ordinary time increase the fertility of the ground, has "destroyed the seed of the whole land" (528). By the action of this inversion of nature, the herald continues, Paris and the whole house of Priam have paid twice over for his crime.

The herald and chorus now converse in stichomythia. The chorus, it appears, desired the presence of the army - and the king - greatly; they have been unhappy out of fear of someone (*τιδᾶς*, plural; 549); but in the absence of the rulers (the Atreidae), they have not dared to speak. Even now, their fear exists (550). The herald seems to misunderstand this, or take their fear to be for Agamemnon's safety at Troy rather than the result of any condition at Argos, for he assures them that everything has turned out well (551) and goes on to tell them of the hardships at Troy. Nature was against them, as always in this play<sup>17</sup>: the constant wet brought lice; the winter snows even killed birds and the summer was intolerably hot and breezeless. But there is no need to remember these things now -- it is no longer a concern to the dead to rise again, and why should one reckon up the number of the dead, or grieve the living with recurring evil fortune (*τύχης παλιμύθου*, 571)? These lines recall both the chorus' fears of reversals of fortune for the unjust but successful (465) and Klytemnestra's remarks about the awakening sufferings of the dead (346-347). Like Klytemnestra's and the chorus' comments, the herald's lines here are ominous in themselves and the more disturbing in their immediate context: past sufferings and future dangers are odd subjects to raise in a speech on the joyful occasion of a great victory. He ends "you have the whole story" (*πάντ ἔχεις λόγον*, 582).

The chorus respond, "I am conquered by your words" (*λόγους*, 583); they accept his message, as it is verbal. They then

direct him to "the house and Klytemnestra" (585), to whom these matters are of concern.

Klytemnestra enters by the skene door and intercepts the messenger before he enters the palace. Ewans (1982: 7-8) sees this as an example of the disruptions of the usual homecoming rituals which Klytemnestra creates throughout the play - the herald would expect to go indoors with his news. Certainly her unannounced appearance is startling; we have not been prepared for it by anything in the text. One feels that she has suddenly intruded on the scene. Her first lines (586-593) point out that she was right to trust the beacon (which she calls *ὁ πρῶτος ἔγγεχ-ος πυρός* , 588) and the chorus wrong to reproach her for "being persuaded by beacons to lift up her heart, just like a woman" (*μελεῖσθαι* , 591; *κάρτα πρὸς γυναικός* , 592). "This talk made me appear wandering (i.e. in her wits)", she continues.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, she - and the other women - sacrificed "in woman's fashion" throughout the city. The division between male and female is again apparent. The chorus blamed Klytemnestra's belief on her feminine gullibility; and the distinction is made more universal by the fact that all of the women sacrificed, not only Klytemnestra.

The tone of Klytemnestra's words here is very much one of stung pride. We have seen her before take offense at the chorus' refusal to recognize her intelligence; certainly she is pleased to be able to point out their mistake now and rub it in, as well.

She turns (598) to the matter at hand. Having blocked the exit of the herald into the palace, she now refuses even to let him give his message. What need has she of a further tale from him? She will learn the whole story from the lord himself. Now she must prepare to receive her "revered husband" (*αἰδοῖον νόον* , 600); for "what light is sweeter for a wife/woman (*γυναικί* , 602) to behold than this, to open the gates to a husband/lover (*ἄνδρα* , 602) saved by god from the field? Take that message to my husband." She has referred to him by his political, household and personal roles in quick succession - *ἄναξ* , 599; *νόον* , 600; *ἄνθρω* , 603. The most personal statement in her speech (translated above) is put in the most general language. Any woman, any man will fit; it need not even be a husband and wife - her words could refer equally to a lover (*ἄνθρω* has a sexual connotation which *νόον* does not). She then sends a message, via the herald, to her husband. This is a reversal of expectation: she has not only blocked his entrance and refused his message, but now uses him instead to send one back. Her control of events and communication in this scene seems absolute.

The message she sends (like her previous statement) is full of innuendo and ambiguous phrasing. She calls him "the darling of the city" - accurately enough, as one has seen from the watchman's and the chorus' affection for him - but expresses no fondness herself. The optative "*εὔροι* " (606) only offers a hope for the future, not a guarantee of it - one is reminded of Calchas' unfulfilled hopes, or Klytemnestra's earlier hope that

the army would not despoil the Trojan temples, as we have just now (527) discovered they did. "May he find a wife as faithful (trustworthy - *πιστή*), 606) as the one he left" is ambiguous; its meaning depends entirely on her original condition, which we do not know. For that matter, loyal to whom - or to what? Her next lines, (May he find her a) "(watch-)dog of the house, noble/loyal to that man, hostile to enemies" (607-608), can also be variously interpreted. "*ἐκείνῳ*" need not refer to Agamemnon. Klytemnestra has so far been seen in close association with the house - the watchman refers to the sorrows of the house under her rule (18); the chorus refer the herald's news to "the house and Klytemnestra" in one breath (585); while the watchman speaks of the joy the beacon brings to Argos (24) and the herald of the light brought to all by Agamemnon (522), Klytemnestra describes the beacon as alighting on "the roof of the Atreid house" (310) after its long journey, as if its news were solely a household concern. Now she speaks of herself as "watchdog of the house", demonstrating her association with it once again. But the "*δύσφροον*" (608) could as easily be enemies of the house itself as of the king. Among these "enemies of the house" Agamemnon himself, as killer of the "*δομῶν ἄγαλμα*" (208) might well be numbered, in Klytemnestra's eyes. Finally, "*κύνες*", used to describe a human, has a complimentary meaning in only one other place in Greek literature, as listed by LSJ. That is in line 896 of this play, where, in fact, it is again ambiguous (Klytemnestra uses it to describe Agamemnon). Elsewhere, when used of a woman, it usually



means "wanton" or "brazen hussy" (Goldhill 1984: 56). There is a hint here, then, of her infidelity.<sup>19</sup>

Her next two lines (609-610) likewise affirm her fidelity, but the length of time she has been faithful - and thus, whose seal it is which she has not broken - is again not specified.

Lines 611-612 ("I do not know pleasure, or scandalous conversation, from another man, any more than I know the dipping/tempering of bronze") are again not an absolute statement and imply that it is possible that she does know these things. The phrase "χαλκοῦ βαφάς" (612) has been variously interpreted. Clearly, it refers to the use of bronze as a weapon, as one usually only tempers blades. Bronze, however, is not tempered. The primary meaning, that "I know no more of (infidelity) than of the tempering of bronze", might be a deliberate inaccuracy, intended to show that she knows so little of weapons that she does not even know bronze loses its edge in cold water. "βαφάς" has another meaning, of dipping, or dyeing and later used by Klytemnestra of dyeing clothes (εἰμάτων βαφάς, 960) in the rusty, purple-red colour (πορφύρεος) of the tapestries, which Goheen (1955: 115-117) has shown to be approximately the colour of dried blood. This line may then be interpreted as the even more violent "the dyeing/dipping of bronze (in blood)", with which we later discover Klytemnestra to be well acquainted. Now, we can only wonder and feel uneasy at her choice of such a violent metaphor.<sup>20</sup>

Her claim that her words are "stuffed full of truth", (τῆς ἀληθείας γέμων ,613), as Goldhill (1984: 56) points out, raises immediately to mind the possibility that they are not; if it could be simply assumed that what she says is true, she would not need to so assure us.

As with 613, so with the whole message to her husband. Her insistence on her fidelity - which is the face value of her speech - implies that it could not in fact be assumed and raises the possibility that she is not faithful. Her exit line, "It is not shameful for a noble lady to proclaim this" (οὐκ αἰσχρὸς ὥς γυναικὶ γενναίᾳ λακείν , 614), is an attempt to compensate for this effect. She is aware that her speech, a public avowal of fidelity, may sound odd to the herald. This line indicates that it seems strange because it is public (which is allowable for a high-born lady), not because it is a lie. It draws attention away from the odd content of her speech to the unusual circumstances in which it is delivered.

Having frustrated the herald's entrance and given a message rather than accepting one, Klytemnestra exits as suddenly as she appeared. She has appeared to have perfect command of her words and of the situation on stage throughout the scene.

The chorus' comment on her speech (615-616), however it be interpreted (see Denniston, Page 1957: n. ad loc.), certainly shows that they realize there is more to her words than appears on the surface. "Through clear interpreters her speech (is)

fair-seeming" (τοροῖσιν ἑρμηνεύουσιν εὐπρεπῶς λόγον , 616) indicates a need for interpreters and may well imply that her words only seem fair. However, they turn away from further discussion of the Queen at this point: their doubts of her honesty, whatever they are, are not so strong as to absorb their entire attention now.<sup>21</sup>

They now ask for news of the other Atreid, Menelaus. The herald's answer "I can't say good things of (from) lies" (τὰ ψευδῆ καλῶ, 620), and the chorus' response "How then can you say good things and true (κεδνὰ ἴαληθῆ)? For if these (the good and the true) are divided, it is not easily hidden" (622 - 623), can be seen as a contrast to Klytemnestra and her speech - she has had no difficulty in saying good things which are not true and so far this has remained reasonably well hidden. The herald is then induced to tell the tale of the great storm which laid waste to the Greek fleet. The disaster Klytemnestra said she feared did befall the fleet on the dangerous homeward journey.

The herald starts by saying that if his story were one of unmixed woe, of the loss of the army by the "double lash of Ares, the double-speared doom" (διπλῇ μάστιγι ... δίλογχον ἄτην , 642-643), it would be suitable to give this παῖδαν to the Erinyes (645); but in this situation, when the army was victorious, how can he mix good with evil news and tell of a storm "not lacking anger by the gods of the Achaeans"? (Ἀχαιῶν οὐκ ἀμήνιτον θεοῖς , 649). The text of this line is uncertain (see Denniston, Page 1957: n. ad loc.) but some divine anger at the Achaeans, result-

ing in a storm, is obviously meant. Thus Klytemnestra's expressed fear of divine anger against the impious seems to have been justified and even prophetic. The storm itself was an overturning of nature and a mixture (alliance - "ἑνωσμοσάν γὰρ , 650) of things usually apart, fire and water (651), in which stormwinds (654) and perhaps even dry land (666) participated; and even the sun, "nurturer of all things on earth" (τοῦ τρέφου - τοῦ ἡλίου χροῦός, 633), rose only to reveal the extent of the carnage, the sea blooming (ἀνθοῦν , 659) with Achaian corpses and wrecked ships. Menelaus and his ship have vanished and only Helios can say if he is alive. Agamemnon's ship was only saved by chance and the gods (663-664); even in the bright day after the storm they did not trust their good fortune (668), but could think only of the wrecked and beaten fleet (670). He hopes it will turn out well and advises the chorus to think of Menelaus as safe and on the way home (675). If he is alive, there is some hope that Zeus, "not yet (οὐπω, 678) willing to destroy the race", may let him come home again. The herald assures the chorus that what they have heard - disaster, uncertainty as to the future, distrust of good fortune and total dependence on perhaps angry gods - is the truth (680). This perhaps stands, again, in contrast to Klytemnestra's "εὐπρεπῆ λόγον ". The herald's speeches also, then, have started in joy and triumph and ended in doubt and fear.

The Atreidae and their fortunes have been treated as a closely coupled pair throughout the play. It is natural for the

chorus, having been told only of Agamemnon's arrival, to immediately inquire after Menelaus; and it is natural also, having heard of his disappearance and possible death in the storm Klytemnestra forecast, to feel that this disaster bodes ill for the other half of the Atreid pair, when their fortunes until now have been so closely linked. The "doubling" images at the beginning of this speech (642-643), some perhaps referring directly to the Atreidae, emphasize their bond.

Immediately on the exit of the herald, the chorus turn in the second stasimon to a discussion of Menelaus' wife, Klytemnestra's sister. As Menelaus is linked with Agamemnon, a song of Menelaus' wife raises thoughts of Agamemnon's; and in fact, much of what the chorus say in these lines can be applied to both sisters.

Helen is portrayed in the first strophe (684-698) as an entirely destructive force, to ships, males and cities. In the antistrophe (700-716), the "will-fulfilling" Wrath (*τελεεσίφρων* *μῆνις*, 701) which formed a "woe/marriage-bond" (*κῆδος*, 699) for Troy, thus "exacting for herself" (*πρᾶσσομένη*, 705) payment in later time (*ὕστερόν γε χρόνῳ*, 703) for the dishonouring of hospitality, brings several echoes to mind. The "late-avenging Erinyes sent by Zeus against Paris (58) is recalled here. *Μῆνις*, "Wrath", last spoken of by Calchas as a "remembering, recurring" avenger of children, who stayed at home and feared no man, is also brought to mind. Klytemnestra was and is at this point in the play the only person one could identify with these words.

"Remembering" (*μνᾶμην*, 155) implies a lapse of time, echoed here by "in later time": "avenging" (*τεκνὸς πολυός*, 155) is echoed by "exacting for herself". Even in this passage, the "woeful marriage-bond" applies not only to Helen and Paris, but also Helen and Menelaus. The parallels between the Wrath that waits at home and the one which arranged Helen's marriage make the reader associate κῆδος with a third couple as well, Klytemnestra and Agamemnon. One set of marriage-hymns has changed already to mourning (705-711); what of the marriage at present before us?

The second strophe (718-726) begins the metaphor of the lioncub in the house. As Knox (1952: *passim*) has shown, this image, associated by the chorus in this stasimon with Helen, describes also every other major character in the trilogy. In the beginning of (married) life (*ἐν βιότου προτελείους*, 720) it was tame (720-721) and "*εὐφρόπαιδα*" (721). In time, however, it showed the temper of its parents (728-729). It repaid the care it received with an unbidden slaughter (*Ἄρη*, ruin, 730) of sheep, befouling the house with blood, an invincible woe to the domestic servants, a many-slaying harm (*μεγα σίνος πολυκτονού*, 734); and this priest/sacrificer (*ἱερεύς*, 735) to *Ἄρη* was brought up in the house by the will of god (*ἐκ θεοῦ*, 735). "*προτελείους*" refers to preliminary sacrifices, particularly before marriage; it was used of Iphigenia's sacrifice (*προτέλεια νῶν*, 227). It thus brings Iphigenia to mind, as well as the early days of Helen's (or Klytemnestra's) marriage. "*εὐφρόπαιδα*" brings Klytemnestra to mind, even at this point in the play, more

than it does any other character - certainly it doesn't suit Agamemnon or Helen; but the *Mḗνις* of Calchas is *τεκνόποιος* .(154-155). The lioncub shows its parents' ways and the chorus identify it as Helen (739-749); but Klytemnestra and Helen have the same parents (officially, at least). The rest of this antistrophe, as far as the audience yet knows, does not apply to Klytemnestra; but the parallels in the first half of the antistrophe, discussed above, make the doom and slaughter of the last half sound like ominous predictions.

In the third strophe (739-749) Helen is described as a "*δηξίθυμος ἔρωτος ἄνθος*" (743), who brings a bitter end to a marriage, by the will of Zeus Xenios; she is a bride-mourned Erinyes (749). Thus she is both the cause of Zeus Xenios' anger and his agent in avenging it.

The chorus then turn to a discussion of heredity. In the next antistrophe and strophe (750-62, 764-771), they speak of the proverbial prosperity from which grows woe to a race. The chorus disagree with this proverb; it is the impious deed which gives birth to offspring which are alike, but more in number (*πλείονα γίγναι* , *σφετέρῃ δ' εὐκότα γένεσθαι* , 759-760); the fate of a just (*εὐθουδίκων* , 761) household is always a beautiful child (i.e. of the previous good deeds of the house) (762). Old hubris, however, gives birth amid mortal sorrows to young hubris on the appointed day (763-767). This hubris seems to acquire quasi-divine powers, as an unconquerable, irresistible *δαίμων* (768), an unholy daring of black doom for the household, appearing like its

hubristic parents (770-771). They conclude in the final antistrophe (773-781) that Justice shines in the houses of the poor and honours the righteous (773-775); but she leaves wealthy houses with filthy (i.e. sinful) hands and does not respect the power of wealth "counterfeited/falsely stamped with praise" (*παρ-πάσημων δίνω*, 780). She (Justice) guides everything to its goal (*πάνθ δ' ἐπὶ τέλος ἑλκῶ*, 781). On this line, the theme of the trilogy, Agamemnon enters the stage.

It will be useful to recapitulate here before continuing. The chorus' concerns in the last section of the play have been the workings of justice and the avenging of crimes. Evil deeds breed further evil, in another example of fertility from destructive sources. There are divine and quasi-divine - daemonic forces at work as well as human actions. Zeus and Dike govern all; evil deeds acquire a daemonic life of their own and perpetuate themselves. There is a persistent feeling of despair and fear in the words of the chorus. They are worried about the fate of their king, whose destiny is linked to the now lost Menelaus. Nature has turned entirely against the Argives: the entire natural world united against them during the storm; fertility images are used of death (the sea abloom with corpses) and harm (Helen, a "heart-stinging" - harmful - "flower", who brought destruction); the sun - true knowledge - discloses a scene of carnage and devastation. The lioncub metaphor applies to others as well as Helen, and he (or she) is spoken of as a sacrificer to Ἄρη.



They are less obviously concerned with Klytemnestra in this section, though her connection with Helen - whom they speak of as a destructive force - should be remembered. The opposition of the sexes has been strengthened: the reasons the chorus give for disbelieving Klytemnestra are specifically sexual; other Argive women also sacrificed in thanksgiving at the beacon; Helen is "ἑλάνδρος" (690). Klytemnestra's infidelity has been hinted at by the chorus and more strongly suggested by Klytemnestra herself. She is shown obstructing an expected procedure associated with homecoming and apparently controls all events on stage when she is there. She does not cause the storm, but she came close to predicting it. Her skill at manipulating words is great. Her speech shows her personal character as proud and powerful. The chorus fear and distrust her and fear for the safety of the king and of his household. At this juncture, Agamemnon enters.

The chorus address Agamemnon as he progresses in a chariot with Cassandra across the stage (783-809). They warn him against those who value mere appearance, "seeming to be" (τὸ δοκεῖν εἶναι, 788) more (i.e. more than true being). As has been shown above, Klytemnestra is certainly one of these. The chorus add that such people overvalue appearance "after they have transgressed justice". These people will feign sympathy while feeling none in their hearts; but a good judge of character will be able to discern false loyalty. The fear and distrust the chorus have shown for Klytemnestra earlier would make the audience think

immediately of her as the person the chorus are warning Agamemnon against.

The chorus add that, while disapproving of the original mission, their feelings have altered now that Agamemnon has returned victorious and they greet him in loyalty "οὐκ ἔτι' ἔκπας φρενός" (805). In time, they are sure, he will distinguish between those who stayed (οἰκουροῦντα, kept to the house, 809) at Argos justly and who untimely (ἀναίρως, 808). This will turn out to be partly a reference to Aegisthus, who stayed at home, as Cassandra and the chorus will later accuse (1258-1259, 1625-1626), though a male of military age; but it also - and as far as the reader now knows, it only - echoes the housekeeping Wrath Calchas spoke of, which, as we have seen, was associated with Klytemnestra.

Agamemnon (810-853) thanks the gods, first, for assistance in his victory. His description of the utter destruction of the city, in which only the "storms of " (819) are still alive, all γυναικὸς οὐδέναι (823), is vivid and disturbing, carrying a hint of the hubris the chorus sang of not long ago. The Argive army he calls a ravening lion, which leapt the wall and drank its fill of the blood of tyrants (827-828). Turning to the chorus (829), he answers their address, but entirely misses their point. He is acquainted with false friends, he says; only Odysseus was loyal to him, of all the men at Troy (841-842). This mention of Odysseus, a loyal man returning home to his loyal wife, calls Klytemnestra to mind in contrast.<sup>22</sup> As for the rest, he will set the

state in order and cure what is wrong with it. It does not occur to him that the "false friends" may be in his home, not his city; his words and concerns are only those of a king, not a householder. He then announces his intention of going into his house and "saluting first the gods" (*Θεοῖσι πρώτα σεβώσομαι* , 852) at his hearth. He does not, even now, mention the people in his household, but only the gods. Of course this is a public occasion, and Agamemnon the king need not be expected to speak of private matters while standing in the street: but the reader has seen and heard a good deal of Klytemnestra in this play, and his complete omission of her from this speech is therefore noticeable. He ends with the hope that the victory which has followed him until now will remain secure (854). This speech is the first wholly triumphant one in the play; he acknowledges the problems he may encounter in his kingdom, but speaks confidently of solutions. The foreboding and fear of earlier speeches do not appear in Agamemnon's words. He is sure his actions were justified and that the gods approved and assisted him.

At this line Klytemnestra steps out of the house and blocks his entrance. As Winnington-Ingram (1948: 132) points out, it is precisely when he prays for a secure victory that Agamemnon loses; for Klytemnestra controls the scene from that point until they both exit at 974.

This speech is Klytemnestra's longest and the longest in the play. It is addressed ostensibly to the chorus, but is intended for Agamemnon's ears. The speech has many functions.

First and foremost, in the action of the play, it is the opening move in her effort to persuade him to walk the tapestries. Several techniques towards this end are combined in her words. First, as Simpson (1971: 97-98)<sup>23</sup> points out, she presents herself as precisely the sort of gullible, over-emotional believer in dreams and rumours for which the chorus have (to her annoyance) earlier mistaken her. This persona allays the suspicions Agamemnon might otherwise feel about her motives in suggesting the impious and hubristic act of walking on the tapestries. The exaggeratedly dependent, emotional and credulous person her speech presents might suggest this act out of an overzealous desire to honour him (coupled perhaps with a little stupidity), but it is hard to suspect her of malice. Second, her speech is both socially inappropriate - as an intensely personal speech delivered in public - and also genuinely dangerous, as it overpraises Agamemnon. (Michelini, 1974: 527.) The chorus have spent much of the last stasimon commenting on the dangers of too-great praise and have just now warned Agamemnon of the danger of wealth "false-stamped with praise". If Agamemnon can be brought to accept her speech as no more than socially inappropriate, it will be easier to move him to consider treading the tapestries, also both socially unacceptable and actually dangerous, as a merely social impropriety. Third, her description of her sufferings is designed, among other things, to give him a sense of obligation to her, so that no reasonable request will be refused. (Simpson, 1971: 99.) The implication is, "out of my great devotion, I

suffered all these torments for your sake; surely you can in return do this one thing for me".

The speech taken by itself seems intended to assure Agamemnon of her emotional dependence on him in his absence and thus allay any suspicions he might have about her loyalty. As he has not in fact expressed any suspicion of her (or, in fact, shown the slightest interest in her), her words defending a love and (by implication) fidelity which has never been questioned seem odd. They are, at the least, overblown for the occasion; moreover, defense against a charge which has not been levelled will often raise more doubts than it stills. Klytemnestra's protestations might therefore have the effect of raising questions in Agamemnon's mind. Her exaggerated expressions are, however, necessary to the image of herself as over-emotional and dependent which she wishes him to accept. Again, the solution to this dilemma is to persuade Agamemnon to accept the uneasiness such a speech creates in him as due merely to its social impropriety.

In strong contrast to Agamemnon's speech, which is solely political and "kingly", Klytemnestra speaks of him exclusively in his domestic role as her husband and the head of the household. This reinforces her identification with the oikos rather than - or even as opposed to - the outside world. Her language throughout is vivid and eloquent; the images she uses in 890 ff. are particularly striking, but the whole speech shows her gift for moving and colourful description.

Klytemnestra's first lines after her greeting to the chorus are (856-858) "I am not ashamed (*οὐκ αἰσχυνόμηναι* , 856) to speak to you of my husband-loving ways (*φιλόνορας πρόπους* , 856); in time shyness fades away for humans." As Michelini (1974: 527) points out, those who say they "aren't ashamed to say" something usually intend to say something embarrassing or awkward. In this case, what Klytemnestra will say is not only embarrassing - that is, socially inappropriate - but also dangerous and untrue, as discussed above; these lines have the effect of directing Agamemnon's attention away from the content of the words and towards the circumstances in which they are said. In this respect, they echo the exit line in her speech to the messenger (614). "*φιλόνορας πρόπους* " recalls her sister's "*στρίβοι φιλόνορες* " (411). For both sisters, then, it is an ambiguous description; which *ἄνθρωπος* is meant? For Helen at 411, Menelaus is the man principally referred to; but she left him. Klytemnestra's "man-loving ways", even if they did originally attach themselves to Agamemnon, could by analogy with Helen have changed to another object.

Klytemnestra's entire description of her sufferings in Agamemnon's absence (858-894) is in the past tense. The reader has no way of knowing that this description is untrue; at some time in the past she may have felt this way about her husband. (Betensky, 1978: 15.) If so, she has used her past experience to make the speech more convincing now. However, any character with the powers Klytemnestra has already shown us need not be assumed to be describing her personal experiences here; she has

earlier shown herself capable of describing vividly what she has never seen.

She passes immediately from the statement that she knows from her own experience the miseries she speaks of (858-860) to the general comment "it is a terrible hardship (ἐκπαγλόν κακόν , 862) for a woman to sit at home alone without a man" (861-862). This may generally speaking be true, but Klytemnestra has not had to do it herself, as the chorus have hinted in their interchange with the herald (546-550). In any event, while "sitting alone" Klytemnestra was disturbed by reports of worse and worse evil, she continues. Had all of the rumours been true, Agamemnon "had more holes than a net" (τέτρηται δακτύου πλέω , 868) and died three times over (869-871). Her description of these rumours is disturbingly violent and sounds (particularly in the light of later events) more like a statement of intent than old fear.<sup>24</sup> She so despaired at these tales that she frequently attempted suicide (874-876), she adds. This characteristic of believing unsubstantiated rumours is one which the chorus expected her, a woman, to have. She vehemently rejected their assumption of her gullibility, but is willing (or even eager) that Agamemnon should believe it of her now.

She uses this as an explanation of Orestes' absence: she has sent him to an ally's house so that, if she committed suicide and/or Agamemnon was killed at Troy - either of which could lead to revolution at Argos - he would still be safe. Lines 877-879

do not only refer to Orestes, however; translated in the order of the Greek, these lines are:

And for these reasons, indeed, the child does not  
stand here beside us,  
of me and of you a warrant of (our) pledges,  
as is proper,  
(that is) Orestes.

Until she says Orestes' name, the only missing child we have heard of is the one Agamemnon killed, Iphigenia; "ἡδὲς (877)" can refer to either sex, "κύριος " (adjectival) has two endings in its alternate form, and no article is given to tell us which gender is meant. The killing of Iphigenia is the only event which could come to mind for the audience. Iphigenia is, in Klytemnestra's thought here, the possessor or guarantor of the pledges between herself and her husband; without her, such pledges do not necessarily hold. As Simpson (1971: 97) points out, 884-885 are in agreement with Agamemnon's and the chorus' worries about false (political) friends - certainly Agamemnon has thought only of political treachery. Thus she has provided a reason for Orestes' absence with which Agamemnon has already agreed and cannot now deny.

She continues, "Such an excuse, indeed, can carry no deceit" (οὐδ' ὁλοῦν φέρει , 886), sure that Agamemnon will agree with her political reasoning and therefore detect no deceit. But as, in fact, that is not why she sent Orestes away (though this is not yet absolutely clear), and as she was not referring only to Orestes - as the audience is well aware - it takes daring to make



this statement. Again, referring to the possibility of deceit raises questions in the minds of the hearers; the truth of her statements cannot simply be assumed, or she would not think it necessary to reassure us.<sup>25</sup>

The "gushing springs of her tears" (κλαυμάτων ἐπίβουροι πηγαί, 887-888) which have run dry are clearly a negative fertility image. She does not say precisely what she was weeping for; by implication it is Agamemnon's peril, but Iphigenia was recently recalled to the audience's mind as well.<sup>26</sup> She has also been deeply troubled by her dreams (894-895) - this, from the woman who "would not accept the fancy of a sleeping intellect" (275). Again, she is portraying herself as a weak and gullible female.

Now, having endured all of these things (πάντα τὰδε, 895, which sets up disturbing echoes of Agamemnon's frame of mind at the sacrifice (221), or Helen's when she deserted her husband (408)), she speaks of "this man" (unnamed) in a series of seven hyperbolic metaphors. The first three, "watchdog of the house" (896) (the ambiguity of which has already been noted), "forestay of the ship" and "firm pillar of a lofty roof" (896-897), all refer to physical protection and stability; the last three, land appearing to sailors beyond hope (899) (as Penelope perceives Odysseus, 23:233-40), a fair day appearing from a storm and a flowing spring to a thirsty traveller (901), all present an image of un hoped-for relief from natural phenomena. The "καλλίστον ἥμαρ" appearing from the storm recalls the beacon, bright as day in the night (22), or the morning which appeared "from" mother

morning which appeared "from" mother night (265); the image, of light springing from darkness and destruction, has destructive connotations once again. The "flowing spring" refers back to her own tears, dry for some time but now restored by Agamemnon's stream. The "land appearing to hopeless sailors" metaphor would call Penelope to the minds of an audience who knew their Homer and remind them that it is not Penelope who now speaks these words.

The central metaphor of the seven, "only child to a father" (898), stands out because it alone is human and because it is very ambiguous. Agamemnon and Menelaus have been too closely paired throughout the play to properly call either an "only child" now; but (as Betensky 1978: 17 points out<sup>27</sup>), it refers quite well to Odysseus, who has been mentioned earlier and whom these lines recall. Aegisthus is the sole surviving child of his father; Iphigenia seems to be the only child her mother considers. The audience would not yet think of Aegisthus (though they would remember the reference once he appears): but the recollection of Odysseus contrasts the homecomings of the two heroes; and whether or not Iphigenia came immediately to mind, it is always disturbing to hear Klytemnestra speak of children.

She refers to the *φρόνός* he will fear, and which too-great praise might induce, only to dismiss it - "let *φρόνός* be absent; for we have endured many evils" (904-905) - that is, their previous sufferings justify her great praise now. This frustrated prayer is another in the series which began with Calchas; Kly-

temnestra knows that what she is saying and about to do will invoke *φρόνος* and that it will not be absent from future events. At this point in the play, the very mention of *φρόνος* - particularly after the second stasimon's conclusion - is ominous; the possibility that it may indeed be present is raised by her prayer to the contrary.

Having delivered this masterfully multi-levelled and deceptive speech, she says "Now, my dear, step down from the car" (905-906) - as he had intended to do, 61 lines earlier. It is as if she had said "I have finished what I had to say; now I will permit you to step down". From her entrance she has already controlled events and frustrated Agamemnon's plans. He may enter, but only when she allows it and - it soon appears - only on her terms: for she calls to the maids to lay down the purple (*πορφύρεος*) tapestries. She concludes (910-913) with the ominous lines:

... let there be a purple-strewn path (stream), so that (*ὥς*) Justice may lead (him) into an unhopedor home.

As for the rest, thought not overcome by sleep will arrange the destined things justly, with the gods' assistance.

As Goheen (1955: 121) points out, "*πόρος*" (910) can mean "stream" as well as "path". The fact that his wife thought a blood-red stream was necessary, so that Justice could lead him to an unexpected home, should perhaps have given even Agamemnon pause.<sup>28</sup> The Dike which will lead him is obviously Klytemnestra, who identifies herself with Justice here (Podlecki 1966:67).

This identification is foreshadowed in her speech about Troy and stated almost directly here; for as she speaks of "Justice leading him" inside, the tapestries are being laid down on her order; and she has already ensured that he cannot get inside without her lead, that is, her permission and guidance. As for the "other things", destined "with the will of the gods" - what are they? But Agamemnon does not think of this. The thought (*φρονέει* - of the same root as *φρόνι*) not overcome by sleep is Klytemnestra's and recalls particularly line 275, as well as 15 and 290-91: what she is about to arrange will be no idle dream. This is a hint that she has not, even in this speech, cast aside the masculine intellect (*φρόνι*) she claimed earlier (for instance at 275); but Agamemnon does not notice this either, encouraged as he is to think of her as an emotional, gullible woman throughout this speech.

Klytemnestra speaks only of Agamemnon's return to the household and to her; she does not mention his political role. This focus is in sharp contrast to Agamemnon's speech, which, as we have seen, was exclusively political, referring to his hearth and household gods once and his family not at all. His overvaluing of political at the expense of domestic ties was shown clearly by his sacrifice of Iphigenia; the same misjudgement causes his half-blindness now. When the chorus warned him against false friends and false praise, he thought only of public enemies and for this reason is caught off guard by an attack from the household. Klytemnestra's speech is intended, by misleading

him as to her character and attitude, to blind him even farther to the possibility of attack from that quarter. His answer to her makes it obvious that she has succeeded. While her speech has made him uneasy, he accepts the impression she has tried to give that it is based on feminine foolishness and overemotional tendencies, not in deliberate, harmful intent.

It will be useful to mention here the significance of "treading on the tapestries", about which there has been some dispute<sup>29</sup>. I take the significance to be somewhere between the meaningless "walking on a rather expensive piece of material" (Dawe, 1963: 48 n.2), which Aeschylus uses as an excuse for a conflict between husband and wife and the *sine qua non* on which hangs Klytemnestra's decision to kill her husband. Klytemnestra's purpose is clearly to persuade her husband willingly to commit an impious act on his homecoming. Ewans (1982: 12) points out that this impious act occurs directly before Agamemnon sacrifices, thus rendering him unfit to do so; Lanahan (1974: 25) suggests that Agamemnon's "not setting foot on the ground" symbolically meant, also, that he had not yet reclaimed his kingdom.<sup>30</sup> Burkert (1966: 108-109) shows that in Greek sacrificial ritual it was considered a better omen if the victim approached the altar willingly and were guilty of some minor sin which made it responsible for its own death. (For instance, goats would be teased into eating ivy leaves sacred to Dionysus and then sacrificed for doing so.) This ritual fits events here perfectly and accounts for the feeling (however impossible to prove) of some

readers that Klytemnestra would not have killed him if he had not walked on the tapestries. In fact, what she "would have done" cannot be known, as it does not happen; but Agamemnon certainly makes himself a more perfect victim by walking willingly on the tapestries. There are several layers of significance here and the feeling that something of importance occurs is fully justified. The degree and quality of impiety or hubris involved cannot be absolutely determined: it is not zero, or the scene would be pointless; it is not absolute - an impious and grossly hubristic act under any possible circumstances - or Klytemnestra's arguments would not take the form they do of raising questions about situations in which the act might be permissible. (Were it an absolutely impious act, she would not be able to suggest that there could be any circumstances in which it was proper.)

Many critics have commented on this scene. Goheen's discussion (1955: 115-120) of the colour and its connection with the blood spilled on the ground again and again in the course of the trilogy is well taken, as is Jones' (1962: 86-87) point that the economic value of the tapestry is a large ingredient in its significance, particularly after the chorus' comments on the dangers of excessive wealth. The economic value of the tapestries is emphasized by Klytemnestra's final speech in this scene. The hubris involved in conspicuous consumption is, of course, one of the kinds shown in this scene, but it is only one aspect of the general hubris of getting above one's station, which is like-

ly to attract *φρόνις* (both human and divine). Jones is quite right in pointing out that Agamemnon wounds the oikos (economically) by his very entrance; but the economic aspect is only one part of his hubris here.

The treading of the tapestries is also the greatest of the symbols created by Klytemnestra's powers of symbolic manipulation. She has here invented an act which is surely hubristic (though the degree of hubris involved is not certain) and then succeeded in representing it as only very little more than what is due the conqueror of Troy. (That is, she creates a symbol which clearly has one significance and then persuades her hearer that it has quite another.) This is a feat which only a character of Klytemnestra's powers of definition and persuasion could accomplish. Finally, this scene is the prime example of Klytemnestra's *πεινώ*.

Agamemnon addresses her as "offspring of Leda" (*Ἀγέως γένεσθον*, 914), recalling to one's mind immediately that other daughter of Leda, the destructive force described in the second stasimon. "Guardian of my house" recalls Klytemnestra's "dog of the house" (607), with the difference that Klytemnestra does not use the possessive pronoun. Neither does she ever call it "my husband's house"; it is simply the house, the only important one. Michelini (1974: 527-530) argues persuasively that the phrase "*μακρὰν γὰρ ἐξερεύνας*" (916) is, in the interchange between the two characters, not an insult, but rather a mild witticism designed to take away the sting of the reproof which follows, and

in the formal structure of the play, a marker to show a break from the rhesis-form of Klytemnestra's speech and a return to the action.<sup>31</sup> Agamemnon's objection to her speech, her tapestries and perhaps her posture, if "χαλιπετές" (920) ("grovelling") refers to her position and not her style of speech<sup>32</sup>, shows clearly that he has accepted the image she presented of herself as an excitable female. She should not treat him delicately, "like a woman" (μη γυναικὸς ἐν τρόποις ἐμὲ ἄβρουε , 919), he says (either "as if he were a woman" - i.e. over-luxuriously - or "as women do treat people" - i.e. with exaggerated emotion), nor grovel "like a barbarian" (βαρβάρου ... δίκην , 919), nor lay down a φάος-liable path of tapestries. He sees her action, then, as womanish and over-emotional, like a barbarian's; and he assumes that he must explain to her that her tapestries might cause φόβος (921). Clearly, he entertains no suspicion of her motives, which he assumes are friendly; he simply doubts her intelligence. His next lines confirm this impression: he explains carefully, as if he assumes that she will have trouble understanding him, that it is only proper to honour the gods this way (922); that for a mortal to walk on these tapestries is "οὐδαμῶς ἄνευ φόβου " (924); and that therefore she should honour him as a man, not a god. His fame cries aloud without "footwipes" and embroideries (925-926, following Denniston, Page 1957: n. ad loc.). He continues with some platitudes which have greater personal significance than he realizes.<sup>33</sup> His tone is not "cold and hostile", as Denniston, Page believe (1957: n. at 915); rather, it is gentle, if anything, but extremely condescending, as if he addresses the



young girl whom, Greek marriage customs being what they were, he may very well have left behind him ten years before. The objections he raises to the act itself are all conventional.

The speed of Agamemnon's capitulation, which takes place only fourteen lines after his refusal in this speech, has puzzled many. However, by the end of his speech (930) most of the work of persuading him to take this course of action has already been accomplished. He does not suspect danger from his oikos and thanks to Klytemnestra's speech, he does not think her intelligent or "masculine" enough to suspect her motives. He is already, consequently, very much off guard and off balance; it will not take much more to lead him onto the tapestries. Klytemnestra's sudden attack catches him unawares. The versatility and range of her arguments, the speed with which she leaves one approach as soon as she has gained her point there and attacks again from another angle, her use of sophistry where necessary (especially in equating "envy" and "admiration" (939), and her use of a personal appeal at the perfect tactical moment leave him no chance at all to defend himself. Her skill in argument and her intellectual superiority over her husband are brilliantly demonstrated in this scene.

Klytemnestra responds to Agamemnon's conventional objections (931) "Tell me this, not against your opinion" - i.e. "tell me what you really think", implying that he does not really believe the objections he just raised. He answers "Be sure my opinion will not be corrupted" (932). It is difficult not to

hear a note of indignation in this; he is a little off-balance, caught unawares by her unflattering question after a too-flattering speech. She asks (933) "Would you have vowed to the gods to act thus ( $\hat{\omega}\delta\epsilon$ ) in a time of fear ( $\delta\epsilon\lambda\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ )?" If this act is in the class of things he could offer to the gods, she implies, it cannot itself be *prima facie* an impious act. He answers (934) "yes, if someone who knew clearly (i.e. a seer) proclaimed this duty". One is reminded of the last time he accepted the word of a seer; the result was a monstrously impious act. One might wonder why he does not add "but there is no seer here; the condition has not been fulfilled". The answer is that Klytemnestra wanted to elicit from him the theoretical admission that there might be some circumstances under which this act might be committed without divine disapproval; this accomplished, she cuts him off before he can raise a strong objection to the particular circumstances of this act.<sup>34</sup> There are some circumstances, then, under which he would do it, which would not incur divine  $\phi\epsilon\acute{o}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ . Her next question (935) is "What do you think Priam (would do) if he had achieved your deeds?" Certainly Priam would walk on the tapestries, answers Agamemnon (936). Again, he does not add "but he's an Oriental tyrant; it would not be suitable for a Greek king" - something he certainly knows, for he has earlier reproached Klytemnestra for behaving too flatteringly, "like a barbarian" - because Klytemnestra cuts him off. So there are some circumstances under which Agamemnon would do this and there are some people who would think this act appropriate, not impious, in his present circumstances. Divine  $\phi\epsilon\acute{o}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ , then is not a sure

consequence of the act. Turning from this point, she attacks the other potential source of *φθόλος*, human opinion, saying (937) "Don't feel ashamed then at (merely) human censure." If the gods do not disapprove, what do humans matter? But he demurs, saying (938) "But the voice, at least, of the people is very strong". She answers with a touch of the praise of her first speech - probably welcome to him now, after this sudden cross-examination - and skilfully using a sophistical reinterpretation of "*φθόλος*": "The unenvied (*ἀφθόλητος*) man is not admired." (939) Her implication is that any admirable man is envied. Throughout, Klytemnestra has made only negative arguments (the gods wouldn't necessarily be angry; some people would do this; the people wouldn't envy a man they didn't admire), which do not prove the positive corollaries she implies (the gods won't be angry; you should do this; if the people envy you, it is because they admire you). Her arguments thus do not give an actual, positive basis for the action she suggests. Agamemnon, however, has accepted at least the possibilities she has introduced - as Goldhill puts it, he has accepted the idea that an act which he thought had only one significance has, in fact, several different possible significances (1984: 77) - and is now in position to be toppled by the third level of argument, the personal, based on sexual differences which he himself introduces. He says (about her willingness to quarrel with the people) "It is not the part of a woman to desire battle". Klytemnestra deliberately misunderstands him to mean battle with himself and answers (941) "For the fortunate (i.e. Agamemnon), it is fitting even to be conquered (i.e. in

this battle with her)." When Agamemnon answers "Does it really mean that much to you?" (942), he is doomed; his question makes it clear that he has given up his certainty that the gods or men would object and his only remaining ground for refusal is an uneasy reluctance. While he has no longer a good reason to refuse, this does not give him good reason to agree. Klytemnestra's desire that he tread the tapestries is the only factor motivating him to do so, if he does; so he asks how important it is to her. This is where the groundwork of Klytemnestra's first speech proves decisive. First, her motives seem to be innocent and do not, if the action itself is (as it now seems) fairly harmless, in themselves give him anything to fear. There is no harm in giving in. Second, he is under obligation to her because of the suffering she described there and so should grant her a favour if she strongly desires it.

When she answers "be persuaded; you rule indeed in submitting willingly to me" ( $\pi\lambda\epsilon\sigma\theta\acute{\upsilon}\cdot\kappa\pi\alpha\rho\epsilon\lambda\varsigma\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\omicron\iota\pi\alpha\rho\epsilon\lambda\varsigma\quad(\gamma')\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\omega\acute{\nu}\acute{\epsilon}\mu\omicron\iota$ , 943)<sup>35</sup>, showing that it is important to her, he has no choice left but to yield.

Throughout, Agamemnon has been given no good reason to act; Klytemnestra's arguments have been sufficient to remove his objections, but no more. This negative approach is not in itself sufficient to produce action; and Klytemnestra's " $\pi\lambda\epsilon\sigma\theta\acute{\upsilon}$ " is significant. Argument could bring him to the point of uncertainty, but no farther; it is her powers of persuasion which

actually bring him to the point of action - precisely that forceful persuasion of which the chorus sang so fearfully (386-395).

Agamemnon then has his shoes removed, so as to damage the fabric less and minimize the *φθόνος* perhaps incurred. His principal objections now (948-949) are economic - wasting the substance of the house - and it is on this account that he is afraid of divine envy, which he prays may not strike him as he walks (much as he prayed that the results of Iphigenia's sacrifice might be good). He then speaks of Cassandra, whom he describes flatteringly as a "flower chosen for me from among much wealth" (*πολλῶν χρημάτων ἐξείρετον ἄνθος*, 954-955) - that is, the pick of the rich booty at Troy - and commends her to his wife's kindness for an escort inside. This is proof, were any needed at this point, that he does not understand his wife. Bringing home a concubine was no way to ingratiate yourself with your long-abandoned spouse, even in Greece, whose customs, we are assured, were different (but see Gomme, 1925: 1-25). Even Laertes never slept with Eurycleia, for fear of his wife's anger - and his wife was no Klytemnestra. And indeed, Klytemnestra does not answer this part of his speech.

Agamemnon walks into the house on the tapestries, speaking of himself as having been "subdued" (*κατέετραμμαι*, 956) by Klytemnestra in this matter. There is no doubt that this is a victory for Klytemnestra; Agamemnon has entered the stage a conqueror and left it conquered by his own wife. This spiritual

victory is the symbol and precursor of the physical victory Klytemnestra will win inside.

Klytemnestra follows, making another vivid, eloquent and double-edged speech. (She is thus the last of the two to speak, which reinforces her dominance over her husband.)

She speaks of the sea as unendingly fertile, nourishing (τρέφουσα , 959) an ever-renewed (παραίνωστον , 960) flow of purple dye (πορφύρας , 959) for dipping (βαφάς , 960) garments. This sea, however, was last spoken of using another fertility image - as "blooming with shipwrecks and Argive corpses" (659-660); and the "πορφύρας " she speaks of is the same dried-blood colour which has been mentioned before. βαφάς was last used of dipping bronze; now it is used of dipping clothes in this ominously-coloured dye. The image of the destructively fertile sea producing blood-coloured liquid (κηκίδα , 960) is quite disturbing. She continues, saying "Our house has a sufficient supply of these things (τῶνδε , 961), by the gods' will; the house does not know how to be poor" (961-962). This statement is also menacing, partly because of the chorus' warnings in the last stasimon of the dangers arising from too-great wealth (772-781) and partly because one wonders what, exactly, the house has a sufficiency of, given the ominous tone of her previous lines. The obvious referent is "εἰμάρων βαφάς " (960) or "πορφύρας "; either one has frightening connotations of violence and bloodshed. Her claim (963-965) that she would have vowed the trampling of many such garments, at an oracle's guidance, to save this man's life, shows the same extrava-

gance as her previous comments and offers a justification for the action which Agamemnon does not have - no oracle has commanded him. This seems intended to point out his guilt to the chorus, while it ostensibly reassures him. Furthermore, it is probably a lie.<sup>36</sup>

The ostensible subject of her next two statements (966-969) is Agamemnon; he is the root which remains to spread foliage over the house and protect it against the "scorching dog(star)", i.e. the summer heat; it is he, returning to his hearth, that brings warmth in winter. She later speaks of Aegisthus in precisely the terms of the second image (968-969). Now, however, the reader has been given no hint that he should think of anyone but Agamemnon. The fulsome language of the next seven lines (966-972), expressing the highest degree of joy at her husband's homecoming, is puzzling. It is even more emotional than her first speech in Agamemnon's presence. But that first speech was fulsome by necessity, in order to delude Agamemnon: these lines do not seem to have a similar purpose. Agamemnon has already given in, and is walking on the tapestries even as she speaks; she does not need to persuade him further. One could argue that she needed to keep up the illusion of welcome until he was actually in the door, lest he begin to suspect the truth and take fright while escape is still possible. This explanation does not however account for the sheer intensity of emotion present in these lines. Perhaps Klytemnestra here should be seen as expressing her real joy (at the fact that Agamemnon has been suc-

cessfully deceived) in the only way she can in public circumstances: she shows her joy, but ascribes it to the acceptable cause that she is pleased to see Agamemnon enter the house again.

These lines are in themselves also decidedly double-edged. The "returning foliage (*φυλλὰς* , 966)" is clearly the symbol of her returning fertility, which she lost when Agamemnon left and receives on his return, she implies - or, as she has implied earlier, which she lost when he killed Iphigenia and will recover when she kills him. Agamemnon has earlier been called the "*κύων σφαγῶν*" (896), so the "*δελφίου κυνός*" (967), which withers the fertility of the house, refers to him as well. The subject of the third statement is Zeus, with whose will Dike has previously been identified. When Zeus makes wine from bitter (unripe) grapes (*ὄμφακος πιπρᾶς* , 970), she says, then indeed there is cool in the house, when the "man in full authority", "man who accomplishes things" (*ἄνδρὸς γελείου* , 972) occupies the house. Zeus "making wine from unripe grapes " could refer to an untimely death willed by Zeus/Dike - that is, Agamemnon's death; the wine would then symbolize blood. Wine, the sea and the dye then have all been converted to negative, fatal images.<sup>37</sup> If the "*ἄνδρὸς γελείου* " is Agamemnon, which is the immediate interpretation, one should remember that the adjective *γελεῖος* " was used of perfect sacrificial victims. The fate Agamemnon is about to face is thus foreshadowed by this epithet.

When Agamemnon has entered the palace (at about 972: see Appendix B, 146 ) Klytemnestra concludes with a prayer to Zeus



Accomplisher (973-974) to fulfil her prayers and consider what he is about to fulfil. What has gone before is a strong hint that the object of her prayers is something harmful to Agamemnon.

In these fifteen lines (958-974), Klytemnestra uses the words "οἶκος " or "δῶμος " seven times. It is never "Agamemnon's house"; it is just the house, with whose good she is concerned and with which she has been closely associated throughout the play.

This speech (958-974) unites many of the techniques and themes found earlier: Klytemnestra's connection with sacrificial rites, her use of fertility imagery, negative nature images including light (the *σεπτείου κυνός* ), the household and Klytemnestra's identification with it, the will of Zeus and the extremely ambiguous use of metaphor and speech by Klytemnestra . In the entire scene, Klytemnestra has shown the full range of her powers of eloquence, manipulation, intelligence and persuasion; and at the last it is her power, not his, against the background of conflict between house and society, female and male, which overcomes. The motives she might have for hostility towards her husband - Iphigenia, Aegisthus and Cassandra - have all been more or less obliquely presented in this scene. Agamemnon's complete inability to control his wife has also been shown - she seems to have controlled events from first to last, as she did with the messenger.

It is no wonder that the chorus on her exit begin (975-977)

"Why does this fear, hovering constantly,  
flit about my prophetic heart?"

Although they have seen the return of the fleet (or part of it), they continue, they still feel no hope; their spirits sing "the lyreless dirge of the Erinyes" (τὸν δ' ἄνευ λύρας ... θρήνον Ἑρινύος, 990-991) and their hearts "whirl in eddies bringing fulfillment towards minds conscious of justice" (ἐνδύκοις, 996-997). That is, they still fear some disaster which, however, they would recognize as just (1001-1016). They continue in the second strophe with a discussion of the danger of too-great fortune; it is best to throw some part of wealth overboard, so that the whole house is not destroyed. This is clearly a reference to the recent speech of Klytemnestra, emphasizing the potentially infinite wealth of the house; it is also a reference to Agamemnon's great good fortune in conquering Troy. They feel that such good fortune is perilous and suggest a remedy against it; but (they continue in the final antistrophe, 1018-1033) once a man's blood has fallen to earth, who can call it up again? There is no remedy for death. This is the closest they come to speaking of what they truly fear, the death of their master.

Klytemnestra re-enters at 1035 to fetch Cassandra inside; she retires at 1068, defeated in her object. Her defeat is astonishing; she has overcome the elements, the chorus and the king, but cannot budge a foreign slave-girl. There have been

many discussions of this scene and reasons suggested for her loss of control here.<sup>38</sup> The first explanation, suggested by Klytemnestra, is that she does not understand Greek (1060-1061); but after Klytemnestra's departure Cassandra proves this explanation wrong by speaking fluent Greek. The easiest explanation is that Cassandra, as a seer, knows what lies in wait for her and is reluctant to face it. In the end, however, she does enter, of her own free will (that is, in willing obedience to Apollo). If she is willing to enter at all, why not when she is asked?

I believe the answer is that she is a seer and knows the truth; knowing everything, as Apollo reveals it to her, she knows also Klytemnestra's plans and what her words conceal. For that reason, Klytemnestra's *πτελώ*, which is based on deception and obscuring of meaning, has no effect on her. Other people can be talked into accepting Klytemnestra's terms and plans; Cassandra does not respond at all, or even answer.<sup>39</sup> Before a true seer, Klytemnestra's powers of imagination fail; before one who knows what symbols really mean, Klytemnestra's attempts to manipulate them are useless. The fact that Klytemnestra's speech is at least in part a calculated insult may reinforce Cassandra's refusal to give in to it.

Klytemnestra's speech to Cassandra is double-edged, as always, and thick with condescending kindness quite possibly offensive to a princess. She intends to put her in her place as a slave quickly and begins by addressing her only as Cassandra, without patronymic (1035). Zeus has set Cassandra in the house,

she continues, to share the sacrificial water, standing among the many slaves at the household altar (1036-1038). Klytemnestra of course means Cassandra to stand at the altar as a victim; the chorus do not realize this. But even in its surface meaning, it is an insult; Cassandra is not to think of herself even as an unusual slave - she will be treated as another domestic and no more. This is clearly not what Agamemnon meant for her, as his description of her and directions for her care reveal (950-955); she is a unique creature in his eyes, and no common domestic servant. "Get down from the chariot and don't be arrogant" (1039), Klytemnestra now adds; Cassandra has not yet responded to her original order. She attempts flattery at this juncture, saying that even Hercules was once a slave (1040-1041). There is no response. If one must be a slave, Klytemnestra then adds, it is better in a house with old money than in the house of a *nouveau riche*, who is apt to treat his slaves harshly. (1042-1043). This is small comfort at best, and sounds more as if Klytemnestra wishes to praise her own household than reassure her captive.

Kassandra remains silent. Command, flattery and dubious reassurance have had no effect; the chorus advise her to "obey", or "be persuaded" (*πειθού' ἔνδ' , εἰ' πειθού'* (1049)), but she does not. Klytemnestra's persuasive tactics have failed.

Klytemnestra wonders next if perhaps Cassandra speaks another language; if not, then she will persuade her with words (1050-1053). The chorus again suggest that Cassandra obey the Queen. Still there is no response. Klytemnestra becomes impa-

tient now (1055-1061) - she has no leisure to waste outside; the sheep stand ready at the altar for sacrifice, for her who never hoped for such a pleasure (*ὥς οὐπορ ἐλπίζασι τῆνδ' ἔξειν χαρὶν* , 1058). Her ostensible meaning is the pleasure of a sacrifice in honour of her husband's homecoming. In fact, Agamemnon is one of the "flock" (*μῆλα* , 1057) at the altar; the sacrifice of sheep recalls the lioncub's sacrifice as a priest of Ἄρη (730-731). The unexpected pleasure, we will soon discover, is that of killing Cassandra, whose presence Klytemnestra had not planned for, as well as the king. If Cassandra means to come inside, the Queen continues, she should do so now; if she doesn't "receive (Klytemnestra's) speech" (*δέχηι λόγον* , 1060), she should signal with her hand in place of a voice. This is a retreat to the next level of communication, the visual; but Cassandra does not in fact "receive" - that is, accept - Klytemnestra's speech and so ignores the compromise Klytemnestra offers.

Klytemnestra, thoroughly incensed by now, says that Cassandra is mad and "listens to an evil *φρῆν* " (1064), not knowing how to bear the bridle (*χαλινόν* , 1066) (i.e. of slavery). She concludes "I will not be dishonoured by saying any more" (*οὐ μὲν πλέω ῥίψας ἀτιμωθήσομαι* , 1068) and departs, leaving Cassandra in possession of the stage. Klytemnestra obviously feels that this scene with Cassandra has been a humiliating defeat, and refuses to make it any worse by continuing her attempt. She does not, in fact, show as much subtlety and skill in persuasion in this scene as she had with the chorus, the herald or Agamemnon, all of whom

she could control. One has the impression that she began by underestimating her victim and could not correct the error. Even so, such power and persuasion as she did use should have been sufficient with any other slave, even a new and high-born one. Klytemnestra's *πειρώ* is simply not effective around the seer, who knows what Klytemnestra is.

Kassandra's prophecy and scene with the chorus (1072-1330) links together the parts of the Oresteia; she prophesies the events of the next play as well as describing all of the past events and supernatural causes which have affected, or will affect, the cycle of ruin she sees. She sets the events of the Agamemnon in a larger context which has only been hinted at previously in this play. She is only partly concerned with Klytemnestra. What Kassandra does say about the Queen carries some weight, for she sees the truth, from a particular, cosmic perspective; she sees the final values actions will have, not their shifting, temporary justifications. For instance, in this play the audience sees - or will see - a Klytemnestra who is perhaps unlikeable and fear-inspiring, but not entirely a villain; she is given an excellent motive for her actions and may even, for all the chorus know, have been nearly justified. By the Eumenides, Klytemnestra is almost entirely a monster, whose motives are nearly forgotten. Kassandra's prophecy here does not mention the motivations of action already discussed in the play, but rather adds others to them. However, to her, motivations excuse nothing. There is no sense in her words that the guilt of a crime

is lessened or increased depending on the reasons for it. And to her, Klytemnestra is only an unnatural, destructive, lying, adulterous and evil creature. No excuses are offered for her. Absolute insight seems to allow no half-measures; evil acts, seen clearly, are simply evil and have no justification. In this play, Cassandra provides a useful insight into Klytemnestra's "essential nature" as it will eventually appear in the trilogy. However, it should be remembered that in this play, Cassandra's is not the only viewpoint we are given.

Kassandra first asks Apollo (1085 ff.) to what sort of house he has brought her. She sees it as a god-hating (*μισόθεον*, 1090; see Fraenkel 1950: n. ad loc.) abode, which has seen many evil kindred-slayings and flesh-cuttings, man-slayings and ground sprinkled (with blood). Iphigenia, then, has not been the only victim. Kassandra next proclaims that (other) children weep over their roasted flesh, eaten by their father (1095-98). Next, she foresees a "great evil" (*μέγα κακόν*, 1102) being now plotted in the house, an evil which is beyond cure. The chorus do not understand and she continues, addressing Klytemnestra (offstage):

Wretch! Will you accomplish this? Having washed  
your husband and bed-partner in the baths - how  
will I tell the end? For quickly, it will be; hand  
after hand stretches out, reaching (towards it).  
(1107-1110)

The chorus do not know whom she is addressing and still fail to understand. She continues (1114 ff.), seeing a "net of Hades" which is the bed-sharing snare (*ἄρνυς*, 1116), the person co-re-

sponsible for the murder. Klytemnestra is the "net of Hades" here, the snare in the bed. "ξυνάγκυρα" (1116) is the first indication that anyone or anything other than Klytemnestra takes part in the murder. The reader had not before been told directly that there would be a murder, but the chorus' fears of any person have been confined (except for a hint at 549-550) to Klytemnestra. Now she is called a "co-agent". Nets have been spoken of before: Zeus flung over Troy a "net of all-catching Ἄη" (361). Now the net of destruction seems set to catch the conqueror. Cassandra calls on "Discord" (ἑτάρις, 1119), whom the chorus identify with the Erinyes (1121), to raise a cry of triumph to the race over the sacrifice. The chorus at last (1121-1124) begin to be frightened.

Kassandra continues (1125-1129) "Keep the bull from the cow!" (ἄπεχε τῆς βοῦς τὸν ταῦρον, 1125-26.) A female has caught a male in a garment, she continues, and strikes with a "blackhorned contrivance" (μελαγχέρε ... μηχανήματα, 1126). She then speaks of a "basin which murders by treachery". (δολοφόνου λέβητος, 1129).

It is difficult to say which is the bull and which the cow here; as the bull is attacking the cow, one might think that the sexes have been reversed and Klytemnestra is the bull, Agamemnon the cow. This implication is strengthened by Klytemnestra's frequently stressed masculine characteristics (ἀνδρόβουλον (11), etc.) and (Podlecki 1983: 34-35), by the hints of Agamemnon's effeminacy (for instance, he enters the stage in a chariot; he



refuses to be pampered "like a woman", but in the end capitulates to it; he is defeated by a woman.

There is another implication; ordinarily one would keep a bull from a cow only to keep her from being bred.<sup>40</sup> Cassandra is the first person to speak of the marriage of Klytemnestra as a sexual bond (*ὁμοδέμνιον* , 1108; *ξύλευος* , 1116; and this line). In fact, she is the first to speak of Klytemnestra in erotic terms at all, however vague (or bestial).

The chorus have gathered the impression by this time (1130 ff.) that this oracle foretells no good thing. Cassandra next predicts her own death, mourns the wedding of Paris and returns to the subject of her death (which the chorus this time understand) and mourns her city. The chorus still do not understand all and she promises to speak clearly (1178-1183).

Kassandra now speaks (1186-1193) of the choir of Erinyes born with the race (*συγγόνων* , 1190) which will not leave the house, drinkers of human blood, which sings of the first, beginning *Ἄρη*, the trampling of a brother's bed (*εὐνὰς ἁδελφούρου καὶ πατρὸς ἑταίρου* , 1193). She pauses for verification of this deed and the chorus agree that such a crime (Thyestes' adultery with Atreus' wife) was committed.

*Ἄρη* has been spoken of before: it is the forward-planning mother of Persuasion. It induced Helen and Paris to act as they did (399-408). The lioncub, when grown, sacrifices to *Ἄρη* (735-736); and hubris, giving rise to worse hubris, eventually becomes

a "black ἄρη" for the house, an avenging daemon who resembles the acts she sprang from (763-771). Now it appears that there has been an earlier ἄρη in this house than had been spoken of before; the cycle has gone on for a long time.

Erinys or Erinyes have also been mentioned before. Zeus sends a "late-avenging Erinys" on transgressors (59); the dark Erinyes in time wear away the life of a prosperous man without Justice (463-466); Helen was sent to Troy by Zeus as an Erinys who brings tears to brides (749); the chorus' spirit sings the lament of the Erinys when Agamemnon enters the house (990-991). Now Cassandra sees, or hears, a whole choir of Erinyes, every one that has ever haunted the house, singing together. None of the past crimes or past vengeance of the house have left it; they all remain, growing stronger.

Kassandra's vision continues (1215-1225) with the image of the children killed by relatives and eaten; and she sees vengeance being plotted against Agamemnon by a "strengthless lion" (λέων ἄδελκεύ , 1224) who lies in bed and stays at home (1224-1225). This is the first clear reference to Aegisthus in the play.

Now (1226 - 1241) she turns to Klytemnestra. Agamemnon does not know what work she will do, with evil fortune, like a secret Ἄρη (1230), after the "hateful bitch" (κυνός , 1228) - as noted before, this word has connotations of unchastity as well)

spoke so long and so amicably (*φαιδρόνους* , 1229; actually "with cheerful disposition"). She continues

*τοιάδε γόημα· Θῆλυς ἄρσενος φονεύς*

(1230). Some degree of "daring" has been seen in the commission of each shocking crime so far narrated. The most shocking aspect of the coming murder, to Cassandra, is that a female kills a male. Cassandra continues, searching for a description for Klytemnestra - "What sort of hateful noxious beast shall I call her?" (*τί νιν καλοῦσα δυσφιλὲς δάκος ῥύποιμ' ἔν* ; , 1232-33). Cassandra suggests a list of powerful and unnatural female monsters - an amphisbaena, a Skylla who destroys sailors, a raging mother from Hell (hellish - *Ἄιδου* , 1235) who "breathes war without truce against her nearest kin" (1235-1236). That Klytemnestra is a female makes her crime particularly horrible and makes Klytemnestra herself unnatural, a monster; for a woman to kill a man over-sets the natural order.

Klytemnestra cried out in triumph (*ἐπωλολύξατο* , 1236) at the beacon "as if at the turn of battle" (1237), Cassandra continues. A woman's *ὀλολύγμος* of course should not be heard at a battle; a desire for battle is not suitable for women, as Agamemnon has said (940). She is "*παντότολμος* " (1237), like her husband; and she was only pretending to rejoice at her husband's homecoming. (1238)

The chorus have understood nothing after Cassandra's mention of the feast of Thyestes (1242-1245). Even after under-

standing that Agamemnon may be murdered, they ask what man (πῖος πρὸς ἄνδρὸς , 1251) will commit the crime. The visions seize Kassandra again (1256 ff.) and she sees Klytemnestra as a "δέπους λέαινα ", thus linking her unmistakably to the lioncub metaphor. This lioness lies with the wolf (συγκαμωμένη λύκῳ , 1258-1259- that is, Aegisthus) in the well-born lion's absence, which sounds not only adulterous but deviant. She is planning to kill Kassandra as well (1260) and will boast as she "whets the sword against the man" (1262) that she "exacts a penalty of death" (ἀντ' ἐτίθεσθαι φόνου , 1263) because Kassandra was brought there (1262-1263). The meaning of these lines is ambiguous: either Klytemnestra, while herself committing adultery, will use her husband's infidelity as an excuse for his murder- or, alternatively, she will use Kassandra's presence as a reason to kill Kassandra herself. The former seems the obvious interpretation at this point in the play, but the latter is what will actually happen later on. Both are implied here.

After prophesying the vengeance to come in the next play (1279-91), Kassandra enters the house to face her death, which she first (1277-1278) describes as a sacrifice, but later (1309) sees as murder.

To the knowledge already given of Klytemnestra has been added now the certainty that she has a lover, Thyestes' son, and that she means to kill her husband, by deceit, in a bathtub. Erotic overtones have entered the description of Klytemnestra for the first time in Kassandra's words; but they are deviant or even

bestial. She has been connected with the image of the destructive net over Troy and with the lioncub, priest of *Ἄρης*. She is all-daring, as Agamemnon was at Aulis. We knew that she was unnaturally intelligent and powerful, for a woman. Through Cassandra's eyes we see her as simply unnatural: evil, monstrous and perverted. The coming murders have been described in sacrificial terms, though Cassandra in the end rejects this image; and there has been a disturbing vision of a choir of Erinyes who will not leave the house.

Agamemnon is stabbed inside the house, cries out twice and is silent. (1343-1345). The chorus mill about, trying to decide what to do. They seem to assume that Klytemnestra had accomplices, as is shown by the plural verb forms at 1354-1355 and 1362-1363 (if these are not simply generalizing plurals); perhaps Aegisthus' role, if any, is hinted here. They expect tyranny to follow the act (1355-1365). In the end, they decide to do nothing until they know more.

Klytemnestra now appears - probably on the *ekkyklema* - standing over the bodies of Agamemnon and Cassandra.

This scene and the next have provoked a good deal of argument over the "change" in Klytemnestra's character. The *kommos* between Klytemnestra and the chorus is opened by Klytemnestra with a speech in which she claims full, final and absolute responsibility for Agamemnon's death; only 100 lines later, she blames the murder on the *εὐεργετής*, the avenging spirit. By the

end of the scene, she is willing to compromise with the daemon-Klytemnestra, who has never compromised before. This change surely argues, at the least, a change of attitude. Gilbert Murray goes the whole way, arguing that until about half-way through the *kommos* Klytemnestra is genuinely possessed by the daemon; after the murder, the daemon releases the body to its original inhabitant, who is left to cope as best she may.<sup>41</sup> Other interpretations have relied on "inconsistency of character" (Dawe, 1963: 51) - the theory that one should not expect Klytemnestra to act like "the same person", because Aeschylus did not write the scene, or the play, with her character as his primary concern. Therefore, as this theory explains, we are mistaken in expecting a consistency of character in this scene, or anywhere in the play, as it would never have crossed the playwright's mind that such a quality was necessary to the drama. This theory, however, is unconvincing when one considers the obvious consistency of Klytemnestra's character in all the rest of the play - if consistency of character did not concern Aeschylus at any time, it is hard to imagine why her character should only become "inconsistent" here, after 1300 lines.

Those interpretations which do allow Klytemnestra's character to retain its integrity explain her change in various ways. Podlecki (1983: 33), for instance, explains that she is seeking refuge from her guilt in uncharacteristic submissiveness (in this play and the next), hoping thus to appease the world. He adds that this could easily be an elaborate charade on the part of a

notoriously deceitful woman. I agree that she is reacting to "guilt", if this means "responsibility for a crime and realization that it may have consequences" and not (following the modern usage) "a feeling that she had done something wrong". Klytemnestra never shows any remorse over Agamemnon's death, only unhappiness at its consequences. But in the Agamemnon, at least, there is not so much "feminine submissiveness" as adaptation to new circumstances. The real change is in the fact that, before the murder, Klytemnestra has never seemed to adapt; she has apparently controlled all circumstances herself and forced others - with one exception - to adapt to her. In fact, as will appear, she did not entirely control her world; the forces which combined to produce the death of Agamemnon coincidentally agreed with her own wishes, and thus seemed to be under her control. She is, before the murder, perfectly adapted to a world in which all events fall out as she has planned them, and which thus appears to be completely in her power. After the murder she must adapt to a world which is revealed to be only partially amenable to her will.

Michellini explains the "change" in Klytemnestra's character as born of her new social circumstances: she is now not the rebel, but the maintainer of a new *status quo*; her active role in the cycle has gone by and it will next be her turn to suffer (1979: 55). Betensky (1978: 12) explains the change as one not so much in Klytemnestra as in the way she is viewed by those around her. This last interpretation explains a good deal of the

progression of the trilogy, but is not as useful in the first play, when a change in the way Klytemnestra handles the world is evident as well as in the way it sees her.

More than anything, Klytemnestra seems to me to act like a person who has not thought past a certain point, or whose expectations past that point have not been fulfilled. All events and elements of her world have united, apparently (to the reader and to Klytemnestra) under her control, in order to bring about the death of her husband. After that event she (unlike Aegisthus) had no clear plans, no great goal towards which to steer events. Her immense talents for manipulating people and things are no use when she has no reason to manipulate them. Moreover, the world after the murder is not what she expected, in as much as she expected anything - she hoped, as she says herself, that the murder of Agamemnon would end the bloodshed in the house. The chorus convince her that this will not necessarily be the result of her crime; that there may be consequences she did not desire or foresee: that her control, in fact, may have been illusory. Her goal is gone and the world she controlled turns out, in one respect, to have been uncontrollable, at least by her. It is no wonder that adapting to these facts causes her to act a little differently.

Klytemnestra's "character change", whatever its cause and nature, has in any case been exaggerated by some commentators. For instance, it is true that at 1372-1398 she claims responsibility for Agamemnon's death and at 1496-1504 says that it was



entirely the ἀλᾶστωρ's crime; but by 1552-1553 she once again claims at least partial responsibility, this time using a (perhaps poetic) plural: "By our (hands) he fell, he died; and we will bury him." (πρὸς ἡμῶν κἀπνεσε κἀθανε καὶ καταθάψομεν , 1552-1553). It is fair, then, to treat her as the same character we met before the murder and to interpret accordingly.

Most of the important issues and images brought out earlier in the play come together in the *kommos*, centering around Klytemnestra . In discussing the death with the chorus, Klytemnestra slowly realizes that there were motives and forces, independent of her, which also led to the death of her husband.<sup>42</sup> This discussion makes her willing to compromise at the end of the scene.<sup>43</sup>

Klytemnestra begins by admitting that she has said much "as suited the moment" (καίριως , 1372) in the past; she is not ashamed now to do the opposite - that is, to tell the truth. How else could one planning hostilities towards "enemies who seem to be φίλος " (friends or relatives, 1374) hope to "fence the nets of harm" (πημονῆς ἀρμύεται' ἄν φάρξειεν ) higher than can be leapt over? (1374-1375) The phrase "an enemy who seemed friendly" would until now have been thought to describe Klytemnestra's role towards Agamemnon; Klytemnestra reverses it. This reversal, showing the equality of their separate crimes, echoes the reciprocal-action motif which has been brought up in several places earlier in the play and which is emphasized frequently by Klytemnestra in this scene; she is trying to show that her act only

reciprocated his. The inescapable net of destruction which she speaks of was once draped over Troy by Zeus, and became Klytemnestra herself in Cassandra's vision; now Klytemnestra speaks of it as a trap which she constructed: she sees the net as being in her power.

She has thought of this struggle for a long time, she continues (1377-1378); it finally ("with time" (σὺν χρόνῳ , 1378) - reminiscent of the Erinyes, who act late and χρόνῳ , 463) arrived. She is insistent on her personal responsibility:

I stand where I struck, upon the completed deeds.  
Thus I did, and I will not deny these things.  
(1379-1380)

She used deceit to kill him. The figurative inescapable net has suddenly become real, for she threw an endless net, like a fishnet, around him, "πλοῦτον εἴματος κακόν " (1383). This phrase vividly recalls the tapestries, which were called "εἴματα " (921) and which were an "evil wealth", as the choral odes before and after that scene implied. She struck twice - we heard him cry out at these blows (1343, 1345) - and after he "let his limbs relax" (i.e. after his death - 1385) she struck a third time. She has switched to present tense now (1386) to bring the scene she describes more vividly to her hearers. The third stroke was added as an offering to "Zeus Saviour" (Διός ...σωτήρος , 1387)- but the "below-ground" (κατὰ χθονὸς ) Zeus, Saviour "of the dead" (νεκρῶν ). This act is quite possible sacrilegious. Zeitlin (1965: 473) points out that one ordinarily poured three liba-

corpse (1395), her deeds would be just, in fact, "ὑπερδίκως" (1396); Agamemnon filled a bowl of evils in the house which he himself drank down on his return. (1396-97).

The bowl from which Klytemnestra would be fittingly pouring libations is presumably the one Agamemnon filled and drank; her libations would then be "κακῶν ἀρτίων" (1396-1397). This image thus continues the perversion of sacrificial imagery; one does not properly pour out curses as libations to a god. Her description of her deeds as "ὑπερδίκως" is perfectly accurate, and damning. Justice, the theme of the play, is a matter of balance; one cannot be "more than just" without becoming unjust.

In these 26 lines Klytemnestra has asserted responsibility for the murder ten times, in the most forceful language possible.

The chorus' first reaction is in fact to her language: they are surprised at her boldness of speech (θρασύτρομος, 1399) and that she boasts in this way over her man (ἄνδρι, 1400). Their surprise is not at what she has done, but at her violation of the feminine role to do it - not "How could you kill our king!" but "How could a properly-bred woman use such immodest language!" Their use of "ἄνδρι" emphasizes this implication by giving Agamemnon a sexual role (opposed to Klytemnestra's).

Klytemnestra shows the same reaction she has had in the past when slighted and dismissed on sexual grounds; her answer shows a touch of offended pride. "You try me as if I were a foolish woman" (γυναικὸς ὡς ἀφράδμονος, 1401) she says; but it

doesn't matter, her deed still stands. Agamemnon, her husband (ἥσος , 1405, giving only his social role) lies dead, the work of her hand, a just craftsman (δικαίως τέκτονος , 1406). This phrase recalls the "crafter (τέκτονα , 151) of feuds that does not fear a man, ... child-avenging Μηδης " (151-155), with which the reader has always suspect that Klytemnestra was identified. That identification is now verified: Klytemnestra and the Μηδης Calchas spoke of are one. The phrase also shows that Klytemnestra identifies her act and herself with justice and wants it to be seen that way, unbiased by considerations of the sexes of the killer and victim.

The chorus ask "ὦ γυναι " (1407) what she has eaten which made her take on this "sacrifice" (θύος , 1408), "casting off" (ἀπέδυνες , 1410) - i.e., not concerned with - the curses of the people (1407-1410). Their implication is that as she is female, her act cannot have been the product of a rational decision; she must have simply gone mad. They warn her that she will be exiled from the city (ἀπόπολις , 1410).

Klytemnestra points out (1412-1421) that they sentence her to exile and hatred of the people, but did not do the same when Agamemnon sacrificed his own daughter - her "dearest birthpang" (1418) - like a beast (1415). Why did they not banish him? The crimes were equal, in short, a sacrifice for a sacrifice; why do they judge her alone so harshly? But if they threaten her, she continues (1421-1425), it is on the following equal terms (ἐκ τῶν ὁμοίων , 1423): if they win (the argument), they will rule; if the

god grants the opposite, then "having been taught, you will learn, though late, to be wise (τὸ σωφρονεῖν, 1425)". The strict reciprocity and equality of judgement Klytemnestra desires is stressed in this speech and once again, she seems to desire strife and victory, as she did in the tapestry scene and as women should not do. 1425 is reminiscent of the Zeus hymn, where wisdom comes even to the unwilling, through suffering. She is then promising them suffering here.

The chorus respond (1426-1430) by reiterating their belief that she is insane: she is overweeningly proud (μεγαλόμητις, 1426), they say, and her words haughty because her φρήν is mad-dened with the blood-dripping crime (φονολιβεῖ νόξα, 1427). However, they accept the idea of action paying for action and promise that in requital (ἀντιτόν, 1429) for her crime she will yet pay blow for blow, bereft of friends.

Klytemnestra responds to the suggestion that she will be στερομένην φίλων (1429) by enumerating her supernatural and human allies (1431-1437). She has not invoked an Olympian in the play, except Zeus Τελεῖος at the end of the tapestry scene (973-974) ("Zeus of the underworld" is hardly Olympian); now she mentions Dike τελεῖον (1432), who is associated with Zeus τελεῖος, but is female. Klytemnestra swears "by Justice accomplished for my child, by Ἄρη and Erinyes, to whom I slew this man" (1432-1433). These are all female deities and have all been important in the play; Dike, for dishonouring whom the Erinyes will destroy a man; Erinyes, who brings punishment for crimes, though late; Ἄρη,

"Doom" and "Folly" both, mother of the Persuasion that blinds men and induces them to commit acts leading to *ἔρῃ* (doom). Klytemnestra thus claims to be priestess/ sacrificer to three of the most powerful forces in the play. As the lioncub grew up to sacrifice to *Ἄρη*, this image links Klytemnestra the more strongly to that metaphor. She continues and swears "(By these three goddesses), Expectation does not set foot in the house of Fear for me, as long as Aegisthus lights the fire on my hearth" (1434-1436), Aegisthus who is loyal as he was before and a shield for her confidence (1436-1437). The first time Aegisthus is named, then, is by Klytemnestra herself; she speaks of him as an ally, in a military metaphor (*ἄσπης*, 1437) and as a key member of her household as well, in an image she formerly used of Agamemnon (601-602) and which surely has erotic connotations. His role in her life has been the same for some time (1436); that is, their affair is a long-standing arrangement, something else which has only been hinted at before. So, while Klytemnestra still claims personal responsibility for the act, her mention of the three powers for whom she sacrificed and the one on whom she relies for human aid brings other elements involved in the murder under consideration for the first time in the *kommos*.

Having admitted her own infidelity, the weak point of her position, she feels compelled to justify it and uses the same method of reciprocity of action. She therefore speaks of Agamemnon's adultery (1438-1443). She has killed the "darling of all the golden girls (Chryseises) at Ilium" (*Χρυσείδων μέλιγγα*,

1439) and lover of this "captive, seer and bedfellow" (ἀγχιμάλω - γος ... γεραδούπος ... κουνόλεκτρος , 1440-1441 - Cassandra) as well, the "prophesying bedfellow of this man, trusty consort, wearer-down of the sailor's benches" (1441-1443). The pair has not suffered unjustly, she adds: he is dead, and Cassandra, the lover of him, lies here also, bringing "an added relish to the pleasures of my bed (? text uncertain)" (1445).

There is more anger and bitterness in her words here than can be explained without assuming jealousy on Klytemnestra's part. Jealousy need not be based on any sort of affection, however and certainly it is not here. It is not surprising that a woman who has so far shown a desire - and an apparent ability - to control almost all elements of her world would now show evidence of violent possessive feelings towards her husband - that is, of desire to control, or to have controlled, all his actions as well. Such a desire can centre on hated objects as well as loved ones.<sup>44</sup>

However, if Agamemnon's death repays Iphigenia's and his infidelity balances Klytemnestra's, then what will repay the death of Cassandra? Aegisthus' death? Klytemnestra's own? By Klytemnestra's own rules, if one infidelity is punished, the other must be also; as, in fact, it will be later on. In fact, Cassandra has not suffered justly; even Klytemnestra tacitly admits this by giving such a frivolous reason for killing her (because it gave her additional pleasure). This, like her ex-

cessive language earlier, shows that Klytemnestra's action was in fact *ὑπερβίωσις*.

The chorus are now brought, perhaps by the thought of adultery, to think of Helen. Helen and Klytemnestra, always parallel, are finally linked as closely together in this passage as the Atreidae were at the beginning of the play. The chorus mourn their king, who has "suffered many things on account of a woman/ and by a woman lost his life" (*γυναικὸς διὰ / πρὸς γυναῖκα - ὅς*, 1452-1453). The chorus' tendency to speak of women as opposed to men, rather than naming specific individuals, has been consistent throughout the play, particularly when they speak of Helen. In the chorus' eyes, - that is, in the eyes of the male Argive citizenry whom they represent - a woman's sex, and transgression of her sexual role, is more important than her personal characteristics. To the chorus, an act cannot be discussed or judged in isolation; they must consider also (or even primarily) whether this act was committed by a woman, and if so, whether it suits a woman's proper role. So, they first establish Helen's sex; they then address her specifically. They call her insane (*μαρῖνους*, 1455) and sole destroyer of the many lives at Troy, she who has now added Agamemnon's blood as a final garland for herself. (*ἐκρηθόσω δῖμ'*, 1460, following Fraenkel's text (1950: n. ad loc.) (1455-1461). There was certainly an Eris, woe of males (*βλάβος οἰζύς*, 1461) in the house, they continue. The Eris (Strife) they mean is Helen, but Klytemnestra, still standing over her husband's corpse, is the woe to men who comes immediately to mind.



The "garland of blood" (1459-1460) - last in the series of fatal flowers in this play - is another perverted fertility image which for that reason reminds one of Klytemnestra while ostensibly referring to Helen. The final link between the sisters, of course, is that they attribute Agamemnon's death to Helen.

Klytemnestra (1462-1467) does not deny Helen's role in Agamemnon's murder. This non-denial is the sign of the turning-point in her attitude towards her crime; she has not given an inch until now. She objects, instead, to their calling Helen a "man-destroyer" (*ἀνδρὸλῆτρερ*, 1465) and saying that she alone destroyed (*μία ... ὀλέσας*, 1465-1466) the lives of many Greek men. She implies in these lines that Agamemnon and Menelaus were also guilty (as the chorus itself said in the first stasimon). The chorus agree that Helen was not solely responsible, but gives her a different assistant; they begin to sing (1468-1473) of the "*δαίμων*" who falls on the house and on the double-natured Tantalid women; "you (*δαίμων*) wield a like-minded power from women ... he (the daemon) exults, singing a tuneless song (*ἐκνόμως ... ὕμνῳ*, 1473-1474), settled on the body like a crow ...". The "tuneless song" reminds one of the "lyreless dirge" of the Erinyes (990-991); daemon and Erinyes are thus associated. "Double-natured" (*διφύοις*, 1469) means either "of different natures" or "each one of a double nature" (i.e. two-faced). Given what we have already heard of the two sisters - the daemon wields a "like-souled" power from the women; they are both a bane (*οἰζύς*, 1461) to their men; they are both adulterous and destructive; in short,

they are shown as very much alike - the second meaning seems more applicable. The natures of the two sisters are not different. This daemon has now settled on Agamemnon's body (1472-1473), thus showing pleasure and part-responsibility for the death. This daemon, finally, fell first on the (Atreid) house, then on the women (Σύμασι καὶ ... τὰν τρεῖς δαίμονι , 1467-1468). Cassandra has already shown that the disasters of the house antedate Klytemnestra, which indicates that Klytemnestra's association with the house, with which she so strongly identifies herself, in fact came after the daemon settled in it. Klytemnestra's link with the house is then not as absolute as she has thought; the daemon infested it earlier and far from relinquishing control of it to her, has - in the chorus' eyes at least - fallen on her as well.

Klytemnestra has already admitted the authority of some supernatural powers. She is happy to accept the daemon, now (1475) as a force in the crime (it is preferable to implicating her sister, at least - 1475). They are right to speak of the thrice-gorged (τρεῖς ἰχθυόων , 1476) daemon, she says, for he nourishes (ἐν τοῦ ... τρέφεται , 1478-1479) the craving (ἔρως , 1478) for blood, new ichor (pus - ἰχὺρ , 1479) before the old has ceased (1479-1480). That is: one crime follows another before the wounds of the old one are forgotten; and while the action is still the responsibility of the doer, the desire to act is prompted by the daemon. Klytemnestra's description of him as "thrice-gorged" shows that she is now willing to accept the idea that her action was part of a series of actions, not necessarily beginning

with Iphigenia. The "three" the daemon has fed on could be Iphigenia, Agamemnon and Cassandra, but Cassandra wasn't really of the "race" (γένους, 1477); keeping to the family, thrice-gorged must imply Agamemnon, Iphigenia and Thyestes' children. Before, she has claimed that Agamemnon's death was a simply blow-for-blow payment for the death of her daughter, whose death had no history; she is now beginning to acknowledge that another context for her crime exists, one which did not concern her directly and which she did not control.

The chorus lament the "great and harmfully wrathful (βρῦ-  
μηνί, 1482) daemon" she praises and move unhappily (ὡς ἔχ', 1485) to considering Zeus "παντακτίου πανεργέτα" (1486) - "what is accomplished (or "ends" - τελεῖται ) for men without Zeus?" (1487). Even this crime - and even the daemon - must be god-ordained (θεοῦ παντός, 1488). They have come to this ultimate level of causation before, in the parodos, in a last-ditch attempt to understand why events fall out as they do; and so here.

The causes of Agamemnon's death have moved back from Clytemnestra, to Helen, to a daemon of the Tyndarids, to a daemon of the (Atreid) house, to Zeus. However, when they return (1489-1496) to lamenting their beloved king ("Oh king, how shall I weep for you? From a loving mind what shall I say?" (1489-1491) they return also to the present and to the direct cause of his impious death, the double-edged weapon wielded by a wife's hand (1495-1496).

Klytemnestra, however, has listened to and accepted the past history and supernatural causes she and the chorus have brought up between them. She answers them with an assertion as strong as that 100 lines ago, but apparently opposite in meaning:

You are sure the deed is mine and that ... I am Agamemnon's wife. But appearing in the likeness (*φάνταζόμενος* , 1500) of the wife of this corpse, the ancient bitter spirit (*αλγιστὴρ*) avenging Atreus the cruel feaster, having sacrificed this full-grown man, repaid him (as payment) for the young (i.e. Thyestes' children).

(1498-1504)

This is the ultimate expression of supernatural causes governing human actions; it comes at the end of a series of such expressions. It is surprising because it is in the first person and because it is said by Klytemnestra, who earlier claimed full personal responsibility. But within a theistic (or polytheistic) world-view, such as the one found in this play, over-determination of actions (that is, the coincidence of divine and human forces in the same action) is perfectly plausible. It is idle to ask whether either force by itself would have been sufficient to produce the action; as it happens, both forces were present. Klytemnestra expressed the human causation first, based on the sacrifice of her daughter, without any supernatural element. Taught by the chorus, to whom she is willing to listen after they first threaten her with repayment for her own crime - something her own code teaches her to fear - she realizes that there were other motives and forces contributing to the crime, which have acted through her. Her lines here express the strictly daemonic

causation, based on the Thyestean feast. In fact, both motives and forces exist now and did before; she expressed them separately because she did not originally acknowledge (or perhaps realize) the supernatural forces operating outside her control. Now she does acknowledge these forces.

She thus acknowledges and fully identifies herself and her actions with the *ἀλάετωρ* / *δαίμων* / *Ἐρίνυς* / *Μῆνις* / *Ἔρις* which has been connected with the house and the family since lines 154-155. This identification is the logical conclusion of the intermediate stage she passed through, in which she suggested that (while the action was still hers) the desire to commit the action came from daemonic powers.

The chorus object to this conclusion (1505-1512). Who could say she was entirely guiltless? An *ἀλάετωρ* might have been a *συλλήπτωρ*, a sharer in the crime; but she still has some responsibility. They return to the present and again lament their king (1513-1520). Klytemnestra, also attending to the present (as both sides do for the remainder of the *kommos*) defends herself once again by pointing out her immediate justification, that the king killed Iphigenia and has suffered worthily for what he did—  
 "Θαλάτῳ γείρας ἔπερ... ἔρξεν" (1529).

The chorus fear the destruction of the house by a "house-ruining bloody rain" (*ὄμβρου κτύπον δαμοσφαλῆ τὸν αἰματηρόν* , 1532-1533) crashing against it; the drizzle Klytemnestra spoke of (1390) is ceasing. Nature has not returned to normal, then, as

Klytemnestra hoped it would; her bloody dew may only be a prelude to a bloody storm. The chorus also fear that Justice - with whom Klytemnestra used to identify herself - is being "whetted on "other whetstones" by fate (*Μοῖρα*), for new harm (1535-1536). Justice and nature have both passed out of Klytemnestra's control. Perhaps they, like the daemon and perhaps Aegisthus, were the co-workers the chorus and Cassandra spoke of, and were never under her control at all, despite appearances.

They wonder next (1541-1550) who will bury the king and sing a dirge for him? It is Klytemnestra's duty, but how can she when she killed him? Even if she did bury him, how could she speak a eulogy and mourn at his graveside sincerely (*ἀληθείᾳ φρενῶν*), 1550)?

"That is no concern of yours" (*οὐ δὲ προσήκει τὸ μέλημα' ἀλέγειν ταῦτο*, 1551-1552), answers the Queen. She (or "they"-plural, 1552) killed him and will bury him (1552-1553); the household will not mourn (1554), but his murdered daughter will greet him "as is proper" (*ὡς ἤρῃ*, 1556) at the river of woe (the Styx), with a kiss. This passage makes it clear that Klytemnestra may acknowledge now that other forces and motives were operating, but in her eyes, they in no way diminish her own involvement; she accepts responsibility for her act and she has not lost her pride (or her vivid use of language).

The chorus cannot answer the argument of the death of Iphigenia. They admit that the case is hard to judge (1560).

They add that it is the will of Zeus that the doer shall suffer (παθεῖν τὸν ἔργαζοντα , 1564). They see (therefore) no end to the sufferings of the house - "κεκόλληται γένος πρὸς ἄρτα " (1566).

This pessimistic view of the house's condition and probable future accords with Klytemnestra's original eye-for-an-eye view of justice; she cannot disagree with it. Her new knowledge of the daemonic forces of the world prompt her to try to find another solution, one very close to a compromise. She answers the chorus "you enter into this oracle with truth" (1567) and says that she is willing to swear a compact (ὅρκους θεμεύω , 1570) with the daemon, whereby it ceases to torment the house of Pleisthenes and "wears out another family with kindred-murders" (1571-1573); in return, she will give up all but a small part of her possessions and be content, if only the mutual bloodshed is taken from the house (1574-1576).

This offer surprising from the woman who was earlier so extravagant with tapestries and other resources (the sea, the beacon-lights, etc.). The house "does not know how to be poor" (962), she said once, in obvious pride; but this scene with the chorus has had such an effect on her that she is willing to let the house learn poverty, in order to escape worse dangers which she did not before foresee. Klytemnestra's πεισώ has worked on the chorus in this scene: they no longer condemn her utterly to exile and their final word is that it is difficult to judge. However, they have had an effect on her as well: she now recognizes the forces which were beyond her control all the time and

which in fact assisted (and perhaps even influenced) her own actions, when she thought herself and the world entirely at only her command. Because of these forces, she also realizes, this may not be the end; she may be the victim of the daemon in her turn. She does not regret her crime, but understands its context and consequences better than she had before.

The opposition between male and female (and their uses of language), the link between the Tyndarids, the roles of the chthonic, daemonic and Olympian powers, and the sacrificial and natural imagery of the play all combine and culminate in this scene. A resolution of the various opposing elements appears to be close at hand; this *kommos* seems to be the end of the play. But there is one loose end, who suddenly enters at this juncture (1577) with a bodyguard.

Aegisthus' scene functions principally as a lead-in to the Choephoroe; without his entrance to destroy the *rapprochement* developing between Klytemnestra and the chorus, the rest of the trilogy would be unnecessary. His existence (and thus adulterous love as a motive for the death of Agamemnon), is very important in the Choephoroe, and it is principally for this reason that he is introduced here. He also makes visible something about Klytemnestra which has only been spoken of before: that she is an adulteress, that she does not live alone; that perhaps she did not act alone. The last of the other forces operating in the play is thus presented here.



Klytemnestra is nearly entirely silent in this scene. Aegisthus gives his version of the death of Agamemnon after his entrance. To him there was only one motive for it - the feast of Thyestes, which was the result of a dynastic struggle (1585). He does not mention the cause Cassandra does (1193 - Thyestes' adultery with his brother's wife), as it weakens his case. Aegisthus claims that after Justice led him home from exile, he devised the whole plan for the murder (1609) and thus killed Agamemnon, though he was absent at the time. Aegisthus, then, also sees himself as an agent of Dike and sees Klytemnestra as only a tool in his plot.

The chorus' hostility, subdued by Klytemnestra in the previous scene, is fully reawakened by Aegisthus' speech. They threaten him with stoning and curses (1616); Aegisthus responds with threats of prison and enforced hunger (1620-1621). The chorus call him "γῶκε" (1625), who stayed home from battle, defiling the bed of this man (ἐνδρῆς, 1626) while planning this fate for "a man, a general" (ἐνδρῆς, στρατηγῶν, 1627). They add that he didn't have the courage to kill Agamemnon himself (1635). Aegisthus, who shares the assumptions about women which the other males in the play have shown, explains that "τὸ δολῶμα" (1636) was clearly the woman's part; Agamemnon would have recognized his old enemy. Where Klytemnestra was willing to give away most of the wealth, Aegisthus now announces his intention of using Agamemnon's wealth to rule the people (1638-1640). The chorus' early fears of tyrannical intent on the part of the killers are

partly justified, it seems: Aegisthus has such ambitions, although Klytemnestra, who actually performed the murder, never mentions a desire to rule at any time.<sup>45</sup>

The chorus repeat their accusation of cowardice in allowing a woman to kill the king (1643-1646). They now pray for the return of Orestes (1646-1648).

Aegisthus responds to this threat by calling up his guards (1650); the chorus square off for a fight; and only now does Klytemnestra speak, to avert bloodshed. She asks the "dearest of men" (*ὦ φίλτατ' ἀνδρῶν* , 1654) that they work no further evils; already there are enough. She wishes to avoid bloodshed (1656). She advises the chorus to depart "before doing makes you suffer" (*πρὶν παθεῖν* ἔρξαντες , 1658); certainly she has taken that lesson to heart. She speaks of herself and Aegisthus - and the chorus also, perhaps - as "unfortunately struck by the daemon's hoof" (1660) and fears further sorrows. She ends her short speech "Thus you have the speech of a woman (*λόγος γυναικὸς* ), if any think it worth knowing" (1661).

The distaste for further bloodshed does not show a major change in character, as some (eg. Micheline, 1979: 156) have thought. It was only Agamemnon's blood she wanted and she thought the bloodshed would stop there. She would still prefer this to be so, but now that she understands the daemonic aspect of the world, she is afraid that it will not end here, afraid that her shedding of blood will lead to more - as, of course, it will.

She treats Aegisthus with respect and affection, as a wife would, and does not challenge his misconceptions about her as she did those of the chorus (for instance at 277, 348 or 1401). The combination of conventional wifeliness and fear of the daemon, both changes, both appearing in the same speech, might be significant, indicating that she wishes to appease the daemon by no longer being "unnatural" and beginning instead to lead an ordinary feminine life. Or, it may be that towards Aegisthus, with whom she lives as a wife, and against whom she has no grudge, she is prepared to behave in a "normal" wifely manner.

Her last line (1661), however, which certainly sounds submissive, is so reminiscent of line 348 ("τοιαῦτα τοι γυναικὸς εἰς ἐμοῦ κλύεις") - which was mock-humble and, in fact, an answer to the chorus' previous doubts about women - that we should pause here. In fact, Aegisthus does listen to the "λόγος γυναικός"; imminent bloodshed is averted by her intervention. Her powers of persuasion are still intact, whatever else may have changed. In fact, the audience would wonder if, even here, she has simply manipulated both sides to avert the threat of violence by acting fearful and feminine, as she manipulated Agamemnon into treading the tapestries; and here, as in the tapestry scene, succeeded in her intent. The exact proportions of truth and persuasion in this speech, as in her other speeches, cannot be precisely determined. Her fear of the future is probably real, as it was developed in the previous scene. However, her use of that fear here and her show of affection for Aegisthus, seem to me to be proof

only that her ability to say the right thing at the right time is undiminished.

Aegisthus grumbles and a few more insults are traded; but Klytemnestra persuades him, in the end, to pay no attention to the "vain yappings" (ὕλη γυμάρων, 1672) of the chorus. She speaks of the two of them as equal masters of the household (she does not, even now, speak of ruling the city) and ends the play hopefully, "Θήσομεν ... καλῶς" (1673). They then enter the house. The last line of the scene and of the play is hers, as the dominant character; and even in this last scene, after all that has happened, control of events has ultimately passed to Klytemnestra.

The central question Aeschylus asks in this play is "Why did Agamemnon die?" The answer is revealed to be complex, to the surprise of some of the characters and particularly to Klytemnestra, who thought she was the answer. But the play is not about her crime, but Agamemnon's death; she was the protagonist, not the purpose, of the drama.

She is by far the most vivid and interesting character in the play. This vividness is the result of several combined factors. In the action of the play, she is the major actor: she seems to herself and to the reader to control the entire world of the play until the end of the tapestry scene, and is throughout the play the major human (and only visible) force affecting the action. The issues raised in the play all involve her, as a

principal figure or major anomaly: in the opposition of male and female, she is more masculine - that is, intelligent (possessing *φρόνη*), decisive, aggressive and powerful - than any man she encounters; in the opposition of oikos and society, she represents the oikos even to the extent of killing the head of the society for undervaluing household bonds; in the opposition of truth and illusion, of visual and verbal meaning (verbal skills being appropriate to males), she has both the ability to manipulate visual symbols and the persuasion attendant on her formidable verbal skills - she is both more visually imaginative and more verbally eloquent than any other single character (except perhaps Cassandra, who lacks, however, the ability to convince); she identifies with Justice and in fact acts as an agent not only of Justice, but also of Erinyes and the daemon. The supernatural forces which unite to kill Agamemnon unite through her act.

The vivid imagery of the play likewise comes to center in her, or is used primarily by her from the beginning. She sees the world in terms of frustrated or negated fertility, as a frustrated mother herself; and negative fertility images, or negative natural images, pervade the play. She is the chief sacrificer in a play thick with sacrifices. She is the lion who turns into a priestess of *Ἄρη*, the net which Zeus threw over Troy and which she used to kill her husband. She arranged the beacons and the sacrificial fires, thus making even light the negative image it becomes in the play. She is closely linked to the other destructive force of the play, her sister Helen. Her unnatural male/

female character is the concrete, human manifestation of the unnatural world of the play. Every image and every theme in the play, in short, at one time or another is reflected in Klytemnestra or seems to be in her power. If the play were not as vivid, complex, and interesting as it is, neither would Klytemnestra be.

But this interpretation treats Klytemnestra only as a representative of "forces" and "images", a walking bundle of themes and motivations, symbolizing everything, nothing in herself. Klytemnestra's personality - her unique personal character - is more than the sum of all of the forces and images in the play. This personality is evident in all her speeches and is illuminated also by the reaction of the other characters to her.

In her own speeches she is shown as proud, confident, eloquent, persuasive, and gifted with a vivid imagination. She dominates every scene she is in except her contest with Cassandra (even Klytemnestra could not compete successfully with Apollo), but whenever she confronts simple human forces she triumphs. Even in the last scene of the play, in which she hardly speaks at all, she ultimately gets her own way. Whatever the chorus may say, her power does not come solely from her position as Queen; it springs from the ability to wield authority which is evident in everything she does. She shows at least one strong emotion, her hatred of her husband. She is also capable of anger and perhaps, in the end, fear.

The other characters have different reactions to her, depending on their positions and their knowledge; thus they show different facets of her person to us. The watchman is afraid of her and unhappy in her house. The chorus can be persuaded by her, but remember their fear and distrust of her whenever she is not on stage. Cassandra, whom Klytemnestra will kill, hates her, will not submit to her and sees her as a monster, a noxious freak of nature. Agamemnon treats her like a foolish woman, which error leads to his death. Aegisthus also underestimates her intelligence, but seems willing to accept her lead. And though the other characters are capable of displaying affection for each other (as the watchman and the chorus do for Agamemnon, the chorus does for Cassandra, Agamemnon for the chorus and Cassandra, and Klytemnestra for Aegisthus), no character, not even Aegisthus, shows the slightest sign of personal liking or loyalty for Klytemnestra.

Klytemnestra is the vehicle of Justice in this play and the expression of many other facets of the Agamemnon. Her function as a vehicle of the themes of the play is an intrinsic part of her role and, no reader can - or should - ignore it. But within that context, the Klytemnestra who enthralls the chorus with her descriptions of Troy, who is irritated when the chorus underestimate her and enraged when Cassandra ignores her, who kills her husband and rejoices outrageously in the deed - and only later begins to consider what the consequences might be-

leaves most strongly, at the end of the play, the impression of an intense and vivid personality.



### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>There has been so much argument over the presentation of character in Greek tragedy in recent years that I had better discuss it before I go farther. By "person" I do not of course mean "living, breathing human being who has an entire life, mere glimpses of which can be seen on stage and the rest of which may be reconstructed, or assumed to exist, exactly as the private lives of those humans we meet every day can be assumed or reconstructed." Leaving aside the point that, even with a human being, attempts to reconstruct the parts of a life which are unknown to us on the basis of those which are known are almost always futile, I agree that the text of Greek tragedy does not in fact suggest that the reader ever make such attempts. The reader is never led to believe, for instance, that Aeschylus wanted the audience to invent an errand to take Klytemnestra offstage every time she exits, unless an offstage activity is actually mentioned by someone on stage. As Gould (1978: 44) points out, when considering a dramatic character, what there is on stage is not merely all we can see; it is all there is. For that reason, the reader cannot invent what he has not been told; to do so is not to explain the story at hand, but to tell a different one. At the same time, an approach which interprets the lines attributed to Klytemnestra, or any other character, as only lines of poetry suitable to that scene in the play, delivered by one character rather than another according to principles of "dramatic effectiveness", convenience, and only the broadest criteria of suitability to the specific character (in whom one need see little or no consistency) misses a great deal of the obvious consistency and personality which characters in Aeschylus - particularly Klytemnestra - certainly do have. Perhaps it is wrong to try to deduce Klytemnestra's inner soul from the lines she speaks. However, it is certainly wrong to ignore the consistency in those lines and thus deny the personal character who speaks them. Dawe (1963: 21) was right to question the premise that characterization in Aeschylus is consistent, as had hitherto simply been assumed. However, his conclusion - that it is not consistent - is mistaken. Far more of Aeschylus can be explained without straining if one assumes consistency of character than if one ignores and explains away the consistency which actually exists, as Dawe was in places forced to do. In saying that Klytemnestra is a "person" I simply mean, first, that her characterization in the play is consistent, and second, that many of her lines just do not fit an interpretation of her character as nothing more than a vehicle for a theme, a "dramatic effect" an ideology or a supernatural force. The easiest way to explain these lines is to accept them as expressions of a personal character beyond those themes and conflicts which she certainly also represents.

<sup>2</sup>Translations are my own. The Greek text used, except where noted, is that of Denniston, Page (1957).

<sup>3</sup>See Appendix A.

<sup>4</sup>See Appendix B.

<sup>5</sup>Michellini (1974: 525 n.2) points out that the chorus' address - and Agamemnon's later "daughter of Leda" - should be taken as innocently said, for "with two such family histories, allusions to ancestry can hardly be without irony, to the audience at least". Thus, the chorus can be assumed to have intended no double meaning, but the audience can be expected to have understood one.

<sup>6</sup>It has been suggested by Denniston, Page (1957: n. ad loc.) and the scholiast on this line that by "sole-guarding bulwark" the chorus mean themselves, not Klytemnestra, on the grounds that they fear and mistrust Klytemnestra and would neither refer to her as a defence nor hope that all would happen as she desires. This is reasonable, except that it is a typical introductory comment on the entrance of a major character and that the fears and doubts of the chorus before this comment and after it are not nearly so specific as this: they do not refer directly to Klytemnestra as the danger they fear elsewhere in this passage and it would be odd if they did so here and then forgot it in favour of dismissing her as a fanciful, gullible woman later on (eg. 482ff.). I am inclined to think therefore that they speak, with formal respect, of Klytemnestra. Their immediate address to her, essentially as the sole keeper of the throne in the absence of its owner (who is the proper "bulwark of the land") would seem to confirm this reading.

<sup>7</sup>For a fascinating discussion of the chorus' search for truth throughout the Agamemnon see Goldhill (1984: ch. 1).

<sup>8</sup>In line 1669 the chorus, angry at Aegisthus, tell him to "fatten himself" (*παίσο*) on (presumably vain) hopes. If the implications of *παίσο* are the same in both lines, it must imply here that she has been convinced by evidence she should not have trusted. The choice of word may in addition be deliberately offensive.

<sup>9</sup>I would therefore like to add my voice to the chorus of disagreement at Dawe's comment (1963: 50) that Klytemnestra is in the beacon speech "little more than a mouthpiece for Aeschylean iambs", through which Aeschylus indulges his passion for geography. Were this so it would hardly fit the play and Klytemnestra, as well as it does. Perhaps, as he says, the lines do not fit a "wronged mother or a faithless wife"; but they suit a powerful Queen.

<sup>10</sup>"Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign ... Thus semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie." (Eco, 1979: 7.)

<sup>11</sup>This shows up especially in the image of "doubling the post of a double course" (κἀμψαὶ δ' αὖλ' οὐ , 344) on the homeward journey, or "may the capturers not in turn be captured!" Goldhill discusses this at greater length (1984: 42).

<sup>12</sup>She omits the mourning of parents for children, but that of children for parents (παῖδες γερόντων , 328) would perhaps suggest it. (See Gantz 1977: 31 n. 32.)

<sup>13</sup>Goldhill (1984: 44) thinks that only corrupt πειθῶ uses force - eg. Aegisthus and Paris. He also speaks of false πειθῶ, which Klytemnestra uses, to "falsify the relationship between speaker and listener"; and impotent πειθῶ, like Cassandra's. The chorus at this juncture, however, clearly think of all πειθῶ as forceful and born of evil.

<sup>14</sup>Jones (1962: 84) points this out and adds that the connection between the two brothers keeps the action to the one oikos Aeschylus is interested in. Certainly it simplifies the matter. He is correct in thinking that the household, not the polis, is the focus of attention in this play and that the characters are all shown in their relationship to the oikos and their effect on it. He is wrong, however, in thinking that the characters are only units of the oikos, with no concept of individual will or personal guilt (1962: 93-94). Were that so, the long and extensive discussions of possible motives for their actions would never arise. Goldhill (1984: 46) also goes a little too far in saying that the characters are not individuals, but parts of the oikos. If this were true we would be unable to understand them and be uninterested in them. Furthermore, if they had no wills of their own, surely they would act only in harmony with the good of the oikos. The bonds of the oikos are certainly stronger in this play than they are in most North American households now, but they are not the only factor which affects the action. It is the conflict between the individual wills of the characters and the good of the oikos which produces the action of this play. Without individual wills there would be no play. In this stasimon, however, it is true that the principal concern of the chorus is the oikos and that their interest in individuals is limited to their effect on the oikos.

<sup>15</sup>Goldhill (1984: 41) developed this interpretation. It's not entirely convincing, but has the merit of explaining a line which has been wholly inexplicable by anyone else.

<sup>16</sup>489-500 are certainly spoken by the chorus, despite the manuscript attribution of these lines to Klytemnestra. (See Appendix B, ).

<sup>17</sup>Peradotto (1964: passim). I am indebted to this article for nearly every comment I make on any nature imagery in the play.

<sup>18</sup>These lines appear to refer to the chorus' comments at 475 ff., but she could not have been on stage then (App. B, XXX XXX). One could explain her words as referring in fact to a combination of the chorus' questions at 268-280 and their disbelief at 317-319, plus their obvious misogyny, to which Klytemnestra has applied her talent for extrapolation. This is unsatisfactory, however; "how like a woman to be persuaded and rejoice at a beacon" is too close to the chorus' comments at 479-482 for her to be referring to anything else. To grant her seer's powers for such a trivial matter now, when we have denied them for her major speeches, is absurd. Perhaps extrapolation is the correct answer; or perhaps the rules about how much of the play occurring onstage an offstage character was allowed to "know" were looser for Aeschylus than Noel Coward (which strikes me as more likely). Perhaps she was just inside the door. I have not been able to think of a watertight explanation for this, but I think it is impossible, nevertheless, for her to have been onstage.

<sup>19</sup>It is not necessary to see "the language escaping even (Klytemnestra's) ... control" here, as Goldhill (1984: 56-57) does. Why should she be unconscious of, or not intend, the connotation that she is unfaithful? Given the course of the rest of the play, it seems more likely that, here as elsewhere, she fully intends any double meaning she utters and that it is her interlocutors who miss them.

<sup>20</sup>One should not choose one meaning of "βλάβη" over the other as the "correct" interpretation; if a word has two connotations (or more), each should be remembered. This is probably the moment to say that I agree wholeheartedly with Aya Betensky's approach to Klytemnestra's speeches. As Betensky (1978: 13) points out, it is not sensible to accept the multiple meanings, involving past, present and future, of the choral odes, as meaningful, only to dismiss Klytemnestra's equally multi-levelled speeches as merely "hypocritical" or "fulsome". Such descriptions tell us little about the speeches and prejudice one's reading of Klytemnestra's character.

<sup>21</sup>Goldhill (1984: 57) thinks the use of "εὐπειρή" (616) refers to the visual rather than verbal modes of proof and that the chorus use it to show that Klytemnestra's speech is misleading, as visual knowledge tends in their opinion to be. This is sensible enough, but the chorus do not attach so much importance to their statement as to allow us to make much of it ourselves. This is no more than a passing reference to their doubt of Klytemnestra.

<sup>22</sup>One cannot be certain that, as Goldhill (1984: 68) suggests, the audience would here remember Odysseus' reputation as a devious liar, or recall that it was Odysseus who suggested the ruse of a marriage to Achilles to draw Iphigenia to Aulis. If this aspect of Odysseus' reputation did come to mind, Goldhill believes that it would have the effect of casting doubt on Aga-

memnon's ability to judge character - the only man he considers a loyal friend is the most deceptive and treacherous of all the warriors at Troy. However, an audience which remembered its Homer would recall that Odysseus did indeed always act in Agamemnon's best interests at Troy, and in the end was the author of the ruse which won the war for him; so Agamemnon's judgement of his loyalty is not unreasonable. Moreover, while Odysseus' abilities at deception and story-telling were noted from earliest times, they were not generally condemned or thought dishonourable, in extant literature at least, until the Athenian orators of the later Peloponnesian war undertook to blacken his reputation, some thirty years after the Oresteia was produced. Pindar does condemn him in Nemean 7 and 8; but there is no evidence that this judgement of Odysseus as not only inventive, but treacherous as well, was an opinion generally held in 458. Sophocles portrays Odysseus sympathetically in the Ajax; it is not until the Philoctetes, produced much later, that Odysseus is shown as a callous and self-serving liar. The audience of 458 may then very well have agreed with Agamemnon's judgement of Odysseus' character; at least, we cannot say that they did not. (Interested readers should see Stanford 1963: 8-24 and 81-117, who treats this subject in greater detail.)

<sup>23</sup>I am greatly indebted to this article for much of my analysis of this scene.

<sup>24</sup>I am not absolutely sure what effect these lines would have on a first-time audience. To anyone who knows the story, of course they sound like wishes; but they may have sounded like perfectly ordinary wartime rumours to an audience accustomed to war.

<sup>25</sup>Goldhill (1984: 56) has some interesting comments on this point. He recognizes that it is usually Klytemnestra who makes this sort of statement and thinks it is because she, unlike the rest, does not assume that words must be true, because she is accustomed to arbitrary definitions of them. I think he may take this argument too far, but it is an interesting approach.

<sup>26</sup>Some critics (especially Betensky 1978: 16) have seen here an expression of frustrated maternity. The killing of her daughter has "dried up" the fertility of which this daughter was the only proof Klytemnestra accepted. (There are other children, but they don't seem to matter to Klytemnestra; Orestes is only spoken of to explain his absence and Electra is not even mentioned in this play.)

<sup>27</sup>I am indebted to Betensky (1978: 16-19) for her discussion of this passage, although I do not see all of the fertility imagery she does here.

<sup>28</sup>Whallon (1980: 66-72) has argued that the tapestries may not necessarily be blood coloured, or even reminiscent of blood. First, the decorations, whether woven or embroidered, would be either geometric or partly geometric in shape; in either case they would be too regular to call to mind the irregular shape of bloodstains. Second, the term "πορφύρεος" was used to describe a wide range of colours, from violet-black to vermillion; it need not refer to blood-colour. Third, "πορφύρεος" may have been used by Homer to mean not "purple", from the noun "πορφύρα" (shell-fish), but "throbbing", from the verb "πορφύρω" (to throb). Later authors, he suggests, used the adjective not because it described the colour of blood, which it did not, but because it was the word Homer used to describe blood, and had become the traditional epithet. However, the audience will not have been so close to the stage as to be able to distinguish perfectly between a regular and an irregular blotch of colour: nor should one assume that absolute naturalistic realism in such a matter would have been thought necessary by either the playwright or the audience. Perhaps a real bloodstain would be irregular in shape; a symbolic representation of one need not be. Any blood-coloured spot could call to mind a bloodstain. As for the colour, Goheen (1955: 115-117) has shown that while πορφύρεος referred to many different colours, the most highly-valued one seems to have been the colour of dried blood. Furthermore, following the recipe given for Tyrian purple (the most expensive dye) produced exactly that colour. πορφύρεος may have been the traditional Homeric description of blood, but seems thus to have been a fairly accurate description of its colour as well. The high economic value of these tapestries is emphasized by both Klytemnestra and Agamemnon, and it makes sense to think that their (also emphasized) colour is an aspect of that economic value - that the dye used was the most expensive one available, that is, the colour of dried blood. I believe, therefore, that the decoration an colour of the tapestries can be assumed to have reminded the audience very strongly of bloodstains.

<sup>29</sup>What exactly were these "πετάσματα" (909)? They were probably garments of some sort (εἴμασι, 921), and bore either embroidered or woven decorations (ποικίλῳ, 926). Whallon (1980: 64-66) argues persuasively that they were probably either πέπλοι or φάρει, both of which were blanket-shaped and could be spread out, were often described as embroidered, and (particularly φάρει) were appropriate attire for high-ranking nobles. I am less convinced by his argument that Klytemnestra's use of the plural to describe them (eg. εἴμασι, 960) is an exaggeration, and only one πέπλος or φάρος is in fact spread out. The text itself does not make clear what the spread-out cloths were: they are described variously as coverlets (909), garments (921), and footwipes (926). I think Whallon is right in describing them as garments, which the audience will remember when the murder-robe is described by Klytemnestra (1382-83) or displayed by Orestes in the next play. However, to preserve the ambiguity of the original text, and because no one word in English conveys all of these

meanings, I shall refer to them as "tapestries". This word at least has the necessary connotations of decoration and great expense.

<sup>30</sup>I am not certain that this was the Greek view of the event. The idea that the king must physically set foot on the ground to claim it sounds more medieval to me; furthermore, I see no hint of it in the text here. However, it's an interesting thought.

<sup>31</sup>She is right also in pointing out that saying "your speech was long" was not necessarily the insult to an ancient Greek that it would be to us now. We think of a long speech as a dull one; there is no reason to believe that the Greeks did the same. (Considering their admiration for oratory, in fact, there is every reason to believe they did not.)

<sup>32</sup>This position is found elsewhere in Aeschylus and is always shown as appropriate for women and barbarians, usually in the worship of gods. (Couch, 1930: 316-318).

<sup>33</sup>"Not thinking evilly is the greatest gift of the gods", from a man whose mind was seized by reckless daring and impiety at Aulis; "only call blessed those who end their lives in prosperity", from a man in his position; and finally, "if I should act (or "should have acted") this way in all things, I would be full of confidence", from a man who has not acted thus in the past and who is about to make the same mistake again.

<sup>34</sup>These lines are an excellent example of the use of stichomythia to further the action. Throughout, Agamemnon is consistently cut off before he can muster a strong argument against Klytemnestra's position. (See Gould, 1978: 55).

<sup>35</sup>I have here accepted the emendations of this line suggested by Weill (*κράεις*), Bothe (*κράεις*) and Wecklein (*del. γ'*) rather than the difficult manuscript reading ("*πῶς : κράτος μέντοι πάρεσ γ' ἐκὼν ἐμοί*"). Fraenkel (1950: n. ad loc.) accepts these emendations in his text, and Denniston, Page (1957: n. ad loc.) speak favourably of them, but retain the manuscript text and obelize "*κράτος ... γ'*". Even omitting the portion obelized by Denniston, Page, the general sense "be persuaded ... willingly by me" remains, and the presence of some form of the word "

" at least indicates that power, or the loss of it, is at issue. Presumably, Klytemnestra would wish to reassure Agamemnon at this point that there was no loss of power (or face) involved in giving in to her willingly; it is difficult to think of another reason for her to mention *κράτος*. The suggested emendations do produce such a reassurance. However, even without the emendations, the sense of a request for willing obedience in response to Agamemnon's last question ("does it really mean so much to you?", 942) is preserved. This request is itself sufficient to

support the interpretation of the scene which I have presented here.

<sup>36</sup>I think that Betensky (1978: 15) overemphasizes these lines when she says that Klytemnestra eagerly desired her husband to come home safely so that she could kill him herself. Perhaps some of the eagerness she shows is sincere and exists for the reason Betensky suggests; perhaps it is wholly simulated; there is no way of knowing. It is my feeling that Klytemnestra would not have lifted a finger to save her husband's life and than any pleasure she expresses in his safe arrival is wholly hypocritical; but that is perhaps going too far in the opposite direction. This is not one of the questions to which Aeschylus supplied an answer.

<sup>37</sup>I am indebted to Betensky (1978: 19) for her analysis of negative fertility imagery in this passage.

<sup>38</sup>Winnington-Ingram's explanation - that the daughter of Priam does not feel she need give way to the wife of a half-civilized Greek prince (1948: 134) - is an interesting explanation. He over-emphasizes it, but some shade of this interpretation is true: Cassandra has a great deal of pride, as Klytemnestra recognizes and - whether because of her ancestry, or for some other reason - she does not tolerate being treated as a slave, except by Apollo.

<sup>39</sup>Goldhill's discussion of this scene (1984: 81-88) deals with the exchange of language throughout very thoroughly.

<sup>40</sup>I asked a friend who grew up on a beef farm about this (by way of verification) and it was the first interpretation he thought of when the line was quoted to him.

<sup>41</sup>As cited in Anderson (1929: 136-138).

<sup>42</sup>See Dodds (1960: 30) for a much more detailed analysis of the learning Klytemnestra does, here and later, about the true nature of the world she inhabits.

<sup>43</sup>Interested readers should see Conacher (1974: 324-329) and Dodds (1960: 29-31) for useful analyses of this scene. I am indebted also to Goldhill (1984: 89-98) in my discussion of the *kommos*, though more for the method of attack than the conclusions reached.

<sup>44</sup>I do not agree with Winnington-Ingram (1948: 135) that Klytemnestra is jealous not of the other women's sexual relationship with Agamemnon, but rather of their sharing his military life - Chryseis at Troy, Cassandra on the ship - while she, with a temperament more active and military even than Agamemnon's, was forgotten at home. Klytemnestra's aggressive nature makes this



an attractive hypothesis, but I see no sign of this reason for jealousy in the text.

<sup>45</sup>I think this must stand as an answer to Winnington-Ingram's thesis (1948: passim), at least as far as the Agamemnon is concerned. Like Zeitlin's article, Winnington-Ingram's explains some elements of the Eumenides well; but they are both wrong in reading into this play (or the next) any political ambition in Klytemnestra - at least, I can find none.

APPENDIX ATHE ORESTEIA TRADITION AND AESCHYLUS' INNOVATIONS

Aeschylus' version of the death of Agamemnon, in manner and motive, was strikingly different from the version of the myth which prevailed in his era or in the preceding tradition. When a playwright goes against his audience's expectations of a story in such important ways, one can assume that it was intended to be noticed and that the changes are important to the interpretation of the play.

This Appendix will show that Aeschylus did make important changes in his version of the myth, by discussing what evidence exists for other versions. This argument cannot be conclusive, as a great deal of information has been lost and much of the argument is consequently from silence. However, assumptions have been made about precursors to the Oresteia which are not justified by the available evidence and which either invent unverifiable theories or ignore some of the little that is known. I will try to avoid both of these errors.

The story of the fatal homecoming of the conqueror of Troy had existed at least since the time of Homer and in the minor details there were many variations. The place varied from one author to the next - Homer put it in Aegisthus' house outside Mycenae (Od. 3.304, 4.517-518), Stesichorus and Simonides in Sparta<sup>1</sup>, Pindar at Amyclae (Pyth. XI.32) and Aeschylus at Argos. Some of these changes of city were undoubtedly made by the poet

for political reasons (see Costa, 1962; 23-28), but they did not otherwise affect the story. The avenging son, who had a memorable role, is Orestes in all sources, but the names of the daughters varied. In Homer, there are three daughters, Iphianassa, Laodike and Chrysothemis (Il. 9.145)<sup>2</sup>. In a recently published Hesiodic fragment<sup>3</sup> there are two daughters, Electra and Iphimede (5a, 1.4-5). Iphimede can be identified with Iphigenia, because in the fragment Iphimede is sacrificed to Artemis, as Iphigenia is in the play; Laodike and Electra are equated by a seventh-century western poet, Xanthos, who explains that this daughter was named Laodike, but acquired the nickname Electra ("Unchosen") because she could not marry.<sup>4</sup> In Aeschylus the children are Iphigenia, Electra and Orestes; Chrysothemis reappears in Sophocles. These changes are for the most part unimportant<sup>5</sup>; but even the motive and identity of the murderer varied in different versions and were greatly altered in Aeschylus' hands.

From the earliest times the record of art shows evidence of two different versions of the story. In the earliest surviving depiction of the death of Agamemnon, a terracotta pinax found at Gortyn, Crete, Klytemnestra is the killer. (Davies, 1969: 229-230.) In this relief, dated to the second quarter of the seventh century, Agamemnon is shown enthroned and holding his spear diagonally before him, in the style of a warrior-king. Klytemnestra, on the right, wearing a long Cretan gown, is about to stab him with a dagger she holds in her right hand. Aegisthus approaches from behind Agamemnon and has grasped Agamemnon's spear

tip with his left hand over Agamemnon's shoulder, while with his right he holds, or drops, some sort of fabric (a net?) over Agamemnon's head. On a steatite disk seal from central Crete, dated to the same period or a little earlier, Klytemnestra is again shown stabbing a seated Agamemnon; Aegisthus does not appear at all. (Davies 1969: 224-228). Finally, on two early sixth century bronze reliefs from shield straps, one found at Olympia and one at Aigina, Aegisthus is shown pinning Agamemnon while Klytemnestra stabs him in the back. (Vermeule 1966: 13). The fact that the earliest representations are Cretan in origin and style might lead one to suspect that there existed an early Cretan version of the myth in which the Queen was the protagonist<sup>6</sup>.

In the other tradition, seen more in Attic vase-painting, Aegisthus is the killer. In fact there is only one surviving painting of the death of Agamemnon before the fifth century, the proto-Attic vase of the Ram Jug Painter, dated to the second quarter of the seventh century. (Davies 1969: 252-256).<sup>7</sup> In this painting one man, sword in hand, stands behind another man and with his free hand pulls a net over the head of the man before him. A woman stands in front of the pair, facing away from them and tearing her cheeks in despair. The armed man is commonly identified as Aegisthus and his victim as Agamemnon.

Aside from this painting, no other depictions of the death of Agamemnon are found until the fifth century; the scene from the Oresteia most often painted was the death of Aegisthus. This scene suddenly became very popular after 500 B.C. (Vermeule 1966:

14). This would indicate that Aegisthus was seen as a prime agent of Agamemnon's death and thus the principal object of Orestes' revenge.<sup>8</sup>

The earliest surviving painting of the death of Agamemnon in Attic art is the Boston Krater by the Dokimasia painter, which was painted very close to the time of Aeschylus' play.<sup>9</sup> Agamemnon is shown draped in a gauzy material (a net?) and otherwise naked; Aegisthus has just stabbed him with a sword. The net and Agamemnon's nakedness (as if he had just stepped from the bath) might have been influenced by Aeschylus' play, if it was painted after the production; but whenever the vase was painted, the tradition that Aegisthus was the murderer must have been too prevalent for the painter to ignore.

In fact, even after Aeschylus, the murderer of Agamemnon is shown as Aegisthus in Attic vase-painting until the end of the fifth century. (Vermeule, 1966: 14). So while two versions of the story were available for Aeschylus to draw upon, the version most common in his own time - if the surviving art is anything to judge by - made Aegisthus the killer and thus the primary victim of Orestes' revenge.

The literary tradition varies as well. The longest surviving account of the Oresteia before Aeschylus is found in Homer. Homer seems to have known two versions of the myth and used each one according to the needs of his own story. The first four books of the *Odyssey* are concerned with Telemachus' growth

to manhood and acceptance of his adult responsibilities, i.e. the defence of his household. Most of the references to the Oresteia myth in these four books are intended (sometimes explicitly) to spur him towards that end<sup>11</sup>; all but one are said directly to Telemachus<sup>12</sup>; and all, without exception, name Aegisthus as the plotter and killer<sup>13</sup>, with Klytemnestra, if she is mentioned at all, playing a clearly secondary role.<sup>14</sup>

Agamemnon, who speaks of his death every time we meet him, tells another version of the story. When explaining his presence in the Underworld to Odysseus (Od. 11.409-453), he at first agrees substantially with the Old Man of the Sea's account of his death, adding only his baneful wife's assistance (11.409-410) to Aegisthus' plotting and executing of the deed. Twelve lines later he says that Klytemnestra killed Kassandra "over me" (11.422-423), which gives Klytemnestra a more active and violent role in proceedings than we had heard of before, and adds that she abandoned him as he lay dying, without even closing his mouth and eyes (11.425-426), which places Klytemnestra in the immediate vicinity right after Agamemnon was stabbed - again new information. A little later, he says that it is Klytemnestra who plotted the deed and devised her husband's death (11.429-430); it is her "ruinous thoughts" which shame all women; and by the end of his account (11.452-453), Aegisthus has been forgotten and Agamemnon says that his wife killed him. Klytemnestra's role thus moves in the space of 43 lines from passive accomplice, through active plotter, to actual murderer. In book 24 Agamemnon again refers

to his death, first as at the hands of Aegisthus and his wife (24.97) and later as being plotted and executed by his wife alone (24.199-200).

The discrepancy between the accounts of Agamemnon's death given in various places in the Odyssey can easily be explained in several ways.<sup>15</sup> But whatever explanation one accepts, it is clear that Homer had two stories in mind, both of which he felt free to use at need.

Klytemnestra's motive for betraying her husband, insofar as Homer gives her one at all, is Aegisthus' seduction of her (Od. 3.262-264); the sacrifice of Iphigenia is not mentioned.

Between Homer and Aeschylus only fragmentary references to the myth of the Oresteia survive. There are three Hesiodic references. Pausanias tells us that according to Hesiod's Catalogue of Women, Iphigenia was not killed, but became Hecate "by the will of Artemis"<sup>16</sup>. According to a scholiast, Hesiod said that Aphrodite was jealous of the daughters of Tyndareus and so caused them all to be unfaithful to their husbands.<sup>17</sup> Finally, in a recently published Hesiodic fragment concerning the daughters of Leda, we are told that the Greeks sacrificed "Iphimede", the daughter of Klytemnestra and Agamemnon, to Artemis, but that Artemis saved (or healed) her and made her immortal; and that she is now called "wayside Artemis"<sup>18</sup>. In this fragment Orestes grew up and "repaid his (male) father killer and killed his mother"<sup>19</sup>.

To this poet, then, Aegisthus was the murderer, but Klytemnestra was not innocent.

The seventh-century author of the Cypria tells the story of the attempted sacrifice of Iphigenia, saying that Artemis rescued her, replacing her with a stag, transported her to Tauris and made her immortal.<sup>20</sup> Agias of Troezen says that Agamemnon was killed by Aegisthus and Klytemnestra.<sup>21</sup> Xanthos, a seventh-century western poet, is reputed to have influenced Stesichorus' work with his treatment of the Oresteia myth, but nothing of his work survives. (Vermeule 1966: 11).

Stesichorus, in the sixth century, wrote an Oresteia which is nearly entirely lost. The absence of most of his work has inspired various critics to attribute to it themes and actions seen elsewhere, for which they would like to find a source. Wilamowitz, for example, thought that Stesichorus introduced the death of Iphigenia as a motive for Klytemnestra.<sup>22</sup> While we are told that Stesichorus closely followed Hesiod in saying that Iphigenia became Hecate<sup>23</sup>, as Düring (1943: 107) points out, there is no mention of sacrifice, or of a reaction by Klytemnestra, in this fragment. In fact, in another of the few surviving fragments of Stesichorus' work, Stesichorus is reported to have said that Aphrodite, angry that Tyndareus forgot her at a sacrifice to all the gods, made all of his daughters faithless ("twice-wed and thrice-wed and husband-leaving").<sup>24</sup> This would indicate that Stesichorus gave Klytemnestra's motive as love for Aegisthus, if he considered her motive at all.



Several scholars (Düring 1943: 106, Vermeule 1966: 12, Davies 1969: 249) agree that Stesichorus' poem probably stimulated production of the death-of-Aegisthus vase paintings, like the Boston Krater, which suddenly became popular around 500 B.C.; but the conclusions they base on this differ greatly. Düring believes that Stesichorus probably made Klytemnestra the murderer, using an axe; Davies thinks that Stesichorus had Aegisthus stab Agamemnon with a sword and Klytemnestra finish him off with the axe; and Vermeule, the most moderate, says only that Stesichorus probably introduced the axe and Klytemnestra's skill with it.<sup>25</sup> All three agree that Stesichorus' Oresteia probably emphasized the death of Aegisthus rather than Agamemnon (the title alone strongly implies this) and that Stesichorus is unlikely to have dwelt on the original murder. I think this last, and perhaps Klytemnestra's motivation by Aphrodite rather than Iphigenia, are really the only conclusions that can safely be drawn from what few fragments of Stesichorus survive.

The last poet certain to have treated any part of the myth before Aeschylus is Simonides. A fragment of a commentary on his poem (or part of it) has recently been published.<sup>26</sup> The poem under discussion in this papyrus is probably by Simonides<sup>27</sup> and speaks of the mourning at Mycenae over the sacrifice of a human female (unnamed). The grief of the mother cannot be overcome and the killing is in honour of a god. The only known myth consistent with these details is that of the sacrifice of Iphigenia. If that is the subject of the poem, it contains the first surviv-

ing reference to Klytemnestra's grief at her daughter's death. However, there is no indication that Klytemnestra takes the step from grief to vengeance in this poem.

Pindar's eleventh Pythian ode was written to commemorate the victory at Delphi of a Theban runner, Thrasydaios. (Herington, 1984: 143). In it, Pindar refers to Klytemnestra as the sole murderer of Agamemnon and speculates on her motive - was it the killing of Iphigenia, or habitual infidelity with Aegisthus, which prompted her act? (Pyth. XI, 23-28). There were two Pythian victories by so-named Theban runners, in 474 and 454. It has generally been assumed that Pythian XI was written to commemorate the Thrasydaios of 474, and that Pindar's magnification of Klytemnestra's role and his speculation on her motives influenced Aeschylus. However, as Farnell<sup>28</sup>, Düring (1943: 108-114) and Herington (1984: 140-146) argue, from different angles<sup>29</sup>, it is far more likely that Pindar's ode was written to commemorate the second Thrasydaios and was inspired by Aeschylus' play.

It would of course be unwise to state categorically that a poet "must have been" inspired by one thing, or "cannot have been" inspired by another. But Pindar in Pythian XI does give the impression that he is referring briefly to a myth which was already fully developed elsewhere, in the form in which he presents it. He can assume that his audience thought of Klytemnestra as the murderer and of the sacrifice of Iphigenia as a possible motive; he did not need to explain or elaborate on these points himself. There is only one author who is certainly known

to have presented the myth in precisely the form in which Pindar uses it, and that is Aeschylus. Aeschylus alone of the ancient authors presents Klytemnestra as the sole killer; the death of Iphigenia is the principal motive for her crime in the first play and love for Aegisthus is given as her motive in the second.<sup>30</sup> If we need assume a definite inspiration for Pindar's question in Pythian XI, Aeschylus' trilogy obviously supplies one and nothing else surviving does. Thus I am inclined to agree with Düring and Herington that Pythian XI should be dated to 454 rather than 474.

In the record of art there are two traditions before Aeschylus' time and he seems, on the evidence available, to have defied the one prevailing in his own era and region in making Klytemnestra the murderer. In the literary tradition there again seem to have been two traditions, but after Homer the one giving Klytemnestra the role of sole killer seems to have fallen entirely out of fashion - even in Homer she is rarely, and never unquestionably, given that role - and she is regarded as, at most, a co-conspirator in Aegisthus' crime. There are references to the sacrifice of Iphigenia before Aeschylus, but before Simonides they seem to have dwelt chiefly (or entirely) on her transfiguration to the immortal Hecate; and nowhere, including Simonides, is there any evidence that the sacrifice of Iphigenia was considered a motive for Klytemnestra's part (however small) in the murder. On the contrary, Homer, the Hesiodic poet and Stesichorus all explain Klytemnestra's disloyalty to her husband as

due to love: Hesiod and Stesichorus ascribe it to Aphrodite and Homer to the persuasion of Aegisthus.

Aeschylus thus seems to have altered the story his audience expected in two major ways, first in making Klytemnestra the only murderer and second in making the death of Iphigenia her primary motivation in the first play of the trilogy. Both of these changes have the effect of almost completely suppressing the role of Aegisthus; and the story is entirely changed in emphasis from the love-triangle murder (or political assassination) found in Homer. These changes form the basis for the Agamemnon and for the portrayal of Klytemnestra in that play. The audience cannot help but wonder if Klytemnestra was justified in her actions; her guilt was never in question, before Aeschylus. This violent and perhaps righteous Klytemnestra thus poses her audience difficult questions of guilt, innocence, and the workings of justice, which are the theme of the whole trilogy and which are not resolved until the last play. The changes introduced into Klytemnestra's role thus draw the audience's attention to the central theme to be worked out in the trilogy.

NOTES TO APPENDIX A

<sup>1</sup>D.L. Page, Poetae Melici Graeci (Oxford: 1962); p. 287, fr. 44.

<sup>2</sup>Iphianassa is usually identified with Aeschylus' Iphigenia. If this is correct, Homer must not have known the story of her sacrifice, or have ignored it at this point in the poem; for Agamemnon at Troy speaks of her as alive.

<sup>3</sup>Oxyrhynchus Papyri 28 (1962), ed. E. Lobel; 2481, fr. 5a, col. 1 (pages 8-11).

<sup>4</sup>Cited in Vermeule (1966: 12).

<sup>5</sup>However, the change of venue of the murder itself, from Aegisthus' house to Agamemnon's own, is not insignificant. This move considerably increases the element of domestic treachery, while decreasing the importance of the political or dynastic motives involved. Aeschylus' treatment, which concentrates almost exclusively on the domestic aspect of the crime, demonstrates this.

<sup>6</sup>Davies (1969: 236-238) discusses this more fully.

<sup>7</sup>Vermeule (1966: 13) believes that this is a death of Aegisthus and that the weeping woman standing in front of the two males is Klytemnestra. But that does not explain the net which the murderer is clearly pulling over the victim's head and which elsewhere is associated exclusively with the death of Agamemnon. The weeping woman, whose expression and pose are certainly too striking to be likely to denote a simple serving-woman, could surely be Cassandra.

<sup>8</sup>There is a bronze Cretan mitra of the 7th cent. which shows Orestes killing an enthroned Klytemnestra (Davies 1969: 237). In the Cretan version of the myth, Klytemnestra seems to have been seen as the killer and Orestes' vengeance is accordingly directed towards her.

<sup>9</sup>Vermeule (1966: 19) argues that it was painted after 458 and inspired by the play itself; Davies (1969: 258) sets it in the 470's, where stylistically it belongs.

<sup>10</sup>Vermeule argues that the painter used a male rather than a female murderer because he was borrowing from the iconography of the death of Aegisthus, as the death of Agamemnon had no traditional iconography of its own. I find this unconvincing. Even assuming - as Vermeule has convinced me one should - that the positioning of the figures in the death of Agamemnon was borrowed from the traditional poses of the death of Aegisthus, a painter

who could change the traditional victim from a seated, clothed lyre-player to a standing, naked man in a net could surely also alter the killer from a male to a female.

<sup>11</sup>For instance, Athena (Od. 1.298-300) mentions the renown Orestes won in killing Aegisthus, his father's murderer; and Nestor (Od. 3.199-200) advises Telemachus to be brave as Orestes was, who took vengeance on his father's killer.

<sup>12</sup>The exception is the gods on Olympus (Od. 1.29-43). One might expect the gods to know "what really happened" and therefore think that Aegisthus was "really", in Homer's eyes, solely responsible for Agamemnon's death. But the gods in Homer are part of the story, like everything else, and tend to say what suits the needs of the story at that point. There is no reason to expect them to reflect the opinion of the poet.

<sup>13</sup>The gods say so (Od. 1.36); Athena says this (1.299-300 and 3.235); Nestor does (3.194 and 3.255-310, especially at 3.305); Menelaus says this (4.91-92); and the Old Man of the Sea, as Menelaus quotes him (4.514-537, especially at 4.537).

<sup>14</sup>Athena (Od. 3.235) says that Agamemnon was killed by the deceit of Aegisthus and his wife; Nestor (3.255-310) says that Klytemnestra, being formerly "*φρεσὶ* ... *ἀγροῆς*" (either "with honest heart" or simply "intelligent" (3.266), was seduced by Aegisthus; Menelaus (4.91-92) says that "another" (male - *ἄλλος*) killed Agamemnon "by surprise unlooked-for and by his baneful wife's treachery". In none of these is Klytemnestra more than an accessory to Aegisthus' plot.

<sup>15</sup>For instance, a psychological explanation could say that while the version given in the Telemachy, with Aegisthus as killer and Klytemnestra as passive accomplice, is "correct", and Agamemnon knows this, he is so shocked at the fact that his wife had any hand in it at all that he cannot help dwelling on her role and consequently eventually exaggerating it in his own mind. The more common literary explanation (found, for instance, in D'Armes 1946: 211-212) points out that Klytemnestra's role is emphasized whenever a contrast to Penelope's conduct is desired and tells us more about Penelope than about Klytemnestra - just as Aegisthus' role is emphasized whenever it is needed as a spur to Telemachus.

<sup>16</sup>Pausanias i.43.1, i.116 Sp. (quoted in Page, Poetae Melici Graeci p. 115, n.1).

<sup>17</sup>schol. on Eur. Orestes 249.

<sup>18</sup>p. Oxy. 28 (1962), 2481 fr. 5a col. 1, ed. E. Lobel, 1.8-11 and 15-18. It may be this passage to which Pausanias referred.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 21-25.

<sup>20</sup>Stasinus (?), Cypria, in Hesiod, Homeric Hymns and Homerica (Heinemann, London), 292-294.

<sup>21</sup>Nostoi, as summarized by Proclus, Chrestomathy.

<sup>22</sup>As cited by Düring (1943: 107).

<sup>23</sup>Philodem., de piet., p. 24 Gomperz (quoted in Page, op. cit., p. 115, fr. 215).

<sup>24</sup>Schol. on Eur. Orestes 249.

<sup>25</sup> All agree that Stesichorus must have introduced the axe which Klytemnestra holds in most paintings, as they can find no other source for it. I would like to speculate that the axe - a labris, found frequently in Cretan art - was associated with the apparently Cretan source of the female-protagonist version of the myth and thus account for its appearance in the paintings, but I have not as yet found supporting evidence for this notion. One should add that Vermeule (1966: 6) states that Ag. 1127 and 1262 refer to an axe, but I don't think that this is justified by the text.

<sup>26</sup>P. Oxy. 25 (1959) 2434 Fr. 1a (5).

<sup>27</sup>As Lobel reconstructs line 2.

<sup>28</sup>L. R. Farnell, The Works of Pindar (London: 1932), 223-224.

<sup>29</sup>Farnell believes that Pindar must have composed under the strong impression left on him by Aeschylus' Agamemnon. Düring's argument is principally based on parallels in words used to describe the act and its motives and in the general line of thought. The strongest part of Herington's argument is that Pythian XI 22-25, the alternative questions as to the motive of the act, are unique in Pindar and in fact in all of non-dramatic Greek poetry - especially in that they are left unanswered. He suggests that the Agamemnon, which offers both motives in the order found in Pindar's poem and does not decide between them, would inspire precisely that unanswered question in Pindar's mind.

<sup>30</sup>In Herington's opinion (1948: 142), both motives are given, in that order, in the Agamemnon itself; the death of Iphigenia is stressed until Cassandra's vision and love for Aegisthus thereafter.

APPENDIX BKLYTEMNESTRA'S ENTRANCES AND EXITS

In analysing a character's role in a play it is useful to know when he was on the stage, and what lines he spoke. In the last fifty years, however, there has been some controversy in both areas, concerning Klytemnestra.

Klytemnestra's entrances and exits are not clearly signalled in this play. Taplin (1972: 89)<sup>1</sup> thinks that the central skene door had been invented only a few years prior to the production of the Oresteia, and that Aeschylus did not feel it as necessary to announce entrances and exits through the new central door as he did movement from the wings. In fact, the abruptness of a sudden, untelegraphed entrance through the central door and directly into (or out of) the action could be used to good effect by an innovative playwright; and was so used in the portrayal of Klytemnestra. The lack of indication of her appearances or exits has led, however, to a good deal of confusion and disagreement among later critics. At the farthest extreme are Denniston, Page (1957: 76) who say that it is "possible, and perhaps preferable" to believe that Klytemnestra enters at line 40 (or at latest 83) and does not exit again until 1068, after her scene with Kassandra.<sup>2</sup> They add that "the tension and power of the scenes, 503-37 and 615-80, are greatly enhanced by her presence, and particularly by her silence, throughout."



I cannot agree with this view. First, in all of the time she is assumed to be speechlessly on stage, the chorus and other actors do not notice her or interact with her in any way (except at 83-103, of which more shortly). As Taplin (1972: 58ff.) points out, if a character's silent presence is intended to be noticed, the chorus and actors will refer to him, wonder why he has not spoken, and otherwise draw attention to his existence. If his presence is not significant (as, for instance, Danaus' is not during the first choral song of the Suppliants), the other characters will ignore it. By this standard, if Klytemnestra is to be assumed to be on stage for most of the play, her presence cannot be thought significant. It seems to have no dramatic function; it is unnoticed, it has no effect on any other character's actions or speeches, and it does not even appear to affect Klytemnestra's. Denniston, Page's sinister figure lurking in the background adding an aura of impending doom to proceedings (Denniston, Page 1957: 76) does not exist; even if Klytemnestra were on stage, there is no reason to believe that she would be perceived as sinister by an audience whose attention is never drawn to her. As Taplin (1972: 90, 97) says, a figure can be mutely significant in the foreground, like Niobe, or mutely insignificant in the background, like Danaus; but "what is meant to be significant is there is the words in the foreground".

But if her presence is not significant, why is she on stage at all? Electra in the Choephoroe, or Danaus in the Suppliants, must enter with the chorus, and have thus a good tech-

nical reason to be on stage, in the background, when they are not part of the action; but Klytemnestra has not even technical reasons to be present. Finally, there are speeches (for instance, the Herald's at 503-537 or again at 551-582, or Agamemnon's, in particular, at 810-854) in which it is hard to understand why she is not addressed, if she is present; and others (for example the Chorus' song at 975-1033) in which her presence might be expected to suppress the expression of the sentiments found there. Altogether, it is far easier to assume that a character who has no reason to be on stage, and whose presence there would frequently be inconvenient, is not on stage except when her presence is obviously actively required (as, for instance, when she is speaking). It seems best at this point to go through the play and discuss Klytemnestra's entrances and exits each in turn. (These are the movements assumed in the paper.)

Klytemnestra first enters at line 258. There is no reason for her to enter with the chorus at line 40, or to be present throughout the parodos; and she is not.

Debate has been hot on this point, centering around Klytemnestra's presence (or absence) during lines 83-103, which the chorus address directly to her, asking for information about the sacrifices they have seen being performed around the city.

Those who believe that she is on stage at 83-103 fall into two groups. First, there are those, like Denniston, Page (1957: 76) and Gilbert Murray (1920: xii-xiii), who believe that she

enters with the chorus at line 40, or, at least, some time between 40 and 83, in time to be addressed; and that she then remains silently on stage until 258, when the chorus greet her and repeat their questions, which, this time, she answers. The second group, including Hermann<sup>3</sup>, Rose (1958: 11-12) and more recently Pool (1983: 71-116) and Goldhill (1984: 17-18 and n.20), seeing no reason to keep her on stage throughout the choral song, believe she enters sometime before 83 and exits at 103 or 104 without having spoken, to re-enter at 258.

Taplin (1977: 282-284) argues convincingly that Klytemnestra's silent and ignored presence during the choral song (104-258) is indefensible for several reasons: it has no purpose, it would distract attention from the chorus' important lyrics, it is common procedure in tragedy to clear the actors offstage (if any are on) before a strophic song, and, as supporting evidence, an ignored silence of that length is unparalleled elsewhere in Greek tragedy. There remains, then, the second theory, that she enters at around 83 to leave silently at 103.

Discussion of this theory can be summarized as follows. If Klytemnestra is not on stage at 83-103, why then does the chorus address her in the manner they do? If she is on stage, what is she doing there? Why doesn't she answer the questions of the chorus? And why don't they comment on her silence (as they do on Cassandra's later in the play?)

Those who believe that Klytemnestra was not on stage (eg. Taplin 1977: 278 ff.) usually explain the chorus' address as a choral apostrophe to an absent character. Other examples of these exist in Greek tragedy, the closest parallel being Euripides Hipp. 141 ff., in which the chorus, anxious over Phaedra's health, come to the gates of the palace and ask her directly "what is troubling you?" However, other critics do not find the two addresses much alike. Denniston, Page (1957: 76), for instance, find no similarity in questions about a situation inside the palace which the chorus cannot see, and questions about a situation outside which they can see but do not know the reasons for. But in both cases the chorus wants information about something, and comes to the palace to ask the only person who can give it to them; so there is no real difference on that score.

Pool (1983: 86-87, 95) points out that in a typical choral apostrophe, the chorus ask questions about the state of the absent character whom they address, not about other people or things. In the Hippolytus, for instance, the chorus ask the Queen what's wrong with her; but in the Agamemnon, they ask Klytemnestra about events at Troy. Pool adds that in a typical apostrophe, the character questioned is at the centre of the interest and attention, or anxiety, of the chorus; in fact, that the purpose of the address is to create a bond of affection with, or intensification of emotion towards, the absent character (Pool, 1983: 95). In Ag. 83-103, however, there is no such concern with Klytemnestra's welfare or activities, and the chorus, far from

feeling any emotional bond with her, dismiss her entirely from their minds after 103. He concludes that on these grounds, this address, if it is an apostrophe to an absent person, is unlike any other in Greek tragedy.

While it is true that the state of the character addressed is not the principal concern of the chorus, as it is in other apostrophes, Pool has not shown conclusively that such personal concern is a necessary condition for an apostrophe, or the only reason that one would ever be made. This argument, therefore, while interesting, does not seem to be of overwhelming importance. However, Pool does show quite clearly that this apostrophe is unique on other grounds as well. First, the sequence of titles and vocatives, a formal Homeric mode of address, is never used elsewhere except to a character on stage.<sup>4</sup> (Pool, 1983: 91-92; Rose, 1958: II, 11.) Second, the questions in 85-87 are direct requests for information, unlike the rhetorical questions, questions arising from simple curiosity, or surmises which do not ask a question so much as suggest an answer, which one finds in other apostrophes, including Hipp. 141 ff. (Pool, 1983: 83-85). Third, Ag. 97-103 are essentially a direct request for an answer (99-103) plus a polite formula giving permission not to tell more than she wishes (97-98). Neither of these make much sense if Klytemnestra is not there to hear them, and neither occur in any form in any undisputed apostrophe to an absent character. (Pool, 1983: 90, 93-94). Altogether, in form and content, this apostrophe is unlike any other in Greek tragedy, if it is addressed

to an absent character, but is (as Pool also shows) in no way anomalous if Klytemnestra is present.

Vetta (1976: 17) suggests that the reason the chorus address Klytemnestra in a manner which strongly suggests that she is present is because, in the excitement of the moment, they "visualize" her so strongly that she seems to them to be present. This is not entirely convincing, in that the only thing that suggests the "excitement" and "visualization" of the chorus at this point is, in fact, the address to Klytemnestra, and it seems unwise to use a conclusion drawn from the text as a premise for explication of that text. Vetta also points out that the questions they ask, especially lines 86-96, perform the standard dramatic function of informing the audience about events - in this case, sacrifices - offstage. This function of the address has usually been overlooked.

Those who believe that Klytemnestra is on stage at 83-103 explain her presence variously. Gilbert Murray (1920: xii-xiii) believes she is at the sacrificial altar in an "agony of silent prayer", preparing herself for her intended crime. Winnington-Ingram (1948: 130) believes she is presiding over the sacrifices, as does Rose (1958: II, 11). It is important to Goldhill (1984: 17) and particularly to Zeitlin (1965: 467)<sup>5</sup> that Klytemnestra be associated with the sacrifices. However, while the chorus describe in detail sacrifices going on in the city, they don't mention or refer to one being performed before them; and in fact the text gives us no reason to believe that there is

one occurring on stage as they speak. Vetta has shown (1976: 109-112) that for several reasons, it is highly unlikely that sacrifices were being performed on stage at this point in the play. Whatever Klytemnestra is doing on stage, then, it cannot be presiding over a sacrifice.

Pool, accepting this, suggests that she merely stands at the door for twenty lines and then re-enters the palace (1983: 103-104). This enigmatic action, he believes, is in keeping with Klytemnestra's unique and enigmatic character, and with the way she is characterized in the trilogy. It would also, he feels, strengthen and emphasize Klytemnestra's connection with the house early in the play, reinforce the fear and uneasiness of which the watchman speaks which surrounds the household, lend visual point and dramatic effect to Calchas' prophecy at 154-155, and finally, it would make Klytemnestra's first entrance in each of the three plays an unexpected one. (Pool, 1983: 106-110).

These arguments are not convincing. Klytemnestra's connection with the house is marked enough later in the play that an otherwise motiveless appearance at this point is not necessary to reinforce it. The audience, which has been given no hint that it should do so, would be unlikely to connect Klytemnestra's entrance here with the obscurely expressed fears of the watchman. If they remembered her entrance, it could indeed lend dramatic effect to Calchas' prophecy at 154-155, but Calchas' words do not lack point even without her appearance; and reinforcement of something said thirty lines later seems insufficient reason to

bring Klytemnestra on stage now. This appearance is not, in fact, in keeping with a character which, whatever else it may be, is not noted for silence: Klytemnestra has the longest speech in the play (even her husband remarks on it) and by far the greatest number of non-choral lines of any character. Finally, while this would make her first entrance in all three plays unexpected, in the other two plays her entrance has a purpose beyond mere surprise: in the Choephoroe to speak with Orestes, and in the Eumenides to rouse the Furies against him. It does not increase the "menace and mystery" surrounding her character (Pool 1983: 111), for the simple reason that the chorus show no fear of her at this point which would direct the audience's minds towards suspicion. Were she to stand in the doorway for twenty lines only to exit silently, the audience's reaction could in fact only be confusion.

Finally, assuming that she is on stage, why doesn't she answer the questions of the chorus, and why does the chorus not comment on her silence? Murray (1920: xii-xiii) seems to think it is because her prayers have put her in something very close to a trance-state, akin to Cassandra's, deaf to all around her. Earp (1950: 54) and others believe it is evidence of her haughty nature; Pool (1986: 113) also thinks her lack of answer can be explained by her imperious character and contempt for the chorus, and that it demonstrates her control over the situation. Throughout the rest of the play, however, she is always more than willing to explain and justify her actions to the chorus; her



imperiousness, if it exists, does not even manifest itself in brevity, let alone silence. Her undeniable control of the chorus elsewhere stems from her ability to manipulate words, not from her lack of them. And again, mere silence will not indicate haughtiness or contempt to an audience whose thoughts have not been directed that way by other things - for example, by the choral reaction to it. And the chorus do not react to her silence in any way.

Two technical reasons have been suggested for her silence, and the chorus' lack of comment. First, Pool (1983: 105) suggests that it would not be traditional for the transition from anapaests to lyric in the chorus' opening scene to be broken by a character's speech, and that a choral comment on her silence would also have been most untraditional. It is possible that a speech of a second character at this point might have seemed disruptive to a Greek audience; but the content of the chorus' song itself is surely in the hands of the poet. Aeschylus, moreover, should not be thought of as bound hand and foot by a tradition which he in large measure developed, and in which he was renowned for innovation. If he had desired a choral comment on Klytemnestra's silence, he could certainly have introduced one.

Second, Michelini (1974: 531 and n.18) suggests that characters are not always expected to take notice, in the spoken (iambic) sections, of what was said in the anapaests. Her other examples of this, however, (Ag. 781 ff. and 829; Supp. 973-979 and 993) do not show this principle clearly. Altogether, the

lack of response, and the chorus' lack of comment, must be considered unexplained.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, one should not forget the point raised by Fraenkel (1950: n. ad loc.) that if Klytemnestra enters and exits without speaking at 83-103, it is the only such appearance by a major character in all of Greek tragedy. Its uniqueness does not prove that it did not happen (as Goldhill 1984: 16 n.20 points out), but it does give one reason to think that it would not happen here without a purpose. The choral apostrophe has been shown by Pool to be unique also, if it is addressed to Klytemnestra in her absence. In the end, one can only try to choose which of two unique events is the more likely.

If 83-103 is addressed to Klytemnestra in her absence, it performs the function of informing the audience about events offstage. Why she is addressed so specifically, and in such language, is unclear. Vetta's "visualization" seems a little far-fetched, but could have an element of truth. Ewans (1982: 7-8) explains it as a request by the Council of Elders for a council meeting, which, at 258 ff., Klytemnestra grants them; the request is made at the palace gates, knowing that Klytemnestra, inside, will hear them and eventually come out. This also is not entirely convincing. Either hypothesis, however, does take into account what information there is.

If Klytemnestra is on stage, the wording of the address is explained. However, she has no reason to be there. She is not

sacrificing, and standing about in a doorway will not convey an air of menace, imperiousness, or anything else to an audience which could only be bewildered and distracted by her purposeless appearance. Perhaps a reply to the chorus' questions would disrupt the standard format of the opening choral scenes, but the lack of one is still very strange. The lack of choral reaction to her silence is completely inexplicable.

Of the two possibilities, then, while a certain answer is impossible, an address to her in her absence seems more easily explained, and thus rather more likely, than her silent presence at 83-103.

Klytemnestra enters, then, at 258, and is greeted by the chorus. She responds to their questions with her two famous speeches at 281-316 and 320-350, ending at 347-350 with a formula very typical of exit-lines; the chorus responds with lines very typical of those spoken to exiting characters. (Taplin, 1977: 289-290). So it seems safe to say that she exits somewhere between 350 and 354, and returns at 586, when she speaks to the herald. There is no reason for her to be on stage during the act-dividing song of the chorus, and she is not.

The real argument in this segment of the play centers on lines 489-500, which the manuscripts F and Tr attribute to Klytemnestra. If she speaks these lines, then she is probably on stage during the song, and must surely stay on after 500 to hear the herald.

The two strongest reasons to believe that Klytemnestra spoke lines 489-500 are the manuscript attribution, and the argument that her speech at 586 ff. shows that she knows what the herald said, and therefore must have heard his speech. (Denniston, Page 1957: 116-117.)<sup>7</sup> Of these, the manuscript attributions should not be weighted too heavily, as the same manuscripts which give these lines to Klytemnestra give the beacon-speech to a messenger. Those who do not believe that Klytemnestra was on stage during the herald's speech (for instance Taplin, 1977: 300, and Scully, unpub.: 7) have felt that the second argument required an answer. They tend to explain Klytemnestra's knowledge of what the herald said by referring to her "clairvoyance" and "power", as she is portrayed by Aeschylus.<sup>8</sup> This is not necessary, however, as there is in fact nothing in her speech at 586 ff. that she could not reasonably have said. She arranged the beacons, and knew that she could trust them; she therefore already knew that Troy had fallen, and did not need the herald to tell her. If the chorus did not trust the beacons, it is no concern of hers. Since she received the beacon-signal, she would expect Agamemnon to arrive home sooner or later; when a herald arrives, it makes perfect sense for her to assume that it is the one she expects. She knows that he's a herald because of his staff, and she knows that Agamemnon has arrived safely both because the herald has got there and because he wears an olive wreath (494), the sign of a bearer of good news. (Scully, unpub.: 9). No omniscience is necessary here, only ordinary

deductive abilities on the part of anyone who trusted the beacons. It is not necessary, then, to believe that Klytemnestra is on stage to hear the herald's speech.

Finally, lines 489-500 (or 489-502) suit the chorus better than they do Klytemnestra. Their tone is doubtful, as if spoken by one who is not sure what news the herald brings, and follows very well on the tone and concerns of the chorus' song immediately previous. Klytemnestra does not share the concerns the chorus sing of in their act-dividing song, and it makes no sense for her to reflect them; and she is sure of the herald's news. It seems safe to say, then, that she does not speak those lines and is not on stage to hear them spoken. She enters at line 586.

She exits again at line 614<sup>9</sup> and enters at 855, after Agamemnon's homecoming speech. No further notice is taken of her presence after 613, and it would be odd if, having said that she need not hear anything from the herald when she is about to get the whole story from her husband (598-599), she were then to stay on stage to listen to the herald. There is again no reason for her to stay on stage during the choral ode after the herald's exit (681-781), and she does not.

There are two good reasons to believe that Klytemnestra cannot have been on stage during Agamemnon's speech. First, in a speech which addresses the land, the gods, and the old men at some length, he does not mention his wife. There are several ways of explaining this - that he is so taken up with his politi-

cal role, as a king returning to his land, that he has entirely forgotten his domestic role as a husband and father returning to a home<sup>10</sup>; that Klytemnestra is invisible in the background (why? and why would she stay there, on seeing Agamemnon's entrance?); or that he is deliberately slighting his wife (again, why?) None of these quite explain why he does not address her; surely it is easier to believe that she simply is not there.

Second, in his last four lines (851-854), Agamemnon clearly signifies that he is intending to go immediately into the palace. Instead, Klytemnestra begins to speak, and he does not go in. What better reason for this than that she has suddenly appeared in the doorway and blocked his path?<sup>11</sup> His comment at 916 might be interpreted partly as annoyance at being frustrated in his original intent, as well as at being forced to wait through a long and embarrassing speech.<sup>12</sup>

Klytemnestra exits shortly after Agamemnon, at 974. Her final couplet is probably not intended to be heard by Agamemnon (973-974), and so is most likely delivered after his exit. (Taplin 1977; 308-309; Fraenkel 1950: n. ad loc.) This couplet is, again, very good as an exit-line, and as there is no reason to keep Klytemnestra on stage through the choral song (975-1033)<sup>13</sup>, we may assume it was used as one.

The remainder of Klytemnestra's movements are fairly clearly marked. She enters at 1035, loses in her attempt to

control Cassandra, and exits at 1068. Entering again at 1372, she remains on stage until the end of the play.

One more point needs to be made on the subject of stage directions. Aegisthus admits that he was not in the house ("οὐ-  
παῖος ὢν", 1608). He and his bodyguard must therefore have come on from a side entrance. (Taplin 1977: 329). Klytemnestra has used only the central door into the house throughout the play, and has controlled its use by almost everyone else. The herald is not permitted to enter; Agamemnon enters only on her disastrous terms; and Aegisthus, from outside the palace, is permitted to enter with her at the play's end. Only Cassandra frustrates Klytemnestra's attempt to completely control entrance to the oikos and enters under compulsion not of Klytemnestra, but of Apollo. This failure foreshadows Klytemnestra's eventual doom, by command of the same god; but in the first play, we should remember that visually, Klytemnestra's control of, and authority over, the palace will have been obvious, and her self-proclaimed role as "dog of the house" perfectly clear throughout the play.

NOTES TO APPENDIX B

<sup>1</sup>He cites Wilamowitz' article in Hermes 21 (1886) 597 ff., which argues the same point.

<sup>2</sup>Lattimore's translation also assumes this continual presence. (Richmond Lattimore, Oresteia, translation. (Chicago: 1953).

<sup>3</sup>As cited by Taplin (1977: 284). I am indebted to this work for much of the argument of this appendix.

<sup>4</sup>Vetta (1976: 11) shows that this is not a common form of address to a character entering for the first time and (1976: 117-118) that the address at 258-260 is more common under those circumstances. However, the combination of vocatives, common or not, still suggests that Klytemnestra is present.

<sup>5</sup>Zeitlin's discussion of sacrificial imagery in the Oresteia is extremely enlightening, and I do not wish to weaken her argument. However, Klytemnestra's absence at 83-103 does not weaken it; as she has ordered the sacrifices, her responsibility for the rites (which the chorus emphasize) remains the same whether or not she is present. Her relationship with the sacrifices is thus unchanged, although visually the impact is lessened.

<sup>6</sup>Neither 97-98 nor 263 ought to be thought of as comments on Klytemnestra's silence; both can be explained more easily as merely polite formulae appended to respectful requests for information.

<sup>7</sup>There are other arguments, mentioned by Scully (unpub. 2-3), but they are trivial (as he demonstrates) and easily dismissed.

<sup>8</sup>eg. Taplin (1977: 300) - "she did not need to be present to have this superiority, which is typical of her role", or Scully (unpub.: 7) - "(She) does not need to be present at 489 to know that Agamemnon has arrived at Argos. Earlier Aeschylus has made her describe the scene in the ruined city of Troy."

<sup>9</sup>The MSS F and Tr give 612-613 to the herald, but as Fraenkel (1950: n. ad loc.) demonstrates, this should be disregarded, if not because it would be extremely unusual for a second actor to break in with an answer before the chorus speak, then because there seems no reason for the herald to say them; but they are good exit-lines for Klytemnestra.

<sup>10</sup>Of course, Agamemnon's great weakness and the source of his downfall in the play is precisely that he does outrage his domestic ties for the sake of his political role. One cannot



doubt that in this homecoming scene Aeschylus shows us a man who is, at that moment at least, entirely preoccupied with his position as king. Were his speech not sufficient to tell us this, Klytemnestra's speech addressing him exclusively as husband and head of the household emphasizes the "regal" tone of his own words. But even a king would mention his regent - which we know Klytemnestra to be from lines 258-260 - on homecoming, if the regent were present. Agamemnon does not.

<sup>11</sup>Taplin (1977: 307) points this out. It is foreshadowed at 587, when she blocks the herald's entrance. (The herald likewise has not addressed her.) See also Ewans (1982: 7-8), who develops the theme of obstructed, or perverted, homecoming.

<sup>12</sup>See Michelini (1974: 527-530) for an interesting interpretation. She suggests that his comment is intended partly to mark the transition between a formal rhesis and the return to the "action" of the play, and cites other examples of this usage.

<sup>13</sup>And some to take her off - would the chorus have expressed their forebodings so clearly if the agent they feared were still on stage?

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