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THE IMAGERY OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

IN THE ORESTEIA

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Nicholas Mark Russo, B.A., A.M.

* * * * *

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The imagery of light and darkness pervades Greek thinking. Light connotes life, salvation, virtue, and glory. Darkness, on the other hand, is associated with the disgrace of obscurity and death. Light is the daylight that makes existence understandable, and so darkness versus light signifies ignorance versus understanding. But light can also reveal its destructive force as in the scorching sun or in devastating fire.

The imagery of light and darkness with its various connotations permeates the Oresteia as a unifying thread. In a vast ring composition, the trilogy opens with a powerful scene of light in darkness and concludes with the light of religious torches. By the recurrent use of imagery throughout, characters create atmosphere, depict and respond to events (past, present, and future), and in the process not only portray each other as well as themselves
but also express the dominant ethical and philosophical themes. The light and darkness are at times real as in the glow of the beacon or the darkness of night and often imagistic as in the light of joy or the darkness of sorrow.

In the Agamemnon, the watchman anxiously awaits a beacon in the night. Its light, however, does not portend the hoped-for joy and salvation but guilt and destruction. In the Choephori, Electra and the chorus pray that Orestes bring that light of salvation to a house darkened by sorrow. All three seek assistance from Agamemnon and Hermes in the realm of dark Hades. But the light of Orestes is tainted with matricide, and avenging dark Furies pursue him. In the Eumenides, the true light of joy and salvation shines at last for Agamemnon's house as Orestes is set free, and the glow of torches lit in the presence of Zeus' daughter celebrate the transformation and reconciliation of the dark Furies into beneficent powers at peace with men and gods. Within this broad spectrum, the images of light and darkness operate in various and intricate ways to enrich the poetry, drama, and meaning of the trilogy.
Acknowledgments

I am indebted to Professor Robert J. Lenardon for his great assistance and inspiration and should like to thank Professors John W. Shumaker and Jane M. Snyder for their helpful comments. Finally I express special gratitude to Mrs. P.E. Easterling, Fellow of Newnham College and Lecturer of Cambridge University, who helped to direct my research during my stay in Cambridge.
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Introduction

Among various literatures, including that of the Greeks, light is associated with joy and goodness while darkness is linked to sorrow and evil. As Bultmann notes, the friendliness of light pervades Greek thinking. "To be in the light" is a way of saying "to live," and further, light connotes salvation, virtue, and glory. Darkness, on the other hand, is associated with the disgrace of obscurity and death. Light is the daylight that makes existence understandable, and so darkness versus light signifies ignorance versus understanding. But light can also reveal its destructive force as in the scorching sun or in devastating fire.

This imagery of light and darkness with its various connotations permeates the Oresteia as a unifying thread. In a vast ring composition, the trilogy opens with a powerful scene of light in darkness and concludes with the light of religious torches surrounding powers of darkness. By the recurrent use of this imagery throughout, characters create atmosphere, depict and respond to events (past, present, and future), and in the process, not only portray each other as well as themselves but
also express the dominant ethical and philosophical themes. The light and darkness are at times real as in the glow of the beacon or the darkness of night and often imagistic as in the light of joy or the darkness of sorrow. Aeschylus' art is subtle, complex, and ironic as he interweaves the threads of light and darkness into a finely wrought tapestry.

A basic element of his art is repetition of the same words and of kindred phrases with the images that they imply. Sometimes images follow one another closely; at other times, they are introduced in one play and do not recur until the next. Such iterations are no accident; consciously or unconsciously, Aeschylus uses the repetition of images for significant effect. I say "unconsciously," for, as the psychologist D.W. Harding notes, images and words that writers and readers of literature encounter may carry the results of extensive organization that happens before they appear. Our motives, desires, impulses, and conflicts relate with each other and with our sentiments, memories of the past, and premonitions; all of this is done in a mode lower than words or imagery. Thus poets, as they use words and images with symbolic overtones, are likely to convey meanings that they did not intend before writing and ones that they do not realize after writing. Harding's ideas
borne out when we consider the reflections of the poet, Amy Lowell. She notes that sometimes an external stimulus that produces a poem is known; it may be some sight, sound, or emotion. Sometimes, the consciousness has no record of the initial impulse; it is simply forgotten or comes from an unrealized memory. She gives this example: "Bronze horses" will come to her as a suitable poetic impetus, but she forgets about them. They really drop into her unconsciousness, and six months later the words of a poem are there. As she says:

What I know of them (the poems) is only a millionth part of what there must be to know. I meet them where they touch consciousness, and that is already a considerable distance along the road to evolution.

The Oresteia is replete with imagery of light and darkness. But it is often difficult to determine whether or not a specific image should be considered as such. Many images, of course, are quite obvious and so pose no problems, e.g. "a bright radiance" (λαμπρὸν σέλας Agamemnon 281) or "sunless gloom" (αυθήλιοι δυνάφοι Choephori 51-52). But others are more ambiguous and are thus open to interpretation. For example, the word "Hades" has many connotations: he is god of the dead; he lives far beneath the earth; his territory and its inhabitants are dark and shadowy. In a certain context, therefore, one person may feel that Hades emphasizes death; another may believe that darkness is the primary
connotation while still another may find separation from earth to be the principal implication. All may have valid reasons for their belief. When I treat such images, my analysis will make it clear why they are considered images of light or darkness.

In general I follow Page's 1972 edition of Aeschylus' text; in a few places, however, I have preferred a different reading in another edition. In such cases, I explain my reasons in a note. For the translation of the Agamemnon, I closely follow Fraenkel, modifying his interpretations wherever necessary. The translation of the other plays is mine unless otherwise indicated. There is little written about the dramatic function of imagery in the Oresteia. What works there are isolate only certain images of light and darkness and often treat them in cursory fashion. I found Lobeck's works, though, most helpful in this study. In addition, I am indebted to Eduard Fraenkel for his monumental three volume work on the Agamemnon with its text, translation, and commentary. For the other two plays, older commentaries, such as that of Sidgwick, were useful. But there really has been no extensive treatment of the imagery of light and darkness in the Oresteia; indeed, most of the secondary sources were beneficial only in an indirect way.

Beginning with the opening of the Agamemnon, I
shall treat the imagery in a linear fashion and divide the thesis into three chapters that deal with each play in succession. My treatment, though, will also be comparative as I demonstrate how the images foreshadow and recall each other. By this analysis, the vital role of light and darkness in the Oresteia will be made manifest.
Footnotes

1 Cf. P. Wheelwright, The Burning Fountain (Bloomington, Indiana 1954) 303-308.


7 D.W. Harding, "The Hinterland of Thought," in Metaphor and Symbol eds. L.C. Knights and B. Cottle (London 1950) 11-15. In his article, he discusses various frameworks for considering what is in us before things are formulated into words and images.


9 Amy Lowell, 10. For a similar view of creativity, cf. a letter of Mozart in The Creative Process 34-35.
Chapter I

In a mere thirty-nine lines of the opening speech, Aeschylus establishes the recurring themes of ambiguity, irony, and somber foreshadowing, especially through the interplay of light and darkness. Stars alone illuminate the all-encompassing darkness, making objects merely hazy shadows. This atmosphere of visible uncertainty reflects the unstable state of the watchman as he vacillates between hope and despair. The darkness itself matches the guard's forebodings, and the beacon light ironically foretells doom for the household. Light and darkness, whether or not actually depicted on the stage, permeate the first speech and set the tone for the scene, the play, and the trilogy. Throughout the drama, men in the darkness of sorrow await the light of joy, but ironically, the light brings only more darkness and sorrow. The ironic use of light reflects the domestic, moral, and political turmoil within Agamemnon's house. Only when these problems are solved on a divine level in the Eumenides, does the true light of joy and salvation shine forth radiantly.

The poet introduces the audience to the light in
darkness at the very beginning of the play. The watchman declares: "I see an assembly of stars in the night." (αστρων κατοικα νυκτερων δυνηνηθα. 4) But he does not stop at a mere mention of constellations; instead, he goes on to designate particular stars: "and those bright potentates that bring winter and summer to man, stars conspicuous in the sky, whensoever they set and by their risings" (καλ τοις φεροντας κειμα και θερος βροτοις/ λαμπροις δυναστας, επερουντας αιθερι/ αστερας, δια/ ωθησειν αντολας τε των 5-7). The watchman, therefore, turns from an assembly of stars to particular ones, an action that is quite normal. When one views the starry heaven, he notices a host of glittering objects; he then recognizes a constellation that he knows by name and focuses upon it. But the guard's action is most fitting to his particular position. He has spent many an agonizing night in his watch and prays for a release from this labor (line 1). To pass his time, he counts the stars, but that merely adds to his suffering. He is anxiously on the lookout for a signal beacon; yet he sees only twinkling dots in the far-off heaven.

His reference to the constellations, though, may already hint at the ominous meaning of the beacon. He speaks of stars that usher in the seasons and so calls to mind, among others, the Pleiades and Sirius, the
Dog Star. Since both of these constellations forebode destruction, the one of wintry storms, the other of searing heat, they foreshadow the beacon that heralds Agamemnon's death. Furthermore, as Fraenkel notes, the ancients saw these stars not as inanimate objects but as living beings who cause the seasons; later, in a speech of Clytemnestra (281-316), the beacon will take on animate qualities and become a symbol of the king coming home.

From these individual stars, the watchman's mind moves to one individual light. He calls those particular stars which bring in the seasons "bright potentates" (λαμπροδς δυνάστας); the special light for which he waits is "the torch signal" (λαμπάδος το σύμβολον). Notice the same root in the words used to describe the stars and the light of the beacon (λαμπ). The guard turns from one image of light, the stars, to another, the beacon, and etymologically emphasizes the connection of the two. This light of the beacon, however, is not a star in the heavens which ushers in the seasons but "the bright gleam of fire bringing forth a tale from Troy, the tidings of her capture" (αύγην περδς φέρουσαν ἐκ Τροάς φάτην/ ἀλώσιον τι βάλην 9-10). It is a special light bringing long-awaited news.

The watchman anxiously hopes for this signal from Troy; yet, while waiting, he suffers terribly. When
Aeschylus describes the man's toil, it is in terms of darkness and restlessness at night. The guard has a bed which "causes to wander by night" (σκοτεινός πλαγκτός 12). This image aptly describes the situation of the watchman. He must get up and walk about to keep himself awake; he lies down in one place then in another. Thus, not only he but the place where he lies changes. But in view of what he says subsequently, the image takes on greater connotations. Unlike others, he cannot sleep but must keep awake for the signal and so has a "couch upon which no dreams look" (οὐκέρας οὐκ ἐπισκοπομένην 13). But he cannot fall asleep for another reason: "for instead of sleep fear stands beside me that I may no close my eyelids firmly in sleep" (φόβος γάρ ἄνθ᾽ ἕπνου παραστετέ, τὸ μὴ βεβαλῶς βλέφαρα συμβαλέω ὑπ᾽ αὐτῷ 14-15). The fear that keeps him awake is partly that of the penalty for falling asleep at his post, the darkness of death. Indeed, the words, "close my eyelids firmly in sleep," call to mind the permanent sleep of death. The image of darkness in "causes to wander by night" would thus reflect that fear, but it also reflects the character of those who would exact such a penalty, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.

The watchman tries to comfort himself and break up the deadly silence and sing "this medicine of song against
sleep" (ὢποιοῦ τῶν ἀντίμολου ἀκός 17). But the result is similar to that of his counting of stars. He is made more discouraged: "Then I weep and groan over the misfortune in the house not now as of old, excellently husbanded." (κλαίω τῇ οἴκῳ τούδε συμφορᾶν οστεύων / οὐχ ὡς τὰ πρόσθ' ἄριστα διαπονυμένοι). The guard's fear and anxiety then arise not only from the threat of death but also from the situation in the palace; again there are significant implications about those inside.

The guard, nonetheless, prays for a "release from his toils" (ἅπαλλαγῇ ποῦν 20). This release, this true cure to the darkness of sleep, he hopes will come "by the fire of good tidings appearing in the dark" (εὐαγγέλου φανέντος ὀμφαλοῦ πυρὸς 21). Again, light shines amid the darkness. In line 4, the watchman says: "Stars I see in the night, a throng of them." But note that he positions the darkness of night between the words for light. This careful word order may well reflect the watchman's hope that as the stars overcome the darkness about him, so he, by focusing his attention upon them, may disperse his own darkness of despair. As was noted, his hope is in vain; ironically, the stars merely add to his sorrow.

A similar situation to that expressed in line 4 occurs in line 21. The word "darkness" is preceded
by "of good tidings shining forth" and is followed by "fire." Again the watchman is full of hope; the first word in the line is one of great expectation. Again the structure of the line demonstrates the guard's hope that the light of the beacon will surround and overpower the darkness about him, that the beacon with its good tidings will dispel the darkness in his heart.

In the stars lie his desire for a brief respite from suffering; in the beacon rests his hope for total relief of agony. Thus, when his hope of beholding the beacon encounters only the all-encompassing night, he plunges all the more deeply into the darkness of despair.

The watchman uses many images of light in his first twenty-one lines, all of them linked to one another. This last mention of the beacon as "fire" in line 21 echoes the "fire" in line 9. When the guard first describes the beacon in line 8, he calls it a "torch signal." As was pointed out above, the word "torch" is linked linguistically with "bright" in line 6, which is used to describe the particular stars. These individual constellations recall the host of stars in line 4, and thus the chain reaches back even further in a splendidly intricate fashion.

In the first twenty-one lines before the appearance of the beacon, then, the watchman employs many images of
light which vary in intensity and significance. Darkness, nonetheless, remains constant in the physical setting surrounding the guard and in the inner part of his soul.

A short interval may be imagined between lines 21-22 during which the guard sees the beacon and jumps to his feet before hailing it. Indeed the imagery of light may now become an actual glow on the stage and thus accentuate the words of the guard. The signal that he has been awaiting for years shines forth in the darkness bringing the light of hope to his darkened spirits. As Méautis says: "... la lumière de la joie, plus éclante que la lumière du jour." 14

The guard salutes it: "O hail you light-giver" (ὰ χαίρε λαμπτήρ νυκτός 22). Fraenkel notes that λαμπτήρ is not merely a synonym for λάμπως but, as a non-Attic word, is an alternative. Thus it may provide, as he maintains, a more lofty sound, or, at any rate, I should say perhaps a more striking sound. 15

After the watchman joyously greets the beacon, he does not cease in his enthusiasm. He ecstatically describes this light: "O hail you light-giver of the night that shows the light of day" (ὰ χαίρε λαμπτήρ νυκτός , ἡμερήσου· φῶς πυράσκων 22-23). Once again Aeschylus introduces the image of light shining in darkness by an
artful positioning of words; in the two lines above, darkness is surrounded by light. Indeed, in line 22, "by night" is hemmed in by "light-giver" and "of day" which is in turn followed by two more synonyms of light in line 23, "showing forth" and "light." Appropriately there are so many words of light that darkness almost disappears; it is this beacon, as said before, which destroys the darkness of despair within the guard and ushers in the light of joy. Thus, he fittingly addresses the beacon as "light" (φῶς), which would here convey the well-established second meaning, "salvation." 16

The watchman expresses his personal joy by saluting the light and describing it. In line 24, he goes into the joy that this beacon will evoke through all of Argos. This light will be a signal to establish many a dancing choir. He is so full of glee that he shouts: "Hurrah, Hurrah!" (λού λού 25) But his very cry is ironical, for it is an expression of grief as well as of joy.

Next, the guard's mind turns to Clytemnestra and how he will tell her the good news (26-27) so that she can arise "to lift up her voice, for the house to hear, in a jubilant shout of thanksgiving to welcome this torch" (ολολυγμὸν εὐφημοῦστα τῇ δὲ λαμπάδι / ἐπορθείσειν 28-29). In lines 22-24, the guard uses visual images of light and darkness to convey his joy and that of all
Argos. Here, the theme is repeated with meaningful variation; the beacon is enclosed by words of joyful sound.

As he anticipates his report to Clytemnestra, he reminds the audience what news the beacon brings. He will tell the queen to welcome the torch "if the town of Ilion is taken indeed, as the beacon announcing it shines forth" (ἐἰπέρ Ἰλίου πόλις ἐκλάμεν, δέ ο θρυμμὸς ἀνελθὼν πρέπει 29-30). The torch shines forth the joyful news that Troy is captured. The guard proclaims it twice (9-10, 29-30); the audience must not forget it.

After he describes the jubilation with which Clytemnestra will welcome this news, the guard returns to the theme of dancing. He says that he himself will dance a prelude because of the good fortune of his master, which he considers his own. This good luck he expresses in terms of dice: "for as his master's cast has been lucky, he will make his move accordingly, now that this beaconing has thrown treble six for him" (τά δεσποτῶν γάρ εὖ πεσόντα θάσοναι τρίς εἰς βαλοῦσις τῆςδέ μοι φρυγμωρίας 32-33). Note that he joins together "beaconing" with "treble six," that is, a lucky throw. The image may be rather striking, but then, so is this first speech. It is certainly Aeschylus' manner to employ common images well-known to the Greeks such as the net and hunting for higher artistic purposes. A throw of
dice would be common to them and therefore provide a familiar metaphor. But why would Aeschylus fashion such an unusual link with light? It is to stress the magnitude and intensity of the watchman's emotions.

The light of the beacon evokes great joy in the watchman; Troy has finally been destroyed. But more specifically, it means that his dear master will come home. The man lays bare his deep devotion to his master and king. He looks forward to the day he can run up to his master and clasp his hand (34–35).

The light of the flare makes the guard most happy, but, at the same time, the note of somber foreshadowing in lines 18–19 is again struck at the end of the speech. The watchman declares: "I am silent about the rest, for a great ox stands on my tongue, and if the house had a voice, it would speak clearly." (τὰ δὲ ἄλλα σιγὰ· βοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσσῃ μένας /βέβηκεν· οἶκος δὲ αὐτῆς, εἴ φθογγὴν λάβοιν, / σαφέστατ᾽ ἄν λέξειν. 36–38) As Kitto says, the character of the guard is valuable to Aeschylus most of all because he can suddenly and penetratingly sound the note of uneasy foreboding. He begins a rhythm of apprehension which increases through the choral odes and reaches its climax with the prophecies of Cassandra.\(^{18}\)

The guard sounds the note of discord by a powerful and appropriate image, an ox stands upon his tongue.
The matters to which he alludes are most serious, and divulging them would be fatal. Clytemnestra takes an adulterer; she and her consort seize the throne; her hatred for her husband is in full bloom; the people mutter in secret. The audience, like the watchman, know these matters which will be revealed as the play unfolds.

These somber foreshadowings give the opening speech a tone of great irony. The watchman's joyful shout of "hurrah" will be turned into a mournful cry. In line 23, he predicts that the beacon will be a signal for choral dancing. Agamemnon's return will inspire choruses, but of a very different sort, namely, the Furies ever-present in the house to whom Cassandra alludes in line 1186 and the chorus of women who pour out lamentations after Agamemnon's death. The flame of salvation will inspire Clytemnestra's joy. But it is a salvation for her pent-up hatred, for she can now vent her anger; it is a joy that will cry out in victory over the corpse of Agamemnon in line 1236.

The last two lines fittingly close the speech. The guard says: "Thus I willingly speak to those who understand, but to those who do not I forget." (Δς ἔκαστος ἐγὼ σαίτοις αύτῶν ὑδατοις λήθομαι. 38-39) The sentence is at first ambiguous and thus matches the tenor of the first scene. Yet, its point is clear: you who know
what is going on inside the house understand my meaning; you who do not, forget what I said. The watchman, in fact, says more than he realizes. He addresses those who understand; the audience know about the adultery and the other evils. But we also know that the queen will kill the king and thus understand the watchman's words in a different light. He realizes that there is trouble in the house but does not know exactly where it will lead. He speaks to the ignorant but, ironically, he is ignorant.

In this first speech, then, light and darkness focus our attention on the significance of the events and on recurring themes of the play. The illumination of the darkness through the stars makes physical objects partially visible. This exterior uncertainty reflects the internal uncertainty of the guard who vacillates between joyful singing and somber silence, between speech to the knowing and forgetfulness to the ignorant. The pervasive darkness of the scene reflects the guard's despair and his somber foreshadowings. Finally, the shining beacon signals not hope and life but ironically proclaims sorrow and death for the house.

With the conclusion of the watchman's speech, the chorus begin their long ode that considers the war and all of its implications. Their first reference to light has ominous connotations. They discuss how Zeus sends
the sons of Atreus against Paris for his impious action (60-62) and how the matter comes to its appointed end (67-68). They note that "neither kindling (burnt offerings) nor pouring out fireless offerings, will he (the guilty man) soothe aside relentless anger." (οὗθ' ἵπποκαίων οὕτ' ἀπολεβών ἄνδρων ἱερῶν/ ὄργας ἀτενεῖς παραθέλει. 69-71) From the context, the chorus undoubtedly think of Paris and his inability to appease the gods by sacrifices; he must suffer for his crimes. But both the subject of the sentence and the person who is angry are left unspecified. The chorus, probably without realizing it, refer to Agamemnon and, at this early point in the trilogy, imply his condemnation and destruction. By the sacrifice of his daughter, the king does not appease the anger of the gods but only furthers it by an act of impiety (219-221). Secondly, the fact that this death is a sacrifice to the gods will not quiet the wrath of the queen. Both the gods and Clytemnestra will have their revenge: Agamemnon will pay with his life.

The chorus then turn to the sacrifices of Clytemnestra and ask what prompts her to kindle such fires. Again actual fire may be present on the stage and so intensify the impact of the chorus' words. They observe:

The altars are ablaze with gifts, and torches, from here, from there, rise up heaven-high, medicined by the gentle, guileless persuasions
The image of burning fires provides a link to the watchman's speech and anticipates the imagery of Clytemnestra soon to follow. Indeed there is verbal echoing, for both the guard (28) and the queen (287, 296) employ the same word with which the chorus describe the torches here, λαμπάς. By using kindred imagery, a connection is established between the fires of the beacon which bring the news and those to which the news gives rise. The predominant note is joyful, but in both there is an undercurrent of somber foreshadowing, for irony is involved. The chorus are uncertain whether the sacrifices are supplication after a disaster or thanksgiving for blessings. At one time, they are overwhelmed by anxiety (99-100) "while at another, from the sacrifices that you (Clytemnestra) make blaze up, hope wards off insatiate care" (τοτε δ' ἐν θυσιῶν ὡς ἀναφαίνεις ἐλπὶς ἀμύνει φρονίτε δ' ἀπληστοῦν 101-102). As the light of the torches dispells the darkness of the house, as the oil soothes the flame, so these lights and the news that they represent would heal the chorus of their anxiety. Indeed the description of the oil that feeds the flame connotes a reassuring
message, for "persuasions" (μαρτυρίας) also means "consolations."

Yet the chorus do not realize how well-founded is their anxiety. Clytemnestra plans the death of her husband; for her these fires are a thanksgiving for his return and a prayer for a successful murder. Furthermore, the queen's fires, soothed by oil, recall the unsuccessful sacrifices of Paris. Clytemnestra may soothe her own wrath in the joy of vengeful murder, but she will not satisfy the gods. In the Choephoroi, she too will pay for her crime with death. The image of light ironically becomes the unmistakable symbol of death and revenge.

When the chorus describe the events at Aulis, they, perhaps unknowingly, reiterate the guilt and resultant destruction of the king through significant images of darkness. They relate that the king of birds, i.e. the eagle, "the black one, and the one that is white behind" (ὁ κελαίμνης ὁ τῆς έλθον άρνας 115) send the two brothers against Troy. Since the chorus associate these eagles with the "two Atreidae, twain in temper" (δύο λημαοι διόσσους/Ἀτρείδας 123-124), they imply a comparison between the two groups. The eagle that is "white behind" was regarded as cowardly or at least poorer in spirit. This suits the general history of Menelaus' character.
Agamemnon is represented by the black eagle, one who is noted for his strength and love of fighting. By such a comparison to his brother and the black eagle, the chorus emphasize Agamemnon's love of fighting, but by the same token, they look forward to the murder of his daughter for military reasons (212-217). The color black with its terrible connotations thus befits a man who will be guilty of his daughter's death and who will pay with his own life.

A few lines later, the chorus again employ a meaningful image of darkness. They quote the prayer of Calchas: "Only let no envious grudge from the gods strike beforehand and overcloud the great bit for Troy, the army on its campaign" (ολον μη τις άγα θεόθεν κυνέα / ση προτυπέν στόμιον μέγα Τροίας / στρατωθέν 131-133). The reference, of course, is to the angry Artemis who demands the sacrifice of Iphigenia while the army is at Aulis. Darkness appropriately describes the guilt that comes upon Agamemnon for this sacrifice and by implication the entire army. The image also looks forward to the further guilt incurred once at Troy and expresses the payment that will be exacted from the king and from many others, death.

After they quote the words of the prophet, the chorus sing a hymn to Zeus. They then describe in more
detail the events at Aulis and end at the moment just before Iphigenia is sacrificed.

They close their ode with a dominant theme of the trilogy that justice weighs out understanding to those who endure suffering (250-251). They then refer to the future:

And the future, when it happens, you will hear of it. Beforehand, dismiss it from your thought. It (anticipating the future) is equal to lamenting in advance, for clear it will come together with the rays of the sun.

The expression in line 254, that the future will arrive clearly with the dawn, is used in a metaphorical way. The line signifies that the future is always revealed by the morrow, at first seemingly a mere variation on a proverbial expression, but the meaning is to be inferred from the immediately preceding statement of knowledge through suffering. The chorus predict in lines fraught with meaning that the light of understanding will come through suffering and that the future will arrive with clarity. But can they be fully aware of the terrible suffering that they will endure before a complete understanding of the horrifying events which have taken place and will occur? The future will come but with the
piercing "rays" of realization. Even further, these lines anticipate the words of Cassandra. She says that she will no longer speak in riddles; her prophecy is "bright as a fresh wind blowing toward the sunrise . . . in the manner of a wave it will surge toward the rays of the sun" (λαμ-πρὸς δ' ἐοίκεν ἡλίου πρὸς ἀντολάς /πνέων 1180-1181 . . . κύματος διην/κλήζειν πρὸς ἀυγὰς 1181-1182). She then fulfills her promise and clearly foretells Agamemnon's death. The chorus will hear Cassandra's prophecy and see it accomplished. When they utter lines 251-254, they do not understand the full implication of what they are saying. By using words that anticipate Cassandra's lines, Aeschylus foreshadows the chorus' suffering and their terrifying realization of her prophecies.

The watchman beholds the light of the beacon and joyfully welcomes it as a release from his agony. The chorus likewise look upon the light of the sacrificial fires, kindled by the beacon, as a sign of relief from their anxiety. But all is not joyful. The watchman's speech forebodes evil. In their reference to Paris' sacrifices and to the events at Aulis, the chorus imply guilt in Agamemnon's house. Ambivalent in their comprehension of the joys signified by Clytemnestra's fires, they look ahead to the shattering experience of what is to come.

At the close of the first choral ode, the chorus
ask Clytemnestra whether the sacrificial fires arise because she has received some happy news or whether she hopes for some good tidings. She answers with a proverb cast in light and darkness: "Bearer of good tidings may the morning be, coming—as the proverb goes—from (and taking after) its mother night, the kindly time" (ἐὖ-
ἀγγελὸς μὲν, ὀπέρ ἡ παροιμία, ἐὰς γενοῖ το μητρὸς ἐὐφρόνης πάρα 264–265). Fraenkel points out that we do not know the proverb to which Aeschylus alludes. It is natural to regard the morning as child of the preceding night, as does Hesiod (Theogony 124). Furthermore, Clytemnestra knows that the night brought good news and so asks that the future correspond to it. But Aeschylus moulds a common proverb into a most complex and ironic expression of Clytemnestra’s joyful emotions.

Consider the sentence from a literal point of view. Just as the watchman hails the light of the beacon as "light-giver," Clytemnestra greets the morning as "bearer of good tidings." Light is most immediately a symbol of joy and life; her invocation is thus most appropriate. But it is her wish that the light be a messenger of good news as it comes from (and takes after) its mother, night. Night must be a symbol of evil: the terror of prolonged war and the absence of her husband. But out of this night shines the beacon of joy proclaiming Troy’s
capture and her husband's return; the night becomes a bearer of the messenger light. Thus Clytemnestra calls the night "the kindly time," a standard euphemism for night.34

But for Clytemnestra, this imagery conveys something quite different. The light brings the joy of Agamemnon's death and satisfaction of her justice.35 The long night means frustration and delay, but it is kindly, for it brings her husband home. The "kindly time," then, is a symbol of death and for Clytemnestra is far from euphemistic. "Bearer of good news," then, as an epithet of the dawn, is also ironic, for dawn as well means death for Agamemnon.

Thus, these two lines bear two interpretations, both of which are operative in the play. The chorus, not knowing Clytemnestra's designs, would understand the imagery at face value. The queen, here and elsewhere, speaks in words of double meaning.

As the guard links the light of the beacon with the fall of Troy, so, here, Clytemnestra links the bright light of the morn to the fall of Ilion. Immediately after her salutation of the dawn, she informs the chorus that Priam's town is taken (267). A bit later, when the chorus ask at what time the town was destroyed, Clytemnestra replies: "Since the night, the kindly time, I say, that
has just now given birth to the light of this morning."
(τῆς νῦν τεκνούσης φῶς τόδ' εὐφρόνης λέγω. 279) The queen again uses the connotative term for night "the kindly time" and again associates the fall of Troy with the dawn, but the word that she uses this time for light, φῶς, is the same one used by the guard to describe the beacon. Hence, she anticipates the detailed description of the beacon in her next speech.

In line 280, the chorus ask her how it is possible for her to know the news so soon; what messenger is so swift? The queen answers with her famous beacon speech. The passage is replete with brightness; indeed, it is the most brilliant in terms of light imagery in the entire Agamemnon.

I shall first analyze the brilliance of the torch as fire, the echoing of the watchman's vocabulary, and the significance of the fire. I shall then discuss the relay system, that Clytemnestra established, in terms of the imagery it entails. Finally, I shall examine the significance of the speech as a whole.

When the chorus ask her what messengers could travel so quickly, Clytemnestra replies: "Hephaestus, sending forth from Ida a bright radiance" ("Ἡφαίστος, Ιδῆς λαμπρῶν ἐκπέμπων σέλας 281). In this first statement about the beacon, she makes clear not only that a god is at work
here, but a god whose overwhelming brilliance is confirmed by the vocabulary of light which completes the line.

This image of incendiary light is sustained throughout the speech by the reiteration of the designation "fire." The beacon is a "courier fire" (ἄγγαρον πυρὸς 282), a "sender fire" (πομποῦ πυρὸς 299), an "ordinance of fire" (θεσμὸν πυρὸς 304) and the "fire from Mount Ida" (Ἰδαίου πυρὸς 311); men "set fire to a stack of aged heath" (γαλαζ ἐρείκης θωμὸν ἄναυτας πυρὶ 295). Verbs of "burning" also emphasize the image of fire (καλώσα 301, ἀνάδαιοντες 305, and φλέγουσαν 308). Indeed, this fire is so brilliant that it is compared to "some sun" (ὡς τίς ἡλιος 288). But there is deeper significance.

Fire, as the sun itself, can be a very healing or a very destructive force. When she speaks about the beacon fire, Clytemnestra and the chorus would be thinking of the destructive fires at Troy. But as the chorus would consider as well the life-bringing news of the beacon: Agamemnon is on his way home (note their joy in lines 351-354); Clytemnestra alone would imply that the beacon fire heralds destruction, i.e. Agamemnon's death, the healing of her anguish.

Hence, the words for the torch have the same significance for the chorus as they have for the watchman in
the first scene, but for Clytemnestra they hold quite a different implication. As we have seen earlier in the queen's two line greeting to the morn, her use of light imagery is most ironic.

To increase this irony, she echoes the same words (or their derivations) for the beacon which the watchman employs. He uses λαμπάς (6, 8, 28), πῦρ (9, 21), φῶς (23), φρυκτός (30), and a kindred word φρυκτωρία (33). We have discussed Clytemnestra's use of πῦρ; she also employs λαμπάς (287, 296), the adjective λαμπρός (281), the compounds ἀντελαμπάνει (294) and λαμπαδηφόρων (312), φρυκτός (282, 292), and φῶς (292, 300, 302, 311). Note that she calls the beacon φῶς. This is most ironic. The guard adopts the same word, as we have seen, to mean salvation as well as light. For Clytemnestra, this light of salvation signifies salvation in her just retribution upon Agamemnon.

I have pointed out that Clytemnestra mentions Hephæstus, god of fire, in the very first line of her speech. This deity is also the blacksmith of the immortals, the finest artificer in metals. The queen sees herself as an artisan too, the creator of the whole relay system. By mentioning the god, she adds significance and pride to her own work. She follows the beacon in detail from its origins on Mount Ida to the end of its
journey, Argos.

In the second line of the speech, Clytemnestra introduces the dominant theme of relay: "And beacon ever sent beacon hither by means of the courier fire." (φως τος δε φωνηται δεευρ' ἀπ' ἀγγάρου πυρδῆς/ἐπεμεν. 282-283)

This first statement conveys the general concept of relay particularly well by the juxtaposition of subject and object. To continue this image of fire lighting fire, Aeschylus uses a word with significant connotations ἄγγαρος. This refers to the mounted courier posted at regular intervals throughout the Persian empire for carrying royal dispatches. Herodotus calls his work ἀγ-γαρίου and compares it to the torch race in honor of Hephaestus. From his description, a very important element in the picture of this courier for the Greeks seems to be the process of sending a message in relays. Clytemnestra's description of the fire as ἄγγαρον is thus most appropriate. At the end of her speech, with artistic point and emphasis, she returns to this essential characteristic of the relay; she points to her "rules for the torchbearers one from another in succession, supplied to the full" (λαμπαδηφόρων νόμοι, / ἄλλου παρ' ἄλλου διαδοχαῖς πληρούμενοι. 312-313). By the word "torchbearers" she thus alludes to the Lampadeiphoria at Athens, a torch race done in relay.
Let us now return to the queen's description of the beacon itself within the framework of the relay. Toward the beginning of the speech, the beacon is more literally a fire lit by men, but as the speech moves to its close, the torch picks up speed, as it were, of its own accord, and becomes a living being.39

In line 281, Hephaestus sends a bright "torch" (σέλας) from Mount Ida. In line 284, a "huge torch" (μεγαν παινόν) from the second station at Lemnos is received by the third position, Athos. By line 287, the torch moves by its own impetus, "the strength of the travelling torch," (λοχδσ πορευτος λαμπάδος) as it "skims the back of the sea" (πόντου ὅπτε ὑπτισαί, 286). The torch is like a skiff carried along by a good wind. In lines 288-289, the beacon is like a "pine-tree blaze transmitting, like a sun, its golden radiance to the look-out of Makistos" (πεῦκη τὸ χρυσοφεγγές ὡς τὸς ἅλιος/σέλας παραγγελιάσας Μακιστοῦ σκοπαῖς). When it leaves Makistos, the torch seems to move like an animate human being: "And after, over the streams of Euripus, the beacon's light gave the watchers of Messapion the sign of its arrival." (ἐκας ἐκ φρυκτοῦ φῶς ἐπ' Εὐρίπου ὁδᾶς/Messapίου φύλαξι σημαίνει μολόν. 292-293)

In the transmission of the torch, the divine impetus has been the dominant, although not the only, note;
now we turn with special emphasis to the human agents involved. In lines 294-295, men supply the impetus: "They kindled an answering flare and sent the tidings onward, by setting fire to a stack of Jared heath." (οι δ' ἀντέλαμψαν καὶ παρῆγγειλαν πρόσω/γραλας ἔρεικες θωμάν απαντες πυρ.) But once again it picks up its own speed: "And the vigorous torch, not yet growing dim, leaped, like the shining moon, over the plain of Asopus to the rock of Kithairon." (οἴδενοσα λαμπάς δ' οὐδὲ τῷ μαυρομένην./ ὑπερθορούσα πεδίου Ἀσόπου, δίκην/φαινάς σελήνης, πρὸς Κιθαιρόνος λέπας. 296-298) The torch seems alive. This personification of the light is continued in line 299; while the beacon remains on Kithairon it is called a "sender fire" (πομποῦ πυρος). In lines 300-301, the torch is a guest: "And the far-sent light was not re-rejected by the watchpost." (φῶς δὲ τηλέπομπων οὐκ ἴνα/νευτο/φρουρᾶ.) In line 306, it is "a great beard of flame" (φλογὸς μέγαν πάγωνα).

By this time, the beacon, as it approaches its destination, Argos, picks up speed. Through careful choice of vocabulary and a watchful eye toward structure, the poet describes these final movements of the beacon.

When the light leaves the watchpost mentioned in line 301, it "shot over the Gorgon-eyed lake and reached the mountain of the roaming goats" (λίμνη δ' ὑπὲρ
γοργώπιν ἐσκητευ ϕάος, ὡρος τ' ἐπ' αἰγίπλαγτον ἐξ-ικνούμενον 302-303). Note the rapidity connoted in the verb, although this idea of fast motion is followed by a short interlude of inactivity and slow movement for the beacon. Upon its arrival, we are told that the torch "urged (the watchpost) not to neglect(?), the ordinance of fire" (ὑπομενε θεομον τη χαριζοθαι πυρος 304). In line 305, the beacon begins moving, but it is a slow movement with exterior impetus: "And they with stintless might kindled and sent on a great beard of flame." (πεμ-πουσι δ' ανδαλοτες ἀφθόνι μένει/φλογις μέγαν πάγωμα. 305-306) In the same vain, in line 307, it simply "passes over" (ὑπερβάλλειν) the promontory that looks down upon the Saronic straits. In the next line, though, the fire is coming to life as it "blazes onward" (φλέγουσαν 308). The momentum begins to build. The beacon "then shot down; then it arrived" (εἰτ' ἐσκητευ, εἰτ' ἀφικετο 308). Note that these are basically the same two words used of the beacon's rapid movement in lines 302-303, but here they are closer together and thus convey a sense of an even swifter motion. But the beacon has only arrived at the neighboring city. One line later, "it shot down here to the house of the Atreidae." (κακεῖτ' ἀτρείδων ἐς τόθε σκήτει ατέγος. 310) The poet carefully employs the same verb "to shoot down" (σκήτεια) to portray the
accelerated pace in these final swift movements.

I should like to digress for a moment on a particular aspect of Clytemnestra's itinerary for the beacon, for it will help elucidate, as we shall see, a facet of the important implications in the use of light imagery. As Clytemnestra is most conscious of the light's rapidity, she emphasizes its origins and is very careful to enumerate the localities over which the beacon passes. Many, with validity, remark that the enumeration of these places by Clytemnestra demonstrates Aeschylus' geographical knowledge. But Aeschylus is a dramatist, not a topographer. He places these words in Clytemnestra's mouth for a dramatic purpose. The queen is very proud of her achievement in organizing a most complex system of relays to inform her of her husband's welfare. This pride is especially evident toward the end of her speech where she declares: "Such you see are the rules I arranged for my torchbearers." (τοιούτε τοι μοι λαμπαδηφόρων νόμοι.) By mentioning all of these specific geographical localities, the queen impresses the chorus with her arrangement of the relay and her scrutiny of every piece of ground over which the beacon passes.

Twice she refers to locales by description rather than geographical name: "mountain of the roaming goats" (ὁρὸς αἰγίπλαγτον 303) and "Gorgon-eyed lake" (λίμνη
Fraenkel, though he attempts to identify them geographically, holds that it is impossible to determine why Aeschylus uses "fancy names" to describe a lake and a mountain, perhaps for the sake of variety. But this is not sufficient reason for Aeschylus' art. These descriptions demonstrate the queen's detailed knowledge of particular localities.

But perhaps more important to her than all of these localities, which she mentions either by circumlocution or by geographical description, is the place of the beacon's origin, Mount Ida. She makes note of it not only in the first line of her speech "from Mount Ida" (281) but also returns to it at the conclusion of her description of the relay. In this latter reference, she emphasizes that the beacon which landed in Argos is taken from the beacon at Troy: "this light, the genuine offspring of its ancestor, the fire from Mount Ida" (οδὸς τὸδ' ὦον ἀπαντοῦ Ἴδαλον πυροῖ 311).

In summary, Clytemnestra has filled her speech with words of brightness, many of which directly echo those of the watchman. She carefully describes the movement of the beacon which at first moves slowly but soon picks up momentum. By the end of the speech, the light becomes a living person rushing to Argos. The queen is most meticulous in her recounting of the beacon's journey. She points out the geographical names of the relay posts as
well as descriptive terms for a couple of localities.

But what does all of this mean? As in Clytemnestra's opening lines, the light imagery holds different significance for different people. For both Clytemnestra and the chorus, the light of the beacon portends joy at Agamemnon's return. In fact, because of the human qualities of the torch, the light becomes a symbol of Agamemnon himself. Just as it rushes toward Argos, so does he. The chorus may be impressed with Clytemnestra's painstaking effort to set up such a complex relay system in order to be informed of her husband's welfare,

Yet, Clytemnestra's joy is a terrible one; the beacon rushing home is Agamemnon who is about to die. Her extremely detailed account of the relay betrays her devotion and care; for the chorus, this is as it should be for a devoted wife. But Clytemnestra's concern is the meticulous working out of his death.

Furthermore, the fire of the torch is a direct offspring of the beacon at Troy. This fire signifying Troy's destruction will mean, on Argive soil, the destruction of Agamemnon. Just as Zeus shot the arrow that "darted down" to kill Paris, so the beacon "darts down" to Argos bringing a swift and just end to Clytemnestra's husband.

This concept of justice is also enhanced by the
image of light. This beacon portends not only destruction but also justification of that destruction. Clytemnestra designates the beacon as "the ordinance of fire" (Θεομον πυρος ἔθνος). This word is commonly used of divine decrees (cf. Eumenides 391) and here appropriately conveys a sense of divine justice of which Clytemnestra believes she is the agent. Just as Troy fell by fire at the gods' will (Agamemnon says that you can still see the smoke and embers in lines 818-820), so, in Clytemnestra's view, the torch coming from Troy itself heralds the destruction of Agamemnon through the gods' will.

Also, the torch affirms the vague forebodings of the first choral ode that the conflict at Troy is the source of troubles to come; the link in the chain of human and divine circumstances is unbroken.

Finally, the momentum of the light reflects the increasing intensity of Clytemnestra's own exultant joy. It is of an ever moving brilliance at times slowed down by uncertainty, at times swiftly leaping with self-assured justice until it finally darts down to its passionate goal.

After a brief interjection of joy by the chorus, Clytemnestra continues in typically veiled language and foreshadows the doom of her husband particularly in terms, once again, of light and darkness. But now the guilt of
Agamemnon in her eyes is made even more manifest.

After repeating that the Greeks have taken Troy, she describes the horrors which Trojans have endured at the hands of the Greeks, sufferings that prompt them to impious acts: "The battle's night-roving toil sets them famished down to make their breakfast on what what is the town." (τοῦς δ' αὔτε νυκτὶ ἔλαμψα τοῖς ἐκ μάχης πόνος / νῆσος-τεῖς πρὸς ἄρεστοισιν ὡς ἔχει πόλις/τάσας.330-332) The watchman uses this same word "night-roving" (12) to describe his noble toil of keeping watch for his master. The result of his labor is seeing the beacon. But the adjective also has sinister implications for those within the palace. In Clytemnestra's speech, the word carries similar connotations. It is associated with a war that inspires infamous labor: roving about to feast upon a town. Indeed the entire city is destroyed. Nothing is spared, as the herald says (535-536).43 Agamemnon and his army are guilty of an act against the gods for which they will be punished, in particular, their responsible leader.

Clytemnestra then speaks most accurately when she says that: "Like men of blessed fortune, they (the army) will sleep all the night, the kindly time, without a watch to keep." (ἂς δ' εὐδαίμονες/ἄφθαλτον εὐδήσουσιν πάσαν εὕρονήν. 336-337) In their sleep without
interruption, they merely resemble such happy people, for they are yet tailing (330), and they will suffer further for their excesses at Troy. Again the kindly time of night forebodes only terror to come.

In their following ode, the chorus express joy over Clytemnestra's assurances that Troy has indeed fallen. They begin: "O Zeus, the king, and friendly Night who possesses great ornaments" (Ὣ Ζεὺς βασιλεύ καὶ Νυξ φιλία/μεγάλων κόσμων πτερόεινα 355-356) and then go to describe how these forces have captured the city (357-361). The chorus thus praise Zeus and the actual time of night that witnesses the destruction of Troy and gives birth to the joyful dawn. In this case, "ornaments" would be the stars, the moon, the planets: imagery that recalls the ominous joy of the watchman who counts the stars. At the same time, though, the chorus personify Night as a powerful force and associate her with almighty Zeus. In this case, line 356 may be translated as Night "that has won us possession of great glories," i.e. Night along with Zeus takes the city. But here too, there are ominous implications, for the capture of Troy was not untainted. By both references, therefore, "friendly Night" yet again becomes replete with irony.

From the capture of the city, the chorus direct their attention to Zeus' actions against its leader,
Paris. They say that the god "bent his bow for a long
time against Alexander so that the arrow might not alight
without effect, either short of the mark or above the
stars" (ἐπ' Ἀλεξάνδρῳ/τείνουτα πάλαι τόξον, ὅπως ἄν /
μήτε πρὸ καιροῦ μήτε ἀπὸ ἀστων/βέλος ἡλίου σκισθεὶν
363-366). By this phrase, the chorus joyfully describe
the accurate aim of Zeus; but again their reference to
stars recalls the watchman's ominous words.

From Paris, the chorus turn to a more general dis-
cussion of the gods and their action against unjust men.
They reject the view of some men who say that the gods
do not care when men trample upon what is forbidden;
they proclaim that there is no protection for the man
amid excessive luxury who rejects justice (381-384).
Indeed, they declare: "Not hidden is the harm; it shows
forth plainly as a terrible bright light." (οὐκ ἐκρυβηθῇ/
πρέπει δὲ, φῶς αἰνολαμμές, σιγῆς. 388-389) To the clause,
"the harm is not hidden," is added "shows forth plainly."
This latter verb provides the positive compliment to the
negative verb. This positive verb has been used before
of flame and light, e.g. line 30, and this leads to the
image of a "terrible bright light." By this stylistic
device, the idea is first presented in the verb and then
intensified in a substantival expression. 47 In lines
388-389, Aeschylus bombards the audience with images of
light and through artful means makes us intensely aware
that no man is able to hide the guilt of injustice. The
man's guilt shines forth like a light; to elaborate this
point even further, the chorus declare that "Like base
bronze, when rubbed and battered, so he (the guilty man)
becomes indelibly black when brought to justice" (μακοῦ
dὲ χαλκοῦ τρόπον /τρίβωι τε καὶ προσβολαῖς μελαμ-
pωνῆς πέλευ/δικαίωθες 390-393). When bronze has the
proper mixture of copper and tin, it has a bright luster
with rubbing. If it contains lead, however, it will turn
black, and rubbing will only bring out that ebonite ap-
pearance. The chorus use this latter fact to describe
the situation of a guilty man. When he is brought to
justice, the fair color of his personality, that formerly
showed on the surface, does not return; instead, his
black guilt shows through as an indelible stain.48

The artistry in the lines is great; the significance
is tremendous. Though the chorus declare Paris to be the
type of individual who has acted against the gods (399),
another person, in fact, comes to mind. Clytemnestra
has just described the army of Agamemnon as going down
to "make their breakfast" on the town; she raises fears
that this expedition will not cease from defiling that
which is sacred. The chorus (without realizing it?) is
describing Agamemnon.49
To reiterate, the chorus refer to the guilt of a man as "showing forth plainly as a terrible bright light." These words reecho the words of the watchman in describing the beacon: "show forth plainly" (πρὸς 30) and "light" (φῶς 23). Finally, the adjective "terrible bright" has the root ἀμμίς that figures in words for the beacon, such as ἀμμιστήρ (22). Light, though usually a symbol for life and joy, proclaims the homecoming of Agamemnon and his death at his wife's hands. The sacrificial fires of Clytemnestra, enkindled from the beacon's news, and the brilliant light of her beacon speech are symbolic of her tremendous joy; her husband is coming home for slaughter. Only now do we fully comprehend how truly "terribly bright" is the light of the beacon.

Agamemnon's death and Agamemnon's guilt converge in the inherent symbolism "terrible bright light."

After discussing the injustice of Paris, the chorus turn to Helen and the destruction she brought with her. By means of light imagery, they keep before the audience the sufferings of the Greeks at Troy. Ares "sends back from Ilion to the kinsmen what has felt the fire" (τωρόθηκε Ἐ Ἰλίον ἀπὸ τὸν ἄμμιστήριον ἴππα, 440-441). Indeed, this light is most terrible, a symbol of the sufferings at Troy. Is it any wonder that the chorus say that the people are muttering against the sons of Atreus (456-457)?
Greeks died for another man's wife.

These themes lead into the final antistrophe which is dominated by darkness. The chorus open their second stasimon with praise for the darkness of night; in the last part, they close with a fear for the darkness of impending doom.

They begin this section with a reference to the angry, dangerous murmurings of the citizens: "An anxious thought persists in my mind, to hear something covered in night." (μένει δ’ ἀγαθόν τι μοι/μέριμνα νυκτερείς. 459-460) These lines refer particularly to Troy's capture under darkness, the joyful theme with which the chorus begin this ode. But these words also recall their earlier anxiety over the possible ominous news that comes in the night (99-100) and the foreboding thoughts of the watchman, as he waits for the beacon in the darkness. As the chorus continue, their words too become most ominous. In line 462, as before, they reflect that gods are not mindful of men who cause much bloodshed:

The dark ἔρινες in the course of time, when a man is prosperous without justice, by wearing away his life in a reverse of fortune, render him dim and faint." (καλάς — ναὶ δ’ ἔρινες χρόνωι τυχαίοι σωτ’ ανεν δίκαιος παλλομενει τρίβας βλου τιθεῖν άμαιρος . 462-466)
The thought of line 464 echoes line 382: the house teems with excessive wealth. That the Erinyes rub away a man's life recalls the guilty man compared to base bronze when it is rubbed (390-393), and "rendering him dim and faint" suggests "indelibly black" (392). Like the general references earlier in the ode, these lines point to Agamemnon. His black guilt appropriately results in a visitation by the Erinyes, the daughters of Night in 'eschylus, the embodiment of horrifying darkness.

The anxious wish of the chorus to hear something covered in night refers to their concerns about Troy's destruction. But in view of their statement about the guilty man, that "something" also forebodes the impending doom of Agamemnon. The chorus, then, begin the ode with praise of friendly night but, towards the conclusion, anticipate a visit by her terrible daughters.

But the chorus describe the guilt and punishment of an impious man not only in terms of darkness but also with imagery of light. They earlier describe his guilt as "a terrible bright light" (φῶς ἄνολαμπς 389); now they state that this brightness incurs "a lightning bolt from Zeus" (Δίδυμος κεραυνός 470), a flash that blinds and kills. Perhaps the chorus are thinking of Paris as the guilty man, for, earlier (363-366), they relate how Zeus sends his missile down upon him. But, from the context, Agamemnon is again implied.
The horror of Troy's destruction and Agamemnon's guilt and doom are brought into focus with imagery of terrifying light and darkness. But the words of the chorus are made all the more powerful by the inherent irony. They do not fully realize that, as they describe the terrible fate befalling an impious man, they are foretelling Agamemnon's death.

Before we consider the light imagery that concludes the ode, we should note the description and the action of the Erinyes. They are black and make their victims like themselves, dim and dark. Such is their frightening role in the trilogy, particularly in the last play where they appear on stage in pursuit of Orestes. But, at this early point in the trilogy, they are at work with Zeus and his lightning bolt. Indeed their mother, Night, earlier in the ode, is praised in connection with Zeus. The harmony between him and the daughters of Night at the end of the trilogy is thus already implicit.56

Until now, the chorus have assumed the fall of Troy, but now they raise doubts about the veracity of the beacon (475-502).57 In terms of light and darkness, they express doubts about anyone who should be excited over the unexpected news which a beacon brings; they want a firsthand witness. A swift rumor has spread through the city "from a fire that has brought good tidings" (νυμφαί
δ' ὅπ' εὐαγγέλου 475). But who knows if it be true? What sort of person would let his "heart be fired by a flame's unexpected message" (φλογὸς παραγγέλμασιν/νέοις πυρωθέντα καρδίαν 480-481). A woman would give thanks before she knows the facts for certain. But "Too easily persuasive, a woman's ordinance spreads fast-travelling." (πιθανὸς ἣναυ ὁ θηλὼς ὄρος ἐπινεμεται/ταχύπυρος 485-486)58 The chorus express their doubts with words that recall the beacon. "Spread" (ἐπινεμεται) is often used of fire,59 and, coupled with "fast-travelling" (ταχύπυρος), it recalls the queen's description of the beacon speeding on from Troy (281-312). They speak of "fire" (πῦρ 475) and "flame" (φλογὸς 480), the very words that Clytemnestra uses for the beacon (304, 306). Furthermore, the imagery of fire looks back to the queen's sacrifices of joy while "be fired" (πυρωθέντα 481) echoes "what has felt the fire" (πυρωθέν 440), an adjective with which the chorus describe the horrors of Troy. With these implications, the words of the chorus become most ominous. The beacon fire inflames Clytemnestra to sacrifices for joyful revenge as the foreboding fires of Troy recoil upon Agamemnon.

When the chorus finish their ode, Clytemnestra prepares for the herald's entrance by a brief speech. With imagery of light and darkness, she notes the difference between knowing of Troy's destruction from a signal fire
and hearing the news from a live witness:

We shall soon know about the transfers of fire and the beaconings of light-bearing torches, whether they be true or whether this light that came so pleasingly has beguiled our minds like a dream.

(τάχεις ἐλούμεσθα λαμπάδων φανοφόρων φρυγκτυρίμων τε καὶ πυρὸς παραλλαγάς, εἴτε οὖν ἀληθεῖς εἴτε δυειρατῶν δίκην τεσσάρων τὸ ἔλθον φῶς ἐφήλωσεν φρένας.
489-492)

She is reassured and says:

I see a herald from the shore beneath the shade of olive branches.

Thus, not voiceless, nor kindling the flame of mountain timber for you, will he make signs by smoke and fire.

(κῆρυκῆ ἀπ' ἀκτῆς τοῦ ὄρου κατάθοκοι κλάδοις ἐλαίας. 493-494)

Her joy anticipates that of the herald who will confirm the validity of the beacon in similar terms of light. But her imagery has ominous and ironic implications. In her description of the beacon, she echoes the watchman's words: "fire" (πυρὸς 21), "light" (φῶς 23), "torch" (λαμπάδι 28), and "beaconing" (φρυγκτυρίας 33) and thus recalls his foreboding joy. Unlike him, she knows full well the significance of the beacon's light, revenge. Indeed, she alludes to this vengeance in her speech. To others, the herald's brow, darkened with olive branches, would mean the triumphant homecoming of the army, 60 but,
for the queen, it means a triumph over her husband who will soon lie in the darkness of death.

With this introduction, the herald appears. In his first speech, he describes his absence, hails his homeland, and portrays Agamemnon in terms of light. In the second line, after he salutes the earth of his fathers, he says: "In this light of the tenth year, I have come to you." (δεκατόυ σε φέγγει τῶιδ' ἀφικόμην ἔτους. 504) The light of this day brings the herald joyfully home, but it also connotes the destruction of Troy, a joyous end to the sufferings of war. To be home and safe from war means everything to the herald; he cannot realize that this light also brings him home to witness terrible events.

Again he salutes his country: "Now I say, Hail O land, Hail O light of the sun!" (ὡς χαῖρε μὲν χάους, χαῖρε δ' ἣλιου φῶς. 508) Significantly, he connects the salutation of his homeland with a light, indeed, the sun itself. But this light he calls φῶς which, as seen before, means salvation as well as light, an appropriate word with which to salute his home, for now he is safe. The light, as a sun, recalls Clytemnestra's imagery of the beacon (286) and thus its significance for her. Once again, there is irony in the different concepts of the beacon.
The herald gratefully goes on to invoke Zeus, Apollo, Hermes, and all the gods. Like Clytemnestra, he sees his salvation as divinely ordained. He continues his salutation with more light imagery. He hails the halls of the palace and the deities therein: "O halls of our kings, beloved abode, and august seats, and sun-facing deities" (ιδι μέλαθρα βασιλέων, φίλαι θέλαι / σεμνοὶ τε θάκοι δαίμονές τε αυτήλιοι 518-519). He invokes them to receive Agamemnon with "bright-shining eyes" (φαίδοοίσι τοῖσι δώμασιν 520). These words of brightness refer to the morning sunshine lighting up the statues of the deities and their welcoming expressions. The light thus reflects the herald's own joy. But the joy of the deities has sinister connotations in terms of divine retribution.

In these first seventeen lines, the herald, then, is exuberant about his safe return and cries out salutations made brilliant by light imagery. It is only after this overflow of emotions that he announces the arrival of Agamemnon and the events at Troy. Here too, he uses the imagery of light. He implores the house and its gods to welcome the king so long absent: "for he has come bringing light in the night, the kindly time, for you" (ἂνει γὰρ θινὸν φῶς ἐν εὐφρόνηι φέρων 522). The imagery recalls the opening of the play where the physical light
of the beacon shines forth in physical darkness. But this light which Agamemnon brings is called φῶς, the same word used to describe the light of the sun earlier in the herald's speech (508). Truly, this light is literally brilliant. But once again, φῶς also means salvation. The hope is that the darkness of troubles in a house without a king will be dispelled by the light of Agamemnon. In this word φῶς, then, the herald unites physical light and spiritual hope, both of which emphasize the exuberance that the herald feels and the joy that the people should experience. But again there is the ironic implication that Agamemnon will come home to fulfill the light of retribution for the gods and Clytemnestra. Thus, the euphemism "kindly night" is once again ambiguous.

After the declaration of Agamemnon's arrival, the herald exults in the success at Troy. The king "has dug down Troy with the mattock of Zeus, the bringer of justice" (Τροιαν κατασκάψαντα τοῦ δικηφόρου / Δίδις μακέλ-λη 525-526). And here lies the rub. As we said before, Agamemnon commits a crime against the gods by utterly destroying Troy; for that act, he will in turn be punished. He comes home to die at his wife's hands. Thus, at the end of his first speech, the herald innocently and unknowingly calls to mind the terrible events about to happen. Instead of an image of great joy, the light
becomes a "terrible bright light" (φῶς αὐνομάτες 389) heralding the king's death.

From events at Troy, the herald turns to affairs at home. When he asks if the people missed the army, the chorus reply that "so much so that I often groaned aloud from a dark and weakened spirit" (ὡς πόλλ' ἀμαυρᾶς ἐκ φρενός ἀπονευείν 546); the imagery appropriately describes their anxiety over the outcome and safety of the expedition. But something else troubles them. When the herald asks: "Whence came this dispirited gloom?" (πόθεν τὸ δυσφρον τοῦτ ἐπῆς στόγος; 547), they answer that silence is best. When he asks if they fear someone, they reply that their anxiety is so great as to make death pleasing. The gloom of the chorus, therefore, results also from the terror that Clytemnestra and Aegisthus instill and thus foreshadows their sadness over Agamemnon's death.

As the herald does not realize the full implications of his words, the meaning of the chorus alludes him. He can only think of his homecoming and the success at Troy and immediately launches into another exuberant speech. He tells of the success at Troy, then, meticulously depicts the suffering at Priam's city: the bird-killing winter, the terrible heat. But all this distress is past, and he, as well as others, is safe. "Therefore it is
meet that, to the light of the sun, we should make this boast, we who soared over land and sea: "Troy is taken. (ὡς κομπασαν τῷ ἔλεοι ἡλιον φασι οὔτε ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ χθονίς ποτωμένοις 575-576)

For the herald, the description of past sorrows serves as a foil to the present joy over Troy's fall, making it all the more prominent. This success at Ilion is to be heralded to the sun itself. Again the herald mentions that brilliant light of the heavens, for him a symbol of joy. Yet, because of events to come, the sorrows of the past become foreshadowings of future horror. The boast of success is a boast of transgression against the gods, an act to be repaid. The bright light of the sun will be a "terrible bright light" shining on the king's death.

The herald is blind to all of this. He exemplifies the eternal blindness of men duped by success. They do not realize that if success is bought by means of unjust acts, they will sooner or later pay the penalty. The herald's blindness is like that of Agamemnon and foreshadows it. The king will also be taken in by recent memories of Troy's capture and will not try to understand what the chorus are telling him.66

Even though the herald does not realize the import of what he says and is blind to the words of the chorus,
the joy over his homecoming and his victorious return is untainted with insincerity or malicious hopes. His reaction calls to mind the joyful emotions of the guard beholding the beacon and Clytemnestra describing her relay. The contrast is all the more evident because the herald uses the same words of light ἱλιος and ἱλιος as both the guard and Clytemnestra use to describe the beacon. As the guard is truly happy to see the beacon which declares his master's return, so the herald is sincerely joyful over the homecoming. Quite a contrast is Clytemnestra who proclaims joy that her husband is finally home so that she may murder him. Ironically, as we have seen, we can hear the herald through the ears of the queen; her ambiguities are deliberate, his completely innocent.

This contrast between the herald and Clytemnestra is brought into even sharper focus when she describes her reaction to the beacon after his two joyous speeches. She again employs the imagery of light to display her joy, but her ambiguities are consistent and intentional.

She first tells how she let out a cry of joy "when the first fiery messenger came in the night" (ὅτ' ἦλθ' ὁ πρῶτος νάχιος ἄγγαλος πυρὸς 588). She is careful to stress that she is so anxious to hear of her husband's welfare that, even at the first signal, she is most hopeful.
People reproach her since she believes that Troy is taken "because of fire signals" (φωτισμὸς διὰ 590). But she, nonetheless, continues her offerings of thanksgiving: "lulling the incense-fed fragrant flame" (θυρήφαγον κοιμώμενος εὔδη φλόγα 597). She is trying to impress the herald with the faithfulness of a good wife, but her echoes of earlier lines, both of the watchman and the herald himself, remind us that the faithfulness is to divine retribution. As seen before, this light means Agamemnon is coming home to die at her hands.

This irony is pursued with further imagery of light. She tells the herald that she must hasten to receive her lord in the best way: "for what light is sweeter for a wife to behold" than her husband safe from the fields? (τι γὰρ γυναικὶ τοῦτον φέγγος ἡδίου δρακέν 601-602)

The herald, of course, does not perceive the queen's real intentions.

After the queen speaks, the chorus ask the herald whether or not Menelaus is alive. He responds that no one could give a clear report "save Helios who fosters life on the earth" (παῖν τοῦ τρέφουσας Ἠλίου χθονὸς φῶσιν 633). The herald recalls his exultation in the warm rays of the sun, which greets him on his return; we recall the irony involved.

When the chorus inquire about the storm that
destroyed the fleet, images of light and darkness appear in his reply. He declares that when a messenger "with a gloomy countenance" (στρυγμεί προσώπῳ 639) brings home news of an army fallen, then it is right to utter "this paean of the Erinyes" (παέαν τοῦ Ερινύων 645).

Note the images of darkness in "gloomy" and "Erinyes;" they of course contrast with the herald's joy previously expressed in terms of light; they also anticipate the evils to come.

Aeschylus has included the striking phrase "paean of the Erinyes" in his imagery of darkness. This is most appropriate in view of what follows. The herald notes that the gods, angry with the Achaeans, cause the storm (649). The army offends the gods by their impious actions at Troy; the gods, in turn, bring retribution of a storm while the avenging sisters joyfully cry out their victory song. These deities, with their paean of victory, foreshadow Clytemnestra, who believes that she is their agent. (At the end of the play in line 1433, she declares that by the Erinyes she justly kills her husband and refers to herself, in line 1501, as an ancient fierce spirit.)

With these introductory remarks, the herald begins his description of the storm. Those elements, which beforehand were enemies, "fire and sea" (πῦρ καὶ θάλασσα
651) swear alliance and destroy the fleet. "During the night" (ἐν ὕπαιτι 653), the storm rages on, but "when the bright light of the sun comes up" (ἐπεὶ δ' ἀνήλθε λαμπρὸν ἥλιον φῶς 658), the Aegean blossoms with corpses and wrecks. "Then, having escaped watery Hades, in the clear bright day" (ἐπείτα δ' Ἀιόν πνευμόν τε φεγγότος/ λευκὸν κατ ήμαρ 667-668), the few survivors reflect upon their unexpected disaster.

There is much imagery of light and darkness, all of it significant. "Fire" recalls light as a destructive force. The word also looks back to the devastating fires which herald Agamemnon's death. Night houses the storm at sea, but some escape Hades; soon the black night of Hades will surround the house of Agamemnon. The bright sun exposes the bodies of the dead men floating on the sea; that same sun, which the herald joyfully greeted, will, by implication, shine down upon the bodies of Agamemnon and Cassandra. In the clear light of day, the survivors reflect upon what happened; with the clear light of understanding, the chorus, witnesses of the murders, will realize what has been going on in the house.

Toward the end of his speech, the herald again mentions Menelaus: "but if some ray of the sun observes him" (ἐὰν δ' οὖν τις ἀντίς ἥλιον μιν ἱστορεῖ 676), there is hope that he will come home. The herald is so taken up with
his own homecoming and the glorious sun that greets him
that he expresses a hope of Menelaus' return in terms of
sunlight. But again the light of the sun is ambiguous.

When the herald finishes his reflections, he leaves
to fetch Agamemnon. The chorus then present their third
stasimon in which they provide moral indictment for both
Clytemnestra and Agamemnon. Since the herald just spoke
of Menelaus, the chorus think of Helen and open the
ode by indicting her as a destroyer of towns and men.
They continue in their tirade against her and, in lines
717-726, compare her to a lion cub raised in a person's
house, a tame pet fond of the children. Like a child,
it would look "bright-eyed to the hand" (φαίδρωπος ποτι
χειρα 725). But when it grows up, the lion returns and
slaughters the flocks of the house (730-731).

Note the image of light in "bright-eyed." Light is
used to describe the warm affection of the cub, but the
cub turns into a savage beast. Clytemnestra ironically
uses light to describe her faithfulness to her husband,
aloyalty to his murder. She is like the lion cub that
turns on its master. The word "bright-eyed" also echoes
the word used by the herald to describe the eyes of the
deities as they welcome home Agamemnon, "bright-shining"
(φαίδροι 520). Thus, the adjective here recalls the
just retribution in store for the king. But Helen is
not only a lion cub; she is also "an Erinys" (Ἑρώνες 749). As before, Helen foreshadows Clytemnestra, who is the vengeful fury.⁶⁹

After their rebuke of Helen, the chorus turn to a general discussion of insolence:

soon or later, when the appointed light of childbirth comes, it (hybris) breeds a daemon against which neither battle nor war avail, an impious black punishment for the house, one that resembles its children.

The chorus use two images usually associated with goodness, childbirth, and light to describe something frightening. They probably think of the disaster that came upon Paris' house. The image of light looks back to the "bright-eyed" (725) lion cub, and so they consider the daemon to be Helen, that impious woman who brought sorrows to many a house.

But we cannot avoid the implications of their words in relation to Agamemnon's house. The word φῶς often describes the beacon and so carries connotations of terror. In this context, it may refer to the light of day appointed for Agamemnon to receive dark punishment. The daemon, as the lion cub, is Clytemnestra full of "impious boldness." But the connotations of their words are even
more far reaching. They speak of dark punishment "that resembles its children." Clytemnestra's vengeance upon Agamemnon will be paralleled, in the Choephori, by that of her child, Orestes, upon her. In the Eumenides, the punishment upon the house will become truly "black" in the form of the Furies themselves.

As the chorus continue in their discussion, they declare:

Justice shines in sooty dwellings.

but the gold-bespangled foundations where there is filth upon the hands she forsakes with eyes averted and goes to what is clean.

(Δίκαι δε λάμπε, μην έν δυσκάπνυσι δάμασιν. 774-775)

We have seen light both as a destructive power and as a healing force. In these lines, both concepts are artfully combined. The true light of justice shines forth amid squalor, but, merged with this contrast, is the antithesis between the brightness of justice and the false gleam of the house. The sooty house of the poor and just man is clean (and bright); the brilliance of the mansion is, in reality, unclean (dark).

These lines, then, contrast the impoverished, honest
man with the proud, rich aristocrat through the artistic use of light and darkness. But their significance is profound, for, a few lines later, Agamemnon will come to the palace celebrating the splendor of a great victory, that is purchased with sinful deeds. His wife will regally receive him and lure him to trample down the purple carpets. Agamemnon is like the rich, proud man whose brilliance Justice will forsake. In these last few lines, without full knowledge, the chorus pass moral judgement on Agamemnon and his house.

When Agamemnon arrives, he makes his protestations to the gods and gives advice to the citizenry. Like the herald, he is so engrossed in his victory that he is completely blind to the words of the chorus, who warn that something is amiss in the house. He glorifies his victories abroad and discusses the state of affairs at home; in both cases, he uses light and dark imagery which involves more significance that even he himself realizes.

He boasts of his complete destruction of Troy:
"by the smoke, the conquered city is even yet easily recognized; the gusts of destruction are alive, but the embers, struggling against death, send forth rich breaths of wealth." (κατω τοιῷ καὶ λουτρικά μὲν ἐτεργημον ἄλαθις. / Ἀττῆς θᾶλλαι γενομέναι, οὐσιοκουσάκοι / οὐδενὸς προτεμίμενος | πλούς πλοῦτον πυρός. 818-820) Even as he speaks, the
dark smoke, the glowing embers tell of his total annihilation of the city and remind us of all his impious deeds. In addition, Troy has laden him with much wealth, and he comes to celebrate a splendid victory. The chorus tell us how Justice views the rich house of the proud man. The gusts of destruction are indeed still alive, for Agamemnon has yet to pay the full consequences of his actions. But the king not only condemns himself; he also foreshadows the results of his punishment. Similar to the darkness of smoke, the darkness of gloom will surround his house after his death (Iphoephor 51-53).

The king continues to praise his victory and again uses an ominous image of light and darkness: The army lep the walls of Troy "at the setting of the Pleiades" (Ἀμφι Μειαδῶν δύσιν 826). The setting of this constellation can refer to a time late in the night or to the approach of winter. In the first case, we are reminded of the ruthless punishment and misery brought upon the Trojans as they lay asleep. In the latter case, the poet calls to mind the season of storms, a bad time for sailing according to Hesiod (Erge 618-620), and thus implies the frightening storm described by the herald. By his imagery, therefore, Agamemnon recalls his impious deeds. Again he unwittingly condemns himself and foreshadows the dark storm of evil soon to befall him and
his household.

When he turns to home affairs, he again demonstrates his own blindness. He says that he knows the feelings of people: few men do not envy a fortunate friend. He calls those who seem very gracious to him "the image of a shadow" (εἴδωλον σκίας 839). "Shadow" would of course connote something that lacks substance, and Agamemnon rightly notes that many of his flatterers have no real love for him. But "shadow" is also an image of darkness; it means "shade." Indeed the queen uses the word later to describe her husband and his murder (967). Again there is irony in the king's protestation.

Toward the end of his speech, he declares that he and all of the townspeople will endeavor to rid the city of disease "by either wise burning or cutting" (τοιο οἰκονομεῖς ἀπετέρωσις εὐφρόνως 849). But his kindling of the fires at Troy have made him diseased. The burning of the surgeon and the flashing of the knife will be a cure when he is stabbed to death.

After his opening speech, the queen proclaims how happy she is at his return, but we know the ambiguity that she intends. She tells her husband how her eyes tired from "weeping over the beacon-watches for him" (τὰς ἀμφί σοι κλαζομα γα μαμπηροχαὶς 890). Toward the end of her speech, she employs a variety of images to
describe him. He is the watchdog of the house, the saving forestay of the ship, the grounded pillar of a high roof. She even calls him "a most beautiful light of day to look upon after a storm" (καλλιστον ἡμαρ εἰσόδειν ἐν χειματος 901). When the queen describes the beacon-relay, the torch takes on human qualities; it becomes a symbol of Agamemnon himself. The herald calls the king a bringer of light after a storm. But, quite ironically, he is the light of her just retribution, which will quell the storm of her revenge; he is her salvation.

After these protestations, Clytemnestra, playing upon his pride, lures the king to trample upon the tapestries. The gods, contests Agamemnon, should be honored with such finery, not mortals. There is grave danger of the gods' anger in such an act; nonetheless, he succumbs. Through the instigations of his wife, he commits another offence against the gods.

Clytemnestra comments on the consequences of his action in her well known discourse on the sea. In images of light and darkness, she declares that the house is now well off, for the king has returned: When the root remains, the foliage returns to the house "stretching over it shade against the Dog Star" (οὐκὶν ὑπὲρ-τείνασα σειριου κυνὸς 967). But the fact is that
his homecoming is the heralding of a horrible light, which will destroy both him and Cassandra. The light of Clytemnestra's retribution will make them both shades in dark Hades.

After the dialogue between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, the chorus sing their last stasimon. They explain their grief over some inexplicable yet definite evil to come. But their vague anxieties are soon turned into concrete fears by a dialogue with Cassandra.

In this final ode, the chorus ask themselves what woe constantly devours their heart. It has been a long time since the fleet went to Ilion, and now they have returned. Yet, the soul within them chants the "dirge of the Erinyes" (ἐρήμου ἔρινθος 992). As they say, their heart does not speak falsely; their mind is conscious of just retribution. They ask: "The black blood once fallen to the ground in front of a man—who by incantation can call it up again?" (τά δ' ἐκείναν πεσοῦ ἄπαθανάσιμου / πρὸς πάρ ἀνδρὸς μέλαν ἁίμα τῆς ἀυ / πάλαι / ἀγαλλίασιτ' ἐπείς διών; 1018-1021). If destiny gave them more knowledge of the future, the chorus would provide it. But such is not their fate. Their heart can only "mutter in the dark" (ὅπδε σκότω βρέμει 1030) while their "mind is ablaze" (ζωπυρουμένας φρενὸς 1034).

The imagery of light and darkness is most effective.
The chorus are uncertain about the nature of future evil; the darkness expresses their ignorance of specific facts. Yet they are certain that the darkness is final and that the future will bring tremendous horror. The blazing fire in their mind expresses both how strongly they realize this fact and how devastating the deed will be. We recall the chorus' earlier words of "a terrible bright light" (329). The deadly song of the Furies, one that the herald felt inappropriate, returns with even stronger connotations of dark revenge. The "black blood" that falls "in front of a man" recalls the deaths for which the king is responsible and foreshadows his own that soon follows. Again the chorus unconsciously predict Agamemnon's murder.74

After the chorus give their evil forebodings, Clytemnestra returns. Again and again she orders Cassandra into the house. The chorus repeat her orders, but the priestess does nothing and says nothing. In frustration, Clytemnestra declares that she has no time to waste outside, "for they, the sheep, already stand at the central hearth ready for the sacrifice of fire" (τα μὲν γὰρ ἑστιν ἡ μῆλα πρὸς οἰκεῖας πυρὸς 1056-1057).75 To the chorus, these sacrifices may be part of the queen's earlier ones in honor of the beacon, but ironically the king stands at his hearth about to be
sacrificed to the gods, as an expiation for his actions.\textsuperscript{77} Cassandra herself is one of the sheep of which the queen speaks. In response to Clytemnestra's words, Cassandra again says nothing. Finally, the queen angrily declares that the girl is mad and storms into the house. Why such silence? What could Cassandra say? She knows that the queen will soon kill her and the king, and no one can change the course of destiny, least of all herself.\textsuperscript{78}

When the queen leaves, Cassandra breaks her silence with a piercing cry: "C woe, woe, woe, woe! Alas! O Apollo! O Apollo" (ὅτωσι πόνοι ἄδηλοι ἰππόλλων ἰππόλλων. 1072-1073) A few lines later, she proclaims the same words (1076-1077). Again in lines 1080 and 1085, she calls out Apollo's name twice. She loudly call upon the god of light whom she twice invokes as her "destroyer" (Ἁπόλλων 1081, 1086). But he will be the light of Clytemnestra's destruction as well, an ominous foreshadowing even before her crimes are accomplished.

At first, the priestess presents her prophecies in a way not understood by the chorus and bears witness to the horrifying truth by breaking silence. She refers to deeds of kindred murder (1091), babes crying because their father devoured their flesh (1096-1097), and an evil plotted in the house (1102). Using light imagery, she talks of the wife "washing clean" (φαίδροντα 1109) her
husband in the bath, a recurrent image of brightness, the significance of which is evident by this time. Yet, the chorus are bewildered by the "dim oracles" (ἐπαργέμοιοι ἡσαφάτοις 1113). The adjective is particularly appropriate, for it refers to a disease in which the eyes are covered by a film. 79

Nonetheless, she continues with her ambiguities. Cassandra asks herself what comes into view: "Some net of Hades. Nay, but the snare that shares his bed, that shares the guilt of his murder." (ὅδε τι τῷ γ' ἀνδρὶ /αλλ' ἄρμης ἡ ξύσευνος, ἡ ἱματία/φόνου. 1115-1117) The imagery of the net used throughout the play is here joined to the image of darkness; Agamemnon will soon be trapped in the robe and the darkness of death. But also, the net of Hades is the one who shares his bed, Clytemnestra, who, as will be seen later, is in her own view an Erinyes. Cassandra concludes this short speech by an invocation to "discord" (στάσις 1117) to raise a shout over the sacrifice to be avenged.

The chorus first express their fear by an image of terrible darkness: "What sort of Erinyes is this that you summon to raise a shout? (πολακ Ἐρινύς τῇ πόθε δόμασιν κέλη /ἐπορθίδει; 1119-1120) They then say that her speech "does not cheer me" (οὐ με φαίδρυσει 1120). But the verb literally means "make bright," an echo of
the same word used in line 1109 to describe the wife bathing the husband. Further, the terror in their heart is the same as that which takes hold of a man struck by a spear "together with the rays of setting life" (τῶν αντίτει βλου δύνατος ἀγαίν). This is the terrifying culmination of the metaphor of Agamemnon as the personification of the torchlight, now to be snuffed out. Ironically, the chorus are unaware of the implications of their words.

Though the chorus are frightened, Cassandra continues in her prophecy: "In a garment she has caught him (Agamemnon) with a black-horned contrivance." (ἐν πελαθοσιῦ μελανκέρω λαβοῦσα μπανήματι. 1126-1127) The contrivance can refer to the instrument that she uses, a festal robe, or to her devising and planning. In both cases, the image of darkness is appropriate. Clytemnestra has planned her husband's murder and makes of a festal robe, a net of death, a fitting symbol of her joy and treachery.80

Cassandra thus prophesies the king's death and goes on to foretell her own. The chorus, though, do not comprehend fully; they are only aware that the prophecy portends something evil.

Finally, Cassandra declares that she will clearly proclaim her oracles; she makes this statement, though,
through a very complex image of light, wind, and wave:

Lo, now will my oracle no longer look out from a veil like a newly-wedded bride, but bright as a fresh wind blowing toward the sunrise, it will arrive so that like a wave there will surge toward the rays of the sun a far greater woe than this. I shall no longer speak in riddles.

1178-1183

Throughout the image, there is a movement from obscurity to clarity. Her oracle will not peer "from a veil;" instead, it is something "bright." She continues this concept of clarity in its movement toward the "sunrise." A noun, though, has yet to be provided for the epithet, "bright." The noun "wind" (contained in πνέων), to which this word applies, appears in line 1181, the next line, and thus begins the added image of movement, for λαμπρός, as the modifier of "wind," means "forceful" as well as "bright." Indeed the two meanings coalesce in "wind," for a brisk wind would sweep the sky of clouds and make it bright. The simile of movement is continued when she likens her oracle to a wave surging on by the impetus of the forceful wind. The image of clarity returns, for the wave moves "toward the rays of the sun" (1182). The
structure is intricately composed in a ring composition with the images appearing in this order: brightness, forcefulness and fast movement of wind, forcefulness and fast movement of wave, and brightness. The structure is further complicated, for the concept of brightness is conveyed in the first part of the simile with the words "to the rising of the sun" (1180) and described by a similar construction at the end "to the rays of the sun" (1182). Yet, through all of this, we do not hear her prophecy, which she carefully saves for the end: "a far greater woe than this." There is a clear reference to Agamemnon's murder, for she soon gives the ancient background of evil to be avenged and the present treachery of the queen (1184-1246).

Significantly, Cassandra uses the same imagery of light and movement as that of Clytemnestra in her beacon speech, but with a different tone and point of view. Both are ominous, but Clytemnestra is ecstatic in the fulfillment of her joy, while Cassandra is racked with terror of the consequences not only for the queen and the house but also for herself.

Likewise, Cassandra echoes the chorus' words in their first stasimon: the future will come "with the rays of the sun" (ἄβγις 254) as she indicates a specific
reason for lamentation, "a far greater woe than this."
By her intricate imagery, she emphasizes the movement
from darkness to the light of the sun, from obscurity
to clarity. Then, in direct language, she answers the
chorus who are bewildered "from her riddles" (ἐτὰ ἀνωγ-
μάτων) and says that she will abandon them (1183). 81

As she gives the details of her prophecy, Cassandra
offsets her imagery of terrible light with that of fright-
ening darkness. For a chorus of happy song mentioned by
the watchman, she substitutes a constantly present chorus
who sing with unpleasant sound, the black "Erinyes proper
to the race" (συγγόνια Ερινύων). They are crying
their chant and besieging the house. With the adjective
"proper to the race," the priestess recalls the terrible
deeds that these dark powers have accomplished and will
perform.

She again refers to Thyestes' feast and gives de-
tails (1217-1222). She says that because of it a lion,
i.e. Clytemnestra, plots revenge against the master on
his return (1223-1226). But the king does not know this,
for she "pleads and spins out her case with a bright
disposition" (λέγει κάπελανα ξασαρόντος δίκην 1229).
Clytemnestra declares joy at her husband's return with
the ironic and extensive use of light, particularly in
her beacon speech, and so makes her case of love and
loyalty. Cassandra sarcastically describes the queen and her lengthy justification in similar terms. Indeed she ironically describes her devising of a plan and the plan itself, for νοῦς has both references. Earlier, in the second ode, we said that the chorus' description of the infamous, "bright-eyed" (φανδρωπός 725) lion referred to Clytemnestra. Now Cassandra echoes that image and its terrible connotations as she calls the queen a lion who greets her master "with a bright disposition."

Cassandra has brilliantly illuminated the queen's evil character through the words of light; next, she does it through an image of darkness. She calls the queen a "raging mother of Hades and one who breathes truceless war against her dear ones" (θέουσαν' Αἰδοὺ μητέρ' ἄσπονδου Ἡρῆ / φλοις πυέουσαν 1235-1236). The image is terrifying in its many implications. The loving mother who gives birth and nourishment is paradoxically associated with the powers of death and destruction. She is the mother of death with particular reference to her husband, the king. But she is a mother of death in general who will go on waging war against her children. Cassandra embraces the more remote future in her prophecies along with the immediate present. Furthermore, Clytemnestra will in effect be responsible for her own murder at the hands of her son Orestes, as Cassandra
predicts in lines 1280-1285.84

Cassandra is now nearing the time of her own death. To express her agony over her murder and the clarity with which she can see it, she prefaces her last long speech with: "O, C! How fierce is the fire, but it comes upon me! Woe, Woe! Lycean Apollo!" (παπαί· οίνω τὸ πῦρ· ἐπι· ἔρχεται δέ μοι. /ότοτοι Δύκει;"Apollo. 1256-1257)

Cassandra foretells her doom at Clytemnestra's hands, recalls how Apollo had made her suffer and brings her to her death, and looks forward to Orestes coming back to murder his mother.

The play exposes light as a bright, kindly warmth as well as a penetrating, destructive force. Apollo embodies both of these effects of light; he is the healer and the "shoot-afar." The play exposes the particular light of fire as a destructive force especially in the burning of Troy. How appropriate for Cassandra to preface clearly-seen horrible events, especially her death, with cries to Apollo and fire. It is Troy's destruction by fire which brings her to Argos; it is Apollo who brings her to her day of doom. It is Apollo also who will motivate her vengeance upon Clytemnestra.

After this long speech, Cassandra has a short dialogue with the chorus in which she reiterates the coming of her death and the death of Agamemnon. She cries out
her last prayer: "To the last light of the sun, I pray" 
(Ἄλλου ὅ' ἐπεύχομαι/ πρὸς ὕστατον φῶς 1323-1324) in the 
hope that the murderers may be requited for the king's 
death as well as hers. Yet, the sun is also associated 
with terrible events; it is in the clear light of the 
sun that the herald sees his companions' corpses on the 
sea (658). To both of these attributes Cassandra appeals. 
She hopes that the sun will be kind to her as he force-
fully avenges her murderers.

Her prayer is answered, for, in the Choephoroi, 
Apollo, the sun-god, sends Crestes to murder the queen 
and Aegisthus. By her prayer for vengeance, Cassandra 
again foreshadows the retribution upon the queen and 
hers consort even before they commit their sinful act and 
provides, as well, a contrast between her vengeance and 
that of the queen. Clytemnestra calls herself a Fury, 
a daughter of the night; the Furies demand the murder of 
the king. Yet, it is Apollo, god of light, who orders 
murder by Crestes.

As she looks forward to revenge with light, a few 
lines later she describes the present situation with 
darkness: "One might compare a man who prospers to 
a shade." (εὐτυχοῦσα μὲν ὅσια τίς ἀν πρέπειεν, 1327-1328) 
Soon she will be a shade in Hades. But she particularly 
looks to the king's death and recalls his guilt. "Shade"
(σωδι) is the same word with which the queen describes
her husband and her murderous intentions (967), and
"a man who prospers" reminds us of Agamemnon's onerous
wealth. 85

As Cassandra goes in to die, the chorus still re­
main in doubt about what is going to happen. Even when
they hear the cries of Agamemnon, they hesitate in their
belief. The chorus believe Cassandra's prophecies only
after they see Clytemnestra with the bodies at her feet.

When Clytemnestra enters, she proudly proclaims the
murder in detail. She relates that as she smites the
king, "he strikes me with a darksome shower of gory dew"
(Εδίκε μ' ἑρεμυνή ψαλδί φοινιας δρόσου 1390). To as­
associate a black shower of gore with the soft moisture
which enfolds the earth in the quiet early hours is to
juxtapose images of opposite connotation. As such, this
image sets the tone for what immediately follows: Cly­
temnestra compares her joy to the crops' delight in the
rain. This juxtaposition of darkness and gore with the
soft dew at morn coupled with her exultant joy confirms
once again the ambiguity of her motives and her act.

But not only does she delight in the murder, the
queen tries to justify herself as well. She says that
she committed the deed "by Justice for my child, by Ate,
and the Erinyes" (τῆς ἐμῆς παιδὸς Δίκην, /"Ατην Ἐρινῶν κή
1432-1433). The deities by whom she justifies her actions are those of darkness, the daughters of Night. Later, she proclaims that "taking the form of this corpse's (Agamemnon's) wife, the ancient, fierce avenger" (φανταζόμενος δὲ γυναικὶ νεκρῷ/τοῦδ' ἡ παλαιὴς δρίμης ἀλάστῳρ 1500-1501) committed the deed. In effect, she herself is a Fury. Her justification as well as her joy, therefore, are cloaked in darkness.

Try though she may to justify herself, the chorus persist in recognizing her guilt. But the queen is not afraid "so long as the fire upon my hearth is lighted by Aegisthus" (Ὡς ὀὖ αἰθηὴ πῦρ ἐφ' ἑστὶν ὑμῆς / Ἁγισθοῦς 1435-1436). Clytemnestra before the murders had consistently used light ambiguously. The light of her husband and his return, which at face value should signify the rightful return of a husband and a king to his hearth, in reality signified death at his wife's hands. The image now is used literally and ironically for Aegisthus, her consort and fellow-conspirator, who in her eyes is her lawful husband. Indeed, by ascribing to him the task of lighting the fire of her hearth, she assigns him with the position of the legitimate lord of the house.

The chorus, however, give her reason to fear. The avenging spirit from the father might come, and, as they point out, "with kindred influx of blood, black Ares
forces his way" (βιάζεται δ' ὁμοσώροις/ ἐπιρροαῖοιν αἰμάτων/μέλας Ἀρης 1509-1511). The chorus thus fore-shadow the dark vengeance that Orestes takes upon Clytemnestra and her lover in the next play87 and those in dark Hades that assist in that revenge.

Clytemnestra calls Aegisthus her light, and when he himself enters, he proclaims a joyous salutation to light: "O kindly light of the day that brings retribution!" (ὡς σέγγος εὐφρον ἡμέρας δικηφόρου. 1577) Now he can look upon the king lying"in the woven robes of the Erinyes" (ἐφαυτοῖς ἐν πέπλοις Ἐρινύων 1580). Again light is associated with death and darkness, for this day sees Aegisthus and Clytemnestra enter the darkness of murder and Agamemnon the darkness of death. We are reminded of the dark festal robes (1126-1127)88 and Clytemnestra’s role as a Fury. But there is further significance far beyond his realization. His words echo the herald who salutes this same day and later, in line 636, calls it a "kindly light of day" (εὐφημον ἡμῶν) with frightful connotations as we have seen. He greets the day of his master’s victorious return from the war at Troy and proudly describes the victory. Yet, this triumph leads Agamemnon to his death. Aegisthus uses similar words. He too then glories in the just vengeance he brings for ancient evils. Yet, because of his just
retribution on this day, he too will die. That same kind of light, which he hails, will also look down upon his own corpse and Clytemnestra's (Choephor 985-986). The chorus will not tolerate the crime of Aegisthus and say that he will not escape with his life. Aegisthus will not stand for such insolence and threatens punishment: "the hated fellow-inhabitant of darkness, hunger," (ә δυσφιλῆς σκότων/λυμος ζύμωσος 1641-1642) will make them behave. In a short space, Aegisthus artfully unites the terrors of imprisonment. He personifies starvation and darkness, two basic aspects of a prison, and makes their relationship a perversion of a normally friendly association. But again his words signify more than he realizes. The "darkness" that he threatens will be the "darkness" (οὐδέτερ Choephor 319) from which Agamemnon will assist Orestes in the murder of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra.

Clytemnestra and Aegisthus both refer to their joy in this murder with imagery of light. This deed, though, will herald their deaths. Most appropriately, then, the chorus pray that "Orestes somewhere is looking on the light of day" (𝑶𝒓𝒆ståτης ἄρδ ποὺ βλέπει φῶς 1646) and will return for revenge. Orestes is their last hope to set the house aright; and so they useφός for "light" with its connotation of "salvation." We may think back to the
watchman at the beginning of the drama; he calls the beacon light ὕδωρ, but it heralds anything but immediate salvation for the house. This ὕδωρ of the chorus is the last image of light in the Agamemnon. The play, then, ends on a note of hope; it foreshadows the light of salvation that Orestes will endeavor to effect through revenge in the Choephori and that will shine forth gloriously in the Eumenides.
Footnotes


2 Cf. G. Smith, 22.


4 Cf. R. Lattimore, Aeschylus I Cresteia (Chicago 1953) 9-10 and Hughes, 91.


6 Fraenkel, II, pp.5-6, 1.6.

7 These two constellations are particularly implied since they both appear later in the play (11.826, 927). The watchman himself hints at the Dog Star when he describes his position on the roof: "in the manner of a dog" (κονὸς δηλη 1.3). Cf. Fraenkel, II, pp.5-6, 1.6; Denniston and Page, pp.66-67, 1.7; G. Thomson, The Oresteia of Aeschylus (2nd. ed. Prague 1966) II, p.9, 11.4-7.

8 Fraenkel, II, p.5, 1.6.

9 Denniston and Page, p.68, 1.12; cf. Fraenkel, II, p.12, 1.12. His interpretation of this adjective as active in this line is preferable to the translation "restless bed."


13 Fraenkel, II, p.15, 1.21. He quotes the scholia for support.

14 Meautis, 125.

15 Fraenkel, II, pp.16-17, 1.22.

16 Fraenkel, II, pp.16-17, 1.22.

17 Fraenkel, II, pp.21-22, 1.33 and Denniston and Page, pp.69-70, 11.32-33.

18 H.D.F. Kitto, *Greek Tragedy* (2nd ed. New York 1950) 72. He notes that this rhythm is climaxed with the words of the herald but does not give his reasons. Perhaps Kitto believes that it is the herald who clearly reveals the sinful act of the king. Once this is known, we realize that Agamemnon will pay the price.

19 Cf. Shepherd, 6.

20 J.D. Peradotto, "Some Patterns of Nature Imagery in the *Oresteia*," *AJF* 85 (1964) 389.

21 Denniston and Page, p.75, 1.71 and Fraenkel, II, pp.44-45, 1.71


26 Cf. Denniston and Page, pp. 76-77, 11.94ff.


28 For this discussion, see Fraenkel, II, pp. 57-70, 1.115. Cf. Thomson, II, pp.17-18, 11.111-120; Paley, p.333, 1.114. A main reference for the description of these eagles is Aristotle, Historia Animalia 9.32.

29 Cf. Hermann, II, pp.377-378, 1.126; Denniston and Page, pp.80-81, 1.131; Fraenkel, II, op.79-81, 1.131.

30 For the translation, cf. Denniston and Page, p.92, 11.251f.


32 Cf. Fraenkel, II, pp.143-144, 1.254. He notes that "bright" (λαμπρός 1160) corresponds to "clear" (τόρνον 254).

33 Fraenkel, II, op.148-149, 1.264.


35 Cf. G. Smith, 22 and Shepherd, 10.
36 D. Page, Aeschylus Tragoediae (OCT Oxford 1972) 11.306-308. He reads the following: ἔρως Σαρωνικοῦ / πορθμοῦ κάτωπον πρῶτ’ ὑπερβάλλειν πρῶσων / φλέγονυσαν and notes in the apparatus criticus that the lines are perhaps sound if a lacuna is posited after line 307 (Blomfield). I agree that it is difficult to explain the grammar of these lines, but the image fits well in the context of her speech. I therefore treat the concept of "burning" and, later on, that of "passing over" as sound.

37 For this discussion, see Fraenkel, II, pp.153-154, 1.282 and Denniston and Page, p.95, 1.282.

36 Cf. Denniston and Page, pp.97-98, 1.314 and Fraenkel, II, pp.166-169, 1.314. In the intervening lines, the concept of relay is kept before the chorus and the audience especially by the reiteration of the verb "to send" (πέμπειν) or its derivatives: "sender" (πομπός 299), "it sent" (ἐπεμπέμπειν 283), "far-sent" (τηλέπομπος 300), and "they sent" (πέμπουσι 305).


42 Peradotto, 389.

43 Here the herald blames Paris for the destruction of Troy, for he is convicted of rape and robbery. Nonetheless, it is Agamemnon and his army who spare nothing at Troy.


45 Fraenkel, II, pp.187-188, 1.356. He maintains only this active meaning of the adjective κτενερικα as does Paley, p.353, 1.347, and believes that "ornaments" refer not to stars but to the success at Troy. Denniston and Page, p.1Cl, 1.356, however, hold that "ornaments" is more naturally interpreted as the sun, moon, stars, and planets. For my interpretation of the word, cf. Lebeck, The Crestela, 64.
Cf. Verrall, p. 41, 1.366.


Cf. Lebeck, The Oresteia, 41.

For the interpretation of this last antistrophe, cf. Lebeck, "Image and Idea," 61-62 and The Oresteia, 43.

Rose, II, p. 37, 1.460.

Cf. Owen, 73.

Rose, II, p. 37, 1.470.

Cf. Lebeck, The Oresteia, 43.

Lebeck, The Oresteia, 64.

Fraenkel, II, pp. 247-248, 1.486. He points out that this scepticism provides an effective foil for the herald who confirms the beacon. But this seems to be a change of attitude for the chorus who have been speaking as if the beacon's news is correct. Fraenkel explains that the elders, like others who hear the end of troubles after a long, desperate waiting, are fraught with contradictory emotions.

Fraenkel, II, pp. 241-244, 1.485. He defends πιθανός as active and ὄρος as meaning "decree."


61 G. Smith, 23.


64 Cf. Owen, 76-77.

65 For the causes of the chorus' anxiety, cf. Paley, p.365, 1.520.

66 Meautis, 158.

67 Fraenkel, II, p.321, 1.645. He notes that it is characteristic of Aeschylus to use deliberately "such a blasphemous paradox."

68 Page reads Ἀχαίων οὐκ ἀμφιτον θεῶν 1.549. But it seems that there are problems with the grammar not with the concept that the gods are angry.

69 Cf. Lebeck, "Image and Idea," 70. She maintains that the lion parable becomes a parable of the curse in the house of Atreus which causes parent to slay child and child to slay parent. The lion image is used of every figure in the trilogy who acts as an instrument of the Furies. For a similar discussion, cf. B. Knox, "The Lion in the House," CPn47 (1952) 18-19.

70 Though Page daggers the word, a movement toward is indicated by the context.

71 Fraenkel, II, pp.380-382, 1.826. He maintains that the phrase refers only to the time of night and notes these connotations of the imagery.
72 For the belief that the phrase refers to a season and for the implications of that season, cf. Paley, p.384, l.799; Verrall, p.98, l.817; Thomson, II, pp.68-69, l.826; Peradotto, 383-384.

73 For the meaning of πρόπαρ, I follow Denniston and Page, p.158, l.1018 as opposed to Fraenkel, II, p.459, l.1019. He maintains that it means "aforetime" and rightly points to its adverbial usage in Supp. 791. But here it is closely followed by the genitive and so becomes a preposition.

74 Goheen, 19.

75 Along with Verrall, p.124, l.1041 and A. Sidgwick, Aeschylus Agamemnon (6th. ed. Oxford 1905) l.1057, I see no reason to dagerrörfos φυγάστ as does Page. For the translation of "they, the sheep," see Sidgwick, p.54, l.1056.

76 Cf. Verrall, p.124, l.1041.

77 Cf. Lebeck, The Oresteia, 59.

78 Cf. Meautis, 185. The silence of Cassandra is the defence of the gods. Clytemnestra feels herself in the presence of something greater than she, a darkness that she cannot penetrate. We feel that Clytemnestra is conquered; she collides with divine power.

79 Fraenkel, III, p.502, l.1113.

80 For the discussion of the robe, see Fraenkel, III, pp.513-514, l.1127.

81 For my discussion of the intricate imagery in lines 1178-1181, I drew upon the following sources: Fraenkel, III, pp.340-542, l.1180-1182; Denniston and Page, pp.177-178, l.1180-1183; Paley, p.411, l.1149; Garvie, 75.

82 Cf. Denniston and Page, p.182, 11.1228-1230.
83 T.B.L. Webster, "Some Psychological Terms in Greek Tragedy," JHS 77 (1957) 149.


86 Fraenkel, III, p.677, 1.1435.


88 Denniston and Page, p.213, 1.1580.

89 Peradotto, 390.

90 For the discussion of this image, see Fraenkel, III, pp.777-778, 1.1641.

91 Cf. Paley, p.448, 1.1671.
Chapter II

The Agamemnon begins in darkness that is penetrated by the ominous light of the beacon and ends only in more sorrow. The Choephoroi also begins amid the imagery of darkness that is penetrated by the light of Crestes, a light that leads to the darkness of the Furies. In the former play Aeschylus employed the imagery of light and darkness, often ironically, to emphasize some aspect of Clytemnestra's and Aegisthus' murder of the king. In this play the imagery is used in a similar fashion to point out various aspects of Agamemnon's revenge on his wife and her lover through his son, Crestes. But there is a difference. Crestes' actions, quite unlike those of Clytemnestra, Aegisthus, and even Agamemnon, are specifically directed by the god of light, Apollo. With the introduction of this deity, the trilogy takes a step closer to true justice, to the expurgation of the notion, blood for blood, to the light of true joy found in the Eumenides.

At the end of the Agamemnon (1646), the chorus pray that Crestes is still looking on the light. At the beginning of the Choephoroi, we see him alive but mourning at his father's tomb. In his brief speech, Crestes,
like the watchman, sets the mood and foreshadows the action of the play by connotative imagery of darkness. He begins with a prayer to "Hermes under the earth, who watches over authority inherited from a father" (Ἐρμῆ χρόνις, πατρῶι ἐποιεῖσθω κράτη). Orestes thus prays that the god protect his rightful authority in Argos from those who have seized it by Agamemnon's murder. Already the note of revenge is sounded, a note that echoes through the play. But with this invocation, he strikes another dominant chord. "Under the earth" refers to Hermes as the conductor of souls to the underworld; repeatedly, in this drama, forces of dark Hades will be invoked for assistance in revenge.

Crestes next calls upon his father and places a lock of hair on the tomb as a sign of grief. His action and the image of darkness implied in "Hermes under the earth" reflect his personal sorrow over his father's death and provide a fitting introduction for what he sees and hears next. He asks: "What is this wailing of women who are conspicuous in their black robes? Whence does it come? To what sort of misfortune shall I liken it?" (τις ποθ' ἢ δισίνυρις / στειχεῖ γυναικῶν φάρεσιν μελαχλημος /πρέπουσα; πολιτ ξυμφοραί προσεικάςω; 10-12) The women, of course, are the chorus and Electra who are taking libations to the tomb. The words "black robes,"
an image of darkness, verbally point to their grief and that of Creastes, while the actual dress physically accentuates the feeling. (I should assume that the chorus and, most probably, Electra too are wearing black garb.) This dark sorrow over Agamemnon's death is yet another motif in the play.

The image of darkness, though, also directs attention to the cause of grief, the dead king whose spirit plays a prominent role, particularly in the first part of the play. Indeed much of the dark imagery in the Choephoroi is associated with the underworld, while that of light with the world of the living.

But this image not only points to present grief but also foreshadows future sorrow. When Creastes sees the black robes, he immediately asks if some new grief has come (13). Indeed it will be Creastes himself who will bring destruction upon Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, the cause of great joy for the chorus, Electra, and Creastes. Yet these same black-robed women also prefigure another group of women in black garb, the Furies, who will bring misery to Creastes at the play's end (1049). Ironically Creastes, by implication, speaks of grief that will come to him.

Creastes finishes his speech by calling on Zeus for revenge; he and Pylades then move aside in order to
learn why the women are there. The chorus enter and sing an ode that continues the motifs of grief and revenge, both connected with Agamemnon's dead spirit. They relate how they have grieved over their king and how they have been commanded by Clytemnestra to pour libations over the tomb. They next point to the reason for the queen's order:

For a piercing dream-prophet of the house that makes hair stand straight up, as it blew anger from sleep, at midnight let out a shriek of fear from the inner recesses.

The chorus then express the view held by interpreters of dreams: "those under the earth are indignant with and vehemently censuring the murderers" (μεμφεσθαι τοῖς γάδες νέρεθεν περιθόμως /τοῖς κτανοῦσι τ' ἔγκοτεῖν 40-41). The passage graphically depicts the terror of Clytemnestra through a personification of her prophetic dream. The dream is described in frightful terms such as "blowing anger;" it comes at midnight, a time readily associated with fear. But the word "midnight" (ἀνρόνυκτον) may have the connotation of "untimely night" (ἀμφος means "untimely" in Eumenides 956 and Persians 496.) and thus increase the feeling of uneasiness.

Indeed, this night is associated with Clytemnestra's
fear of anger from below and provides a reflection of her frightening nature. She had not given the king a proper burial, a task sacred to the Greeks; only the terror of dream could force her to make amends. (In lines 430-433, we are told that the king was not properly buried; in lines 439-443, we hear of his mutilation by the queen.) She therefore sends out the women to placate the spirits with libations. The darkness of the night thus reflects her baseness just as the imagery of darkness expressed her husband's guilt in the Agamemnon 390-393.

In Orestes' speech, the image of darkness and the reference to actual robes reflected grief for Agamemnon's dead spirit; for Clytemnestra, the actual darkness of night houses the vengeful action of that spirit and all those beneath the earth. They send a dream to Clytemnestra; she shrieks and so affirms their anger, particularly that of the king. But so interwoven are these two separate actions that Aeschylus describes them as one and personifies the dream as shrieking. We can therefore say that those below actually effect the scream; the dead are already vitally engaged in the action of the play.

This dream in the night, though, reflects not only present terror and anger from the dead, but, as a "dream-prophet," it foreshadows horrors to come. As Clytemnestra
shrieks, she ironically does not realize that this night of terror forebodes the permanent night of death soon to come upon her and Aegisthus. As the chorus describe this scream, they too may not realize that Agamemnon's revenger and revenge are so near. But they may joyfully infer that this night forebodes evil for their enemies, for their language is oracular: "dream-prophet" (ὄνειρομάντις) brings to mind those associated with oracles; "the inner recesses" (μυχάδεν) would recall an oracular place such as the grotto at Delphi. "Midnight" (ἀναίρωνυμι) would then be a contrasted epithet: i.e., one in which a figure is suggested and its inapplicable parts are excluded through contrary epithets. Here an oracle is suggested, but the above adjective is inappropriate, for an oracle could only be consulted at regular times.\(^\text{11}\) Such a contrasted epithet fits well in this context that forbodes death.

The person who would consider this dream as foreshadowing the death of Clytemnestra and her lover is Orestes standing nearby.\(^\text{12}\) But he too does not fully realize what this terror in the night means for him. When he does revenge his father's murder, the very daughters of night will terrorize him. The chorus indeed do not comprehend the full extent of their oracular language.
The darkness of the night thus serves as a proper context for this terror and colors its many forebodings. We may recall the opening of the Agamemnon where the night was used in a similar fashion for the watchman's ominous shout of joy.

In the second strophe, the chorus tell of the rites that Clytemnestra hopes will appease those under the earth. But what price, they ask, can pay for a man's blood once spilled? This thought evokes sorrow described in terms of darkness:

Alas for the destruction of the house! Sunless gloom that is hateful to man (or man-hating) engulfs the house at the deaths of its lords.

(ἀλάς τὸν καταστροφὴν ὡς τὸν ἀνήλιον ἀνθρώπινον αὐτῷ τὴν κτίσιν δυσμοῦς τὰς μεταφόρησαν ταύτων τῷ Δίῳ. 50-53)

Notice the power of these lines to convey the sense of grief. The first word, an adjective, expresses the darkness of sorrow in a negative way: the sun does not shine here. This is followed by another adjective with both passive and active meanings that emphasize the connotations of gloom for mankind. Thus before we hear the noun "darkness," we have seen three of its grim aspects. Once the word is sounded, we immediately see it actively at work on a man's house. In these few short lines, then,
Aeschylus overpowers us with the feeling of gloom that surrounds Agamemnon's house.

In this image, the chorus speak of the physical palace as a symbol of its rulers. With the deaths of the rulers—here they are thinking particularly of Agamemnon—the house is razed to the ground, and darkness surrounds it. Yet they are at the same time bewailing the dark cloud of violent death and sin that has so long surrounded the lineage of Agamemnon and the continual destruction of that lineage. Here again they refer especially to the king. But they do so with a word that recalls a scene in the former play: "sunless (ἀυελιος) recalls "sun-facing" (ἀυελιος Agamemnon 519) that the herald used to describe the deities who were to greet Agamemnon. There the imagery of light ironically points to the result of his homecoming; here the imagery of darkness logically expresses that result. But on still another level, the chorus are describing the sorrows of the people in Agamemnon's household upon his death: i.e. the chorus themselves, Electra, and Orestes.

Yet as before, the chorus unknowingly foreshadow events to come. Here they speak of a gloom that comes over a house when its masters die. Soon the present masters will die. But also the darkness of a grief far greater than the present one, a gloom that is hateful to
men and indeed despises certain men, will attack a member of the house at the play's end.

As the chorus reflect on the plight of Agamemnon's house, they turn to a reason for that situation. Men no longer have οἶβας, a fearful respect of each other and the laws of the gods. Instead, they are concerned merely with faring well (55-60). The chorus are thinking specifically of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus; they certainly lacked οἶβας when they insidiously murdered Agamemnon and seized the throne. But there will be retributive justice, as the chorus express in enigmatic terms of light and darkness:

The swift turn of Justice's scales keeps close watch on some who are in the light, but sorrows await some who linger in the borderland of light and darkness, and sheer night holds others.

Before we consider the possible meanings of these lines, we should note the various interrelationships among them. By the use of particles, Aeschylus creates a double parallelism. The τοῦς μὲν of the first statement is answered by the τὰ δὲ of the second and also by the τοῦς δ' of the third. By such parallelism, the
concept of justice is thus maintained throughout all three statements. Yet there are contrasts other than structural. "Swift" (ταχεία) of the first statement contrasts with "linger" (χρονίζοντας) of the second; "in the light" (ἐν φῶς) of the first contrasts with "in the borderland between light and darkness" (ἐν μεταίχμισι ομόσι) of the second and "sheer night" (ἀμπατος νύξ) of the third, and "in the borderland of light and darkness" of the second contrasts with "sheer night" of the third. The poet thus artistically expresses the contrasting actions of justice.

The general theme of these lines is that retribution comes on the evil person sooner or later. This is a commonplace of Greek morality and can be found in Iliad 4.160-162 and Solon D.1.25-32. But here the chorus express this well-known concept in a complex, imagistic way that bears great dramatic significance.

Let us first consider past interpretations of these lines. As Booth notes, most scholars see an obvious progression: light and quickness, twilight and slowness, night and never. Many editors read ἀμπατος "ineffective" for ἀμπατος "sheer." Most also conform to one of two interpretations: the first statement points to swift punishment here on earth; the second to a form of punishment that takes longer and is somehow worse than the first,
and the third implies some kind of eternal night. The second interpretation is like the first except that it takes ἀκραντός as implying that the sinner is punished after death. My objection to many scholars is that they do not demonstrate to which characters and how these lines apply. I also object to Booth’s interpretation. He takes ἐπισκοπεῖ to mean "protect" and continues from there. But I find this meaning most unsuited for a context where the chorus are interested in retributive justice.

In the first statement the chorus emphasize the swiftness of justice. Indeed the wording ταχεῖα τοῦ μὲν instead of τοῦ μὲν ταχεῖα accentuates this quality. The very movement of the metaphor is rapid; from justice as a scale, we move immediately to her watchful eye. But this last metaphor suggests yet another; justice may be seen as a bird of prey watching its victim and ready to pounce. Indeed Italie notes that the word ἐπισκοπεῖ means "to keep close watch on" with the "idea of punishing."

This swift justice will fall on "those in the light." To whom does this refer? The chorus have just spoken about men in general who cast aside respect and honor only good fortune. Thus "those" would be evil men, and "in the light" would refer to them as alive, as the image is commonly used. Of course, throughout the ode, the chorus
are describing Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, and here they do so with significant use of light imagery.

Both of these present rulers are alive, \( \textit{\varepsilon\upsilon \ ο\upsilon} \). But even more than this they are having their day of power and glory; they are indeed faring well. Their situation is quite the opposite of Agamemnon's whose death has just been linked to darkness. But "light" (\( \textit{\varphi\upsilon\varsigma} \)) also points to the injustice that Clytemnestra and her lover have committed and the penalty of death that justice will exact. In the former play of the trilogy, Agamemnon's guilt and punishment merged in the image of "a terrible bright light" (\( \textit{\varphi\upsilon\varsigma \ \alpha\upsilon\nu\omega\lambda\alpha\mu\mu\epsilon\varsigma} \ 389 \)). We see that same light here.

As in the \textit{Agamemnon} light is here ironically associated with the desire for a man's death. There it was the queen who joyfully awaited her husband's murder; here it is the chorus greatly desire her death and that of her lover. Yet, as before, the chorus unknowingly and ironically foreshadow more evils for the house. As stated above, the chorus at \textit{Agamemnon} 1646 pray that Orestes is still looking on the light; he is indeed alive and standing near them. This first statement thus applies to him. He will soon commit an act considered by many to be unjust; his deed will shine forth and engender the swift justice of the terrible Furies.
In the second statement the chorus emphasize waiting both on the part of sorrows—and here I would infer ones that justice will send—and their victims. Again the chorus direct their maxim against the present rulers. The phrase "those who tarry in the borderland of darkness and light" would refer to those whose sin is partially hidden. By libations for the dead, Clytemnestra is trying to hide, to smooth over, the murder that she and her lover plotted. Yet the phrase also describes this woman who, in her dream, stood between light and darkness, the world of the living and that of the dead. This image of the borderland is a splendid one that points to the eternal conflict between darkness and light, for "the borderland" (ἡ μεταχωμ) is strictly speaking the space between two opposing armies. This word would, with slight variation, apply to both Aegisthus' and Clytemnestra's positions. They will soon stand between the forces of darkness, the dead Agamemnon, and those of light, the living Orestes. But these forces will not fight each other; they will attack those in the middle. When the chorus speak of sorrows that linger, they reassure themselves that the present rulers will pay the penalty, if not at once, in a little while.

This second statement, however, may be interpreted differently but still with terrible implications for
Clytemnestra: "Sorrows in the borderland of light and darkness await those who linger." As above, light and darkness represent life and death. "In the borderland" thus reminds us of the dead who are in the darkness of Hades, yet, in a sense, come alive and terrorize the queen through a dream. They attack her for delaying in her duty toward Agamemnon. The dream they send, though, only foreshadows greater retribution to come.

Ironically, the person who will effect that retribution is standing close at hand. But perhaps even more ironically, the chorus unconsciously refer to him. Orestes will soon relate his own position. He stands on the borderland between Apollo, god of light, and the Furies, spirits of darkness. If he chooses not to obey the god, horrible attacks from the latter await him. But as the audience knows, these attacks come even though Orestes obeys Apollo. Thus, when the chorus speak of sorrows that wait for those in the borderland, they again foreshadow Orestes' fate.

Emphasis is first placed on swift justice and light then tarrying justice and twilight; the last clause speaks of night and punishment accomplished. When the chorus say that "sheer night holds some," they point to those who have paid for their crimes with the total darkness of death. As Clytemnestra and Aegisthus brought
darkness to the house through the killing of its king, the chorus hope that these murderers too will enter into complete darkness. At the same time, the chorus may be thinking of their unfortunate king while they forget that he too was guilty of crime.

The strong feeling of retributive justice continues in the dialogue that follows the first ode. When Electra asks the chorus what to say at her father's tomb, they advise her to pray for retribution and particularly to remember her brother. Her prayer echoes that of Orestes:

> greatest herald of those above and those below, Hermes under the earth, having summoned for me the powers below the earth to hear my prayers, powers that watch over a house inherited from a father''

She reminds us that the dark powers below are involved in the protection of Agamemnon's house, a protection that involves revenge.

She then focuses upon one man in the underworld, her father, and associates him to Orestes in a significant image of light. She prays that Agamemnon have pity on her "and light up dear Orestes, a lamp in our house"

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(φίλου τ'Ορέστην φῶς ἀναψον ἐν δόμοις 131). Again and again φῶς connotes life, salvation, and just punishment; this last meaning was just emphasized by the chorus in
lines 61-62. By addressing her brother as ὧξ, Electra expresses her desire that he be alive and that he bring salvation for the house by the just punishment of the present rulers. The metaphor of light is particularly appropriate, for the chorus has just described the house as full of darkness over its master's death in lines 51-53. Ironically, though, the person who will enkindle this light among the living is the spirit of Agamemnon covered by the darkness of death.

But this image also looks back in a meaningful way to the uses of ὧξ in the Agamemnon. In Clytemnestra's beacon speech, the beacon is a symbol of Agamemnon coming home to be murdered (see above p.36); here he will enkindle the light of his son to revenge his death. In line 522 of the Agamemnon, the herald describes the king as bringing home the light of salvation in the night; at the end of the play, there was only more sorrow, although Clytemnestra felt saved by the death of her husband. Now through his son, the king will again attempt to effect salvation in his house. In the former play, the herald and others hail the king's coming with the word ὧξ but fail to realize that this same word foreshadows his destruction. Here Electra and the chorus intend this light, Crestes, to forebode death for their enemies, but ironically they do not realize that it also foreshadows suffering for
Crestes as well, that by his revenge he will engender the attack of the dark Furies. Thus, as φῶς was employed to proclaim ominously the arrival of the king, Electra unconsciously applies the same ambiguous metaphor to his son.

When Electra finishes her prayer, the chorus then seek assistance from the dead. As she points to Orestes and light, so they direct attention to Agamemnon and darkness. They call on him to hear their request for revenge "from his dim and faint spirit" (τι / ἄμαυρας φῶς 157-158). The word ἄμαυρας emphasizes the darkness of Hades that surrounds him and the darkness of a humiliating death that weakens and humbles his spirit. The first of these aspects logically contrasts with the living light, Orestes; the second ironically contrasts with the light of revenge that the king himself will enkindle.

The phrase, though, also echoes an earlier line of the chorus and foreshadows coming events. In the Agamemnon 466, the chorus speak of an unjust man whom the Furies make "dim and faint" (ἄμαυρον) and, as noted on p.44, thus point to the king himself, perhaps unconsciously. By using the same word here, they (again unwittingly?) recall the king's guilt and consequent punishment and thereby also foreshadow the guilt of his son's action.
with its resulting punishment, the dark Furies. How ironic are these allusions of the chorus in a context where they emphasize Agamemnon's unfortunate fate and beseech him to free their house of evils.

We have interpreted the phrase \( \epsilon \delta \alpha \mu \alpha \upsilon \rho \alpha \varsigma \varphi \varepsilon \varepsilon \nu \varsigma \) as referring to Agamemnon: "from his dim and faint spirit"; the chorus, however, may be referring to themselves: "from our dim and faint spirit." \(^{33}\) Earlier the chorus describe the darkness that surrounds the house when the lord dies; that gloom has now penetrated and weakened the very minds of the people in the house. As they call on Agamemnon for assistance, they thus accentuate their dire situation. But their sorrow in terms of darkness provides a contrast to the hope Electra expressed in terms of light. \(^{34}\) Indeed, even their gloom is ironic for relief in the person of Orestes is standing nearby.

The imagery of light does not again appear until one hundred lines later where we find it significantly used to describe the feeling of revenge. Orestes, now recognized by his sister, prays to Zeus that retribution come upon the murderers. The chorus then express their hope for revenge in frightening terms of light: "May I someday see them dying in the pitchy ooze of the flame." (οὕς ἰδοιμ' ἐγὼ ποτὲ ἔμαθόντας ἐν κηρίδι πισσἡρει φλογῷ. 267-268) With this expression, the chorus
certainly do not demonstrate a desire to see the present rulers on their funeral pyre, properly buried, and sent off to the next world. Quite the contrary, this expression is in some ways similar to our "dead and buried," where the emphasis is upon retribution not salvation. The chorus wish to see them dead and demonstrate that desire in horrifyingly graphic terms. A flame does appear to come out in spurts from the resinous pinewood used in a pyre. Thus the "ooze" would naturally refer to the pine but here would suggest as well the terrifying appearance of a burning body. The chorus, therefore, gloat in hatred over the vivid picture of their fallen enemy. When Electra speaks of Orestes in terms of light, this is the sort of terrible light that the chorus hope he will bring. Just as Orestes is the "light" (φῶς), so here he is the "flame" (φλογός).

This image also recalls similar images in the Agamemnon. In that play 388-389, the chorus state that the sin of an unjust man is "not hidden but shines forth as a terrible bright light" (see above pp.40-42). The sin of the present rulers indeed shines and engenders this horrible fire described by the chorus. Often Aegisthus and Clytemnestra associate the king's murder with the image of light; in fact the queen speaks of the beacon with words similar to those of the chorus here,
"pine" (πτέρυξ 288) and "flame" (φλόγες 306). The chorus now turn this light imagery, indeed the very words of Clytemnestra, back upon her and her lover.

The chorus' hopes for revenge are immediately reassured by Orestes who relates Apollo's instructions. The god not only orders him to avenge his father's death but also speaks of punishments that will befall him or anyone who does not revenge a kinsman's death:

cankers that eat away at the original skin, ones that appear on this plague white with down. He (Apollo) also speaks of other attacks of the Erinyes that grow to fulfillment from a father's blood, and these a man sees brilliantly though he moves his brow in the dark. For the dark missile of those beneath the earth, from those suppliants for vengeance in the race who have fallen, and rage and vain terror in the night rouse him, throw him into confusion, and drive him from the city.

(λειχήνες ἔλεσθοντας ἄοραλαν φῦσιν, λέεις δὲ πόροις τῆς ἐπαντέλλειν νόσῳ, ἀλλὰς τ' ἐφώνει προσβολὰς Ερινύων ἐκ τῶν πατρῴων σιμάτων τελουμένας τὸ ὀρόβοντα λαμπρόν ἐν σκότωι νυμφῶν ὁρῶν. τὸ γαρ σκοτεινὸν τῶν εὐερτῆρων βέλος ἐκ προστραπαιῶν ἐν γένει πεπωκότων καὶ λύσασα καὶ μάταιος ἐκ νυκτῶν φόβος κινεῖ ταρασσεῖ καὶ δισκάθει πόλεως.

281-289)37

The terrors of darkness that Orestes depicts contrast with those of light that the chorus wish upon their enemies. He graphically describes horrors of the night that arise from dead kinsmen and those associated with such spirits, the Furies, with the appropriate imagery.
of darkness. We shall examine each of these aspects and particularly note their dramatic significance.

When Orestes describes the attacks of the Furies, he makes them all the more vivid by using the present tense; the oracle is still ringing in his ears. But the very structure of the description also emphasizes the Furies and their terrors. These dark spirits are hinted at even before they are mentioned in line 283, for "cankers" (λείχηνας 281) are themselves attacks of these powers. Furthermore, "attacks" (προοβολας 283) refer especially to visitations of divine wrath that often take the form of disease. Thus, when Orestes says: "other attacks of the Furies," he is looking back to the horrors just described and the ones that he will relate. The Furies are therefore ringed by the terrors that they cause.

These attacks fall upon a man who sees, though in darkness, i.e. one who is hesitant to revenge a kinsman's murder, here, of course, Orestes himself. The phrase "plowing his brow in the dark" tells us that the man has this experience during the night, and therefore what he sees are either nightmares while asleep or visions while awake. But the movement of the eyebrows often describes some emotion; thus a frown or a stare of horror may be depicted. Indeed a person would have good
reason to fear, for these attacks not only come from the Furies but also "grow to fulfillment from a father's blood." The line is particularly terrifying since the tense of the participle indicates that the father continues to brood them.  

But the reference is particularly to Agamemnon whose terrifying actions Orestes has already discerned in Clytemnestra's dream.

The attacks of the Furies and the imagery of lines 283-285 have even more extensive dramatic significance. These apparitions of terror in the night are part of the attacks of the dark Furies, attacks that arise from Agamemnon's dead spirit. They will come upon Orestes if he disobeys Apollo. But when he does obey the god, similar terrors befall him. This passage thus foreshadows the terrorizing appearance of the dark-clothed Furies at the play's end, "visions" (Soph. 1051), and their frightening pursuit that continues into the Eumenides at the urging of Clytemnestra's dead spirit. We are therefore reminded that "the Erinyes proper to the race," of whom Cassandra speaks in Agamemnon 1190, continue to be active agents, and as before, Orestes is unknowingly speaking of his own doom.

This passage forebodes the punishment of Orestes, but it also hints at his guilt. The attacks of the Furies recall their action against an unjust man in Agamemnon.
Furthermore, the adverb "brilliantly" (λαμπράν 285) recalls the sinister meanings that λαμπρός or its derivatives assume in the former play. In this context, where the word describes the clarity with which a person sees the visions, it particularly recalls lines 388-389 of that play. The chorus state that the sin of an unjust man is not hidden but shines forth as "a terrible bright light" (φῶς αἰνολαμπές). The adjective and the Furies action, then, emphasize the guilt of Orestes, who is considered unjust if he does not take revenge, and foreshadows his guilt when he commits matricide.

But this adjective takes on even further meaning by its juxtaposition with an image of darkness "in the dark" (ἐν σκότωι). These few words illustrating the constant and minute interplay of light and darkness accentuate the close relationship between Apollo, god of light, and the forces of darkness. Here he is ironically in harmony with such forces, the Furies and the spirit of the dead king; in the Eumenides, he stands in vehement opposition to the Furies and the spirit of the dead queen.

We have examined one attack of the Furies, visions in the night, but there are others that threaten Orestes. There is the "dark missile" of line 286 with its terrifying connotations. βέλος suggests a weapon used in warfare, and this one is dark. The image of darkness may describe
its hidden origin so that the victim is all the more frightened since he knows not whence or when it comes.\(^{47}\)

But the darkness may also point to the missile's effect, death, and, indeed, it may be considered the "shadowy stroke of death."\(^{48}\) Finally, "dark" (σκοτεινὸν) recalls "dark" (σκότως 285) and all the horrors of night.

But the very origin of the missile connotes darkness and fear, for it comes from those in the underworld. We are again reminded of their interaction with the living; indeed, as Verrall notes, the very word βέλος points to their presence. The effect of light and visible objects is often described by "to hurl" (βάλειν) and similar words; therefore, in poetic language, the power of the dead to make themselves perceived is "a dark missile" (σκοτεινὸν βέλος).\(^{49}\) We are first told that it is the missile "of those beneath the earth" in line 286, a phrase that would include even the Furies. But Crestes then specifically points to "those suppliants for vengeance in the race who have fallen" (προστρομαλῶν ἐν γένει πεπτωκότων 287), i.e. the lineage of Agamemnon. But πίπτειν is used particularly of men who are killed in the violence of combat, and προστρόμαλος also means "pollution incurred." The phrase therefore embraces all the murders and pollution that have fallen upon that lineage. Now, another murder within the race is demanded of Crestes,
and it too will carry the consequent pollution.

Besides an instrument of fear the word *missile* (βέλος), as "brilliantly" (λαμπρόν) above, can imply a judgment on Orestes. In the *Agamemnon*, the chorus describe the just punishment of Zeus against impious men in terms of a "missile" (βέλος 366) and a "lightning bolt" (κεραυνός 470). In these instances, the chorus unknowingly refer to the king’s death. Here it is Agamemnon, his lineage, and the Furies who will judge Orestes as unjust and send punishment (βέλος) if he does not take revenge.

But βέλος also carries the connotation of mental anguish, (Pindar *Nemean* 1.48) and this connotation introduces yet another terror of darkness that may befall Orestes, "vain terror in the night" 288. This may refer to hallucinations or a frenzy that throws a person into mental disorder. Since this horror comes in the night, it recalls Clytemnestra’s nightmare and the terrible power of those under the earth. But it also looks back to the frightening night visions of line 285 and thus completes the depiction of terrors in a manner that is reminiscent of ring composition.

This whole section, devoted to horrors, darkness, and the dead, is significant for the fear that it instills and the mood that it sets. After a few lines, Orestes says that he will commit the murder and points to his
reasons. He makes the statement that whether or not the oracle is to be trusted, the deed must be done, line 297, but he does mention the behest of the god as one of the factors in his decision. Here, I should see the terrors that Apollo foretells lurking in the back of Crestes' mind. But the darkness and presence of the dead also sets a mood proper to the extensive lament over Agamemnon's tomb that follows.

"Commos" means the beating of the head or breast by mourners and refers to an old ritual of mourning wherein the individual lament is followed by a lament of the bystanders. We see such a practice in Iliad 24 where the mourning of Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen is each followed by the wailings of the Trojan women. But here, in lines 306-478, the ritual is turned into an artistic composition with great dramatic significance. The commos of this play casts a spell over the dead spirit of Agamemnon, provokes him into action, bolsters the confidence or Crestes, and justifies the forthcoming murders. Indeed, Conington calls it "an actual agent" effecting what is to come. The imagery of light and darkness plays a significant dramatic role at the beginning, middle, and end of the lament.

At the beginning of the commos, the chorus make their confident prayer to the Moirai for revenge,
lines 306-314. Their attitude greatly contrasts with the
doubtfulness of Crestes who is not confident that his
prayers will reach his father under the earth. He
asks what he should do or say and then speaks of the
lament:

Light is equal to darkness;
in a similar way, a lament
that tells of his glory is
considered a delight for the
Atreidæ, the chiefs of the
house.

Crestes implies that since this lament is pleasing to the
dead, he may thus reach his father. But because of the
imagery he employs, he implies far more.

By juxtaposing light and darkness at this point and
in this way, Crestes brings together two motifs most im-
portant in this trilogy with particular significance.
These two images point to the world of the living and that
of the dead. More specifically, ἕάς has been used for the
living Crestes who is here trying to make contact with the
spirit of his dead father. But ἕάς also carries the mean-
ing of salvation and joy. Of course the joy that Crestes
brings is, on one level, simply the remembrance of his
father and his deeds in a lament. Such action would be
particularly pleasing to Agamemnon who suffers from the
darkness of a death demeaning to a military commander. But θυγατέρα has also come to mean the vengeance that Orestes will take on the murderers of his father. He is therefore bringing the joyful light of revenge that his father in darkness and indeed the whole lineage demands. Orestes, however, is unsure of himself, and, as his sister prays in line 131, he too is asking his father to send up the light of revenge, a revenge that is, in turn, incarnate in the person of his son. Thus two interwoven movements that affect the action of the entire play merge in the image of θυγατέρα. This light that the king and Orestes will effect would be most welcome in Agamemnon's house, for it lies in darkness as the chorus state in lines 51-53 and as Orestes recalls with the words "in darkness." But again there is the irony that we have discerned all along: there will be no true light for the house at the play's end.

To reassure Orestes' doubts, the chorus tell him that the dead do live on and that justice is brought to fulfillment:

My child, the mind of the dead man is not subdued by the devouring jaw of flame, but later he shines forth his anger. The dead man is lamented while the one who does harm is brought into the light.

(τέκνον, φρόνημα τοῦ θανόντος οὐ δαμάζειν πυρὸς μαλακὰ γυάθος,
In the first phrase, the chorus tell of the king's continued existence with an image that ironically recalls line 306 of Clytemnestra's beacon speech, "a beard of flame" (φλογὸς πόγωνα). There the queen hails the beacon fire as a foreshadowing of Agamemnon's destruction. Here the chorus point to the destructive light of fire, then deny its total effectiveness. They speak of "fire" as an element both bright and ruinous and emphasize these two aspects in the phrase "devouring jaw" (μαλαρός γυάθος). The adjective means both "blowing" and "consuming," while the noun graphically personifies the destructive effect of the fire. Thus, the chorus accentuate the physical effect of a funeral pyre but allay the doubts of Crestes with the belief that it does not affect a man's spirit. This first phrase, however, has further significance, for μαλαρός is an epithet of fire in Homer. The word adds dignity to the line and recalls all the glory of the Trojan war. The chorus therefore pick up "that tells of glory" (ἐνυλείς 321) of Crestes speech, and, as they remind him of his father's continued existence, they recall the glory of the king.

The chorus, though, not only relate that the dead man's spirit persists but also that, in time, it vents
its anger. They use the verb "shine forth" (φαλει), an image of light that recalls the implications of φως in Orestes' speech. In contrast to a living person who would show his anger directly, at the very moment of passion, the spirit of Agamemnon makes it shine indirectly and at a later time through his son.59

But even more reassuring to Orestes is the fact that this anger is productive. When the chorus note that the guilty man is brought into the light, they significantly use the verb δυσφαλει. This word is a compound of φαλεω, the verb that expressed the dead Agamemnon's anger; thus, the wrath of the king is linked to the guilty person's disclosure in the light. But the image of light connotes retribution, as φως in Orestes' speech above, and just retribution, as ἐν φαλει in the chorus' words of lines 61-62. Through imagery, therefore, the chorus reveal that the anger of the king's dead spirit will bring the guilty to justice.

With these lines, the chorus foreshadow the murder of Clytemnestra and her lover, but again they do not fully understand the implication of their words. What they say will also apply to the dead spirit of Clytemnestra and her murderer. Her spirit will live on; indeed, we see it in the beginning of the Eumenides. It will shine forth its anger in the form of the dark Furies who will
bring Crestes into the light of retribution.

Toward the middle of the comos, the chorus proclaim justification for the revenge they seek and describe that vengeance in terms of darkness. The women point to the law that spilled blood demands more blood: "For murder cries out from those destroyed earlier for the Erinyes, another destruction leading to destruction." (βοῶν γὰρ λοιπὸς Ξρινὼν / παρὰ τῶν πρῶτων φθειρέων ἀτην / ἄτεραν ἐπάνουσαν ἐν ἄτην. 402-404) The chorus remind Crestes that the powers of the dead call for revenge and that the dark Furies are vitally involved in it; he must carry out the murder. But, like Crestes' earlier revelations of Apollo's frightening threats, "blood for blood" and "the Furies" have terrible implications for him in the future.

Despite the chorus' words, the spirit of Crestes falters; he laments his fate and asks Zeus which way to turn. The chorus comment upon his despondence and try to encourage him with the imagery of light and darkness.

They say that they are without hope; then:

My heart is made black at the hearing of this word, but whenever I see you strong again, then easily does hope clear away grief so that all shines fair for me.

(συλλέγων δὲ μοι κελανοῦ- ταί πρὸς ἐπος κλωθσαι·
ὅταν δ' αυτ' ἐπαλκῇ σ' ὅρως, βει'
<ἐπὶς> ἀπέστασειν ἄχος
τοῦτο τῷ φανεῖσθαι μοι καλῶς.
413-417)
The chorus appropriately employ the image of darkness to express a fear that parallels the sorrow of Orestes. Though the darkening of the heart is often used to describe the gathering of the humors: anger, fear, or grief, the phrase nonetheless graphically depicts the chorus' feelings. But more importantly, the image continues a motif, the darkness of sorrow over the death of Agamemnon or its repercussions. In the beginning of the play, we saw the black dress of the chorus that reflected mourning; a bit later, they describe the house covered in darkness. Now the gloom of sorrow penetrates to their very heart.

In contrast to this imagery of despair, the chorus immediately turn to light, hope, and courage. Of course refers to their hope that Orestes will have the courage to take revenge. But the word may also point to Orestes' hope for assistance from his father by which he will commit the deed. By both definitions, this hope would drive off the sorrow of the chorus and set everything aright for them. They express this last sentiment in terms of light and emphasize the joyous state of affairs by the word "fair" (καλῶς). The imagery of light artistically contrasts with their dark sorrow and that of the house, but it also recalls the very reasons for their joy. Courage, hope, and revenge are linked to light throughout the trilogy.
Yet, despite the joy of this passage, the chorus unknowingly forebode evil. The verb "are made black" (κελανωμέναι) recalls the adjective κελαιναίn in Agamemnon 462 where the chorus describe the "black" Furies and their destruction of an unjust man. These same dark powers will soon attack Orestes for his act of matricide.

As the comos continues, emotions and confidence increase. In lines 429-433, Electra lashes out at her mother, while Orestes, in lines 434-438, boldly asserts that Clytemnestra will pay for her crimes, and pay by death at his own hand. At the end of the comos, their feelings become most intense, and they, along with the chorus, call out to their father's spirit with significant use of light imagery. They speak in rapid succession, Orestes, Electra, then the chorus:

I call to you, father; be with your dear ones. I too, amid my wailing, add my voice. This party cries out in one accord. Hear us as you come to the light. Be with us against the enemy.

(όδ οι λέγω, ἔννεγνοι πάτερ φίλοις. ἔγνω δ' ἐπιφθέγγομαι κελαινένα.
οτάοις δὲ πάλαινοις ἀδ' ἐπιρροής·
ἀκουσαν ἐς φάος μολῶν,
κυν δὲ γενοῦ πρὸς ἐχθρούς.
456-460)

Meautis notes that the second part of the comos, from line 423 onwards, has the character of an incantation. The above passage is an appropriate conclusion for this section, for in a chant-like form the three
parties call forth the spirit of Agamemnon. The appeal, of course, reaches its height in the lines of the chorus. Their very wording implies that when Agamemnon hears the prayer, he comes forth, for the participle "coming" (μολὼν) is contemporaneous with the verb. But this incantation also applies to the courage of Crestes. Earlier we saw him in doubt; here he seems more sure of himself and his father's aid, for he uses the imperative in his prayer. The chorus' lines would further incite him to commit the deed.

When the chorus use φῶς in their appeal, they reflect the dual connotation that has accrued to the word. φῶς, as we have seen, means the world of the living, revenge, and salvation; to all of these Agamemnon is called. But, as we note on line 319 above, he can only exact revenge through the action of his son. Thus, Crestes, who has been called φῶς, is also evoked for the same revenge and salvation.

This appeal to Agamemnon is followed by an invocation of Dike and Ares, lines 461-465. Since the three parties use the same structural form as in the above passage, they emphasize that the light of this revenge will be in accord with justice. But Ares is also invoked, and this implies what sort of justice is involved: blood for blood. By this same form of justice, Clytemnestra will
take her revenge. Again the chorus unwittingly forebode the attack of the Furies upon Orestes.

When the lyrical chorus ends, Orestes and Electra continue many of its themes in a dialogue form and in a less emotional manner. Orestes and his sister call upon their father for assistance; Orestes then points to the benefits that the king may gain:

For thus the lawful sacrificial banquets of men would be established for you. But if not (if you do not send aid), among the dead who have good feasts, you will not be honored by the steaming burnt offerings of the earth.

(σὺνω γὰρ ἄν σοι δαίμονις ἐννομοὶ βροτῶν κτισολα? εἰ δὲ μὴ, παρ' εὐδελποὺς ἔση ἀτιμὸς ἀπύροις κτισωτοῖς χθονὸς. 483-485)

Orestes, of course, is referring to the sacrifices paid to the dead. In so doing, he reminds us of Agamemnon's interest in the living world, indeed, his very presence there. But Orestes uses the word "burnt offerings" (ἐμπύροις), which significantly recalls earlier images of fire linked to the presence of the dead king. In line 325 the chorus speak of "the jaw of fire" that does not affect the dead man's spirit. Indeed, we may recall the fires of sacrifice in the Agamemnon 91-96, 594-596, 1058, that ironically foreshadow the debasing death of the king. How differently does Orestes employ this imagery, for here the fires point to honorific rites and the living presence of the dead man.
The chorus praise the lament of Agamemnon's children and advise Orestes now to consider other matters. He agrees and asks what prompted Clytemnestra to send the offerings. The chorus reply that "she was thrown into confusion by dreams and terrors that make one wander in the night (or are night-wandering)" (ἐκ τ' ὀνειράτων / καὶ νυκτιπλάγκτων δειμάτων πεπαλμένη 523-524). The adjective "wander by night" or "night-wandering" (νυκτιπλάγκτων) would apply to both Clytemnestra who is made to wander about and the dead who cause this nightmare, as they wander about in the dark night of Hades. We are again reminded of their all-important influence. But this adjective also significantly recalls the Agamemnon. At the beginning of that play, the watchman describes his anxiety with the same word in line 12, an anxiety due to the impious action of Clytemnestra. The queen herself employs this adjective to depict the terrors that send the Greek army off to commit atrocities against the gods of Troy in line 330, actions for which the troops and their responsible leader are punished. Now this adjective describes the horrors that beset her as a result of her sinful action. But this word may ominously apply to her murderer as well. When the chorus relate the contents of the dream, Orestes interprets them as indications that he should kill his mother. The dream
thus leads him into matricide, and as a result, the daughters of night cause him to wander, to run to Delphi.

As the chorus relate the events of that terrible night, they note that Clytemnestra let out a shriek and describe in startling fashion the lamps that were immediately lit: "Many lamps, made quite blind by the darkness, were lit in the house on behalf of the mistress." (πολλοὶ δὲ ἀνήθουν ἐκτυφλωθέντες σκότωι / λαμπτήρες ἐν δόμοις δεσποτῆς χάριν. 536-537) Logically, darkness results when the servants extinguish the lamps, but here darkness itself is the powerful agent that has overcome the light, but not forever. Yet, by the positioning of the words, Aeschylus surrounds the darkness with light and creates a sort of ring composition. We first hear the verb "were lit," then two words of darkness, then the noun "lamps." Thus, the power of darkness and that of light are both emphasized, and the lamps which were lit, extinguished, and lit again become symbolic of the successive waves of fortune in the whole trilogy. Let us now examine the implications of this light and darkness in more specific terms.

The power of darkness, on the literal level, is the ability of physical night to engulf the house, but on the figurative level, it is the gloom of evil and sorrow that fills the palace (51-53) and douses its light of joy.
This gloom is caused by Clytemnestra's sinister, dark deeds, and as her punishment, the powerful dead in murky Hades send up a horrifying dream in the night. But the punishment of a more powerful darkness yet awaits her, death itself.

Quite naturally, lights are lit to combat the physical darkness and allay the queen's fears. She must have been terrified for "many" lamps are set ablaze. But these lamps have greater significance. After the chorus speak of the lights, they relate that the queen "then" (ἐπὶ ταῦτα 538) sent offerings to allay the anger from below. This mission, however, has quite the opposite effect. When the chorus and Electra go to the tomb, they come upon Orestes, and all three make a long incantation to the spirit of Agamemnon. As a result of that commotion, the king's anger is increased. The lamps in their struggle against the darkness thus symbolize Clytemnestra's vain attempts to set things aright in the house. Furthermore, these lights intensify her guilt and foreshadow her punishment. "Lamps" (λαμπτήρες) verbally echo "terrible bright" (αἰνολάμες), an adjective with which the chorus describe the light of the king's sin in the Agamemnon 389. These lamps in the darkness recall the beacon's "light in the night" (λαμπτήρα νυκτός 22) of the watchman's speech that heralds the death of the king;
indeed the word for light in both passages is the same. Truly, the house that is dark (51-53) is now full of light, as a result of a terrifying dream sent up by its king, with lamps that foreshadow the light of revenge so ardently desired by many within it.

After Orestes interprets the dream, he tells the chorus and Electra his plan for revenge. He describes what may happen when he and Pylades approach the palace: "Suppose that none of the doorkeepers receives us with a bright disposition, since the house is preternaturally confounded and distracted with evils." (καὶ δὲ θυρωφόν οὐίς δὲν φαίδρῳ φέρει / ἔλεατ' ἐπείδη δαιμονιὰ δόμος κακοὶς. 565-566) As Orestes employs the imagery of light to express the servant's lack of good spirits, he thus recalls the darkness that surrounds the house: i.e. the anxiety caused by the dream and the fear and sorrow caused by the actions of the present rulers. Indeed by his very choice of words, Orestes calls to mind the death of Agamemnon and his murderers. "Bright" (φαίδρῳ) echoes three significant lines in the Agamemnon: "bright-shining" (φαιδροίς 520) that portends divine retribution for the king, and "radiant friendliness" (φαιδρόνους 1229) and "bright-eyed" (φαιδρωπὸς 725) both of which describe Clytemnestra's base disposition in the context of its destructive effects.
As Orestes concludes his speech, he warns the chorus to be silent when necessary and to guard their words carefully. They heed his advice in the following ode, as they indirectly comment on past and future horrors. Their ode falls at the midpoint of the trilogy's central play and, because of its themes, unites both halves of the play and the trilogy.73

The chorus begin this ode with a reference to the many horrors that nature breeds. They point to those of land, those of the sea, and finally those of the air:

"Even the lights, raised high in the space between heaven and earth, bring harm to winged creatures and those that walk." (βλάστουσι καὶ πεδαλχιοὶ / λαμπάδες πεδάορι / πτανά τε καὶ πεδοβάμονα. 589-591)74 The chorus here refer to the sun, comets, meteors, lightning, and even stars, all of which can be destructive.75 In gnomic terms they state that nature's terrible marvels are countless and prove this by universal witnesses, creatures that fly and those that walk.76 But the imagery of light recalls all of the atrocities performed by Clytemnestra and her lover as well as the chorus' hatred. The chorus therefore imply that the terrible actions of the present rulers are equal to the frightening powers of the heavens; by the gnomic form of their statement and its universal reference, they emphasize that such actions are known, felt,
and hated by everyone.

But the chorus also comment upon the moral character of the rulers and refer to their punishment. In Aeschylus the state of nature depends upon moral decisions, particularly those of rulers. Here nature is in turmoil, for the rulers have committed sin. Furthermore, "lights" (λαμπάδες) recall the "lamps" (λαμπτήρες 537) of the above passage and all of their implications. Finally, "the space between" (πεδαλεύοντι), an equivalent of "borderland of" (μεταίχμιον 63, πεδ is the Aeolic or Doric for μετ.) looks back to the chorus' opening ode where they state that just punishments await the present rulers. The comets and meteors of this passage, therefore, are ominous portents.

The imagery of light has significant connotations, but perhaps even more than the chorus would realize. All of the implications attached to these glowing bodies of the heavens apply also to Creastes and the revenge that he brings, for both he and his vengeance have been described in terms of light. We are thus reminded of the horror of his action and his subsequent punishment.

As the chorus continue their ode, we realize that these terrors of nature are only part of a priamel. As Holtsmark notes, the chorus are concerned with the definition of "marvel" (δεινόν) about which Creastes speaks in line 548, and they in lines 586, 634. They first
point to nature's marvelous woes but abruptly reject them with the adversative ἀλλ' 594. They then turn to human passions, those of both men and women (594-596). But they select the latter and, with a concluding gnome, validate their choice of feminine passion as the most terrible instance of δεινόν (599-601). To show that this gnome is true, they provide examples of passionate women. They present the first such woman in horrifying terms of light:

The child-destroying, terrible woman, daughter of Thespius, burning with fire, contrived a plan and burned down to ashes the blood-red firebrand of her child that was equal to his age.

Thus the chorus relate the killing of Meleager by Althea in striking images of fire and destruction. The woman herself is "burning with fire." This phrase metaphorically describes her frenzied state of mind, but, in this context, it also depicts the actual method by which she murders her son. The chorus then describe her action with the verb καταίθουσα that not only means "burn" but connotes "burn down to nothing." The woman is indeed bent on destruction. Even the adjective δαφοίνυν that describes the brand is highly evocative. It depicts the color of the torch as it is set afire, a scorched, reddish black and
is thus proleptic with the participle μαθαλθούσα. But this adjective can also mean "flame-colored" and is used to describe savage animals such as lions. It thus emphasizes the destructive power of fire. Finally, the chorus point to the instrument of destruction, itself an object of fire. We are thus overwhelmed with the imagery of a terrible light, but that light is all the more awesome since it actually brings about Meleager's death.

Earlier the chorus express tremendous hatred for the present rulers with the imagery of fire (268); now that imagery emphasizes their atrocious actions. Althea kills her "son" (607) by means of fire; Clytemnestra also murders a person related to her, her husband, and links the deed to the light of fire, both real and imagistic. Aegisthus too participates in this plot to kill one of his kin, a cousin, and speaks of the murder in terms of light. But this discussion of Althea is part of the main point in a priamel that begins with the horrors of nature; the chorus thus imply that the actions of the queen and her lover are a catastrophic disruption of the normal family order that surpasses even the terrors of the universe.

This passage is thus of great importance for it influences our attitude toward Orestes and his revenge. He has just gone off to commit a deed, the reverse of
Althea¹'s, though just as frightening. But because of the connotations of this passage, we shall take little pity on his mother.¹² The chorus would certainly intend their words to have such an effect, but they may not realize the further implications of what they say. Kindred murder and light imagery recall Agamemnon's sinful actions in the Trojan expedition, the murder of his daughter and his destruction of Trojan temples, with their repercussions and foreshadow the guilt of Crestes' deed with its results. Indeed the two aspects of this passage bring to mind all of the atrocities committed in the house of Atreus and their punishment.¹³

When the chorus finish their ode, Crestes calls on someone within to open the doors of the palace. A servant appears, and Crestes delivers a short speech that subtly describes the intended murders and the deceit through which they are to be accomplished. He tells the man that he has news for the rulers and urges him to hurry "since indeed the dark chariot of night rushes on" (ὡς καὶ οὔκοτος ἄρι ἐπελεγματι / οὐκετείνων 660-661). It seems that Crestes merely points out that night is approaching, and, as he says, it is time for travellers to stop and rest. But his imagery implies much more. "Night" recalls the nightmare that Clytemnestra suffers because of her injustice, while "dark" (οὐκετείνων) echoes the "darkness"
(σκότους 63) that is associated with the just punishment awaiting her and her lover. As night in the *Agamemnon* becomes synonymous with death because of sinful deeds, particularly those of the king, so here, night foreshadows that permanent darkness that will soon enfold the present rulers for their injustice. Orestes says that night hastens; he is anxious to commit the deed. But "night" and "dark" also echo the "dark" (σκοτειλήσας 286) terrors in the "night" (νυκτῶν 288), that threaten Orestes, and all of their ominous implications.

Crestes asks the servant to send out someone in authority, preferably a man, "for when respect is present in the discussion, it makes speech dim and obscure. A man speaks to another man with confidence and indicates his point openly." (αἰδώς γὰρ ἐν λέοχαισιν οὖν ἐπαργέμονος / λόγοις θεσσιν. εἶπε θαρσόσας ἄνθρο / πρὸς ἀνδρὰ κάσημησεν ἐμφανὸς τέκμαρ. 665-667) "Dim" (ἐπαργέμος) is an epithet of eyes that are obscured by a cataract,\(^\text{84}\) and so Orestes imagistically refers to the simulated accent and false pretences by which he tricks those in the palace. By this deceit, he will kill his mother and her lover; by this image he recalls the deceit that she used to kill his father. When Cassandra relates that the queen's bathing of her husband will be his murder, the chorus reply that her oracle is "dim and obscure"
(ἐπαργέμοις 1113).85

As Orestes finishes his speech, Clytemnestra, not Aegisthus, comes forth from the palace. She who deceived her husband is here tricked by her son and ironically welcome into her house her own doom. At this juncture, the chorus form a prayer whose imagery is fraught with meaning. They ask the earth that covers the king to send aid and then say that it is time for Persuasion to assist with her guile "but for Hermes under the earth and the night one to watch over the battles that slay with the sword"

(χήθυνον ἐ' Ἐρμήν / καὶ τὸν νύχταν τοῦτον ἐφορεύοις
ξεσοδηλήτορες ἀνώςειν 727-729). Hermes is the god of thieves who traditionally operates at night,86 and so the "night one" would refer to him as one who deceives.87 The darkness and deceit here recall Orestes' words above and thus remind us of the importance that deceit plays in this murder; the very god of trickery will oversee the killing. Furthermore, as in the prayers of Orestes and Electra, "under the earth" refers to Hermes as god of the dead who would conduct the spirits of the dead rulers into Hades.88 But this aspect of the god coupled with the darkness of "the night one" calls to mind the influence that the dead exert in this revenge. Indeed "the night one" may refer to Agamemnon himself,89 whose assistance is so earnestly implored, or even death
personified. By this last interpretation, the chorus would emphasize their desire to see the present rulers destroyed. Finally, as we have so often seen, the chorus speak of night and thus unwittingly point to all of its ominous implications for Orestes.

The prayer of the chorus is full of anxiety over the coming events. When the nurse appears, she provides dramatic relief with her earthy, detailed subject matter and, by expressed love for Orestes, serves as a foil to Clytemnestra. Her imagery of light and darkness is equally significant. The nurse grieves over the death of Orestes as she graphically describes her care for him as a child: "and of his loud cries that made me wander in the night" (καὶ ὠρθίων κελευμάτων 751). Indeed the very structure of her sentence may reflect her grief. Unlike Page who follows Hermann and posits a lacuna after this line, Verrall sets it off from the rest of the sentence, for it is an exclamation amid her sobbing. As the nurse describes her various chores, she notes that she was "the washer of the child's diapers" (παιδός σπαργάνων φαιδρύτια 759). Her sorrow over the death of Orestes contrasts with the sinister joy of his mother while her imagery recalls the evil action of the queen. "Making to wander in the night" describes the nightmare that attacks Clytemnestra because of her
injustice (524) and the sorrows of the watchman in the *Agamemnon* (12) that are caused by the queen. "Washer" (φαιδρύντρια) recalls all of the light imagery that Clytemnestra associates with her husband's death in that play, but this word particularly echoes Cassandra who prophesies the king's murder with "washing clean" (φαιδρύσασα 1109).

Various critics maintain that the nurse provides some sort of relief from the tensions of the play. For example, Croiset notes that the poet, in making his audience smile, wants a few moments of moral tranquility before the scenes of terror soon to come. He is quite correct; we may indeed smile when we listen to such details as the washing of baby clothes or hear the crying of a child described with such a weighty adjective. But by her imagery, the nurse also recalls the injustice of Clytemnestra and her punishment. Indeed she even looks back to that of Aegisthus and the king. Both of these men are implied in the watchman's speech, while the sinful action of the latter and his army at Troy are associated with the toils "making to wander by night" in the *Agamemnon* (330). The nurse thus calls to mind all the evils that beset the house of Agamemnon and, by implication, foreshadows those to come.

The chorus reassure the nurse that all may be well;
without fully understanding their words, she nonetheless asks that everything may be set aright with the help of the gods. In their following ode, the chorus expand this hope into a prayer to the gods for revenge. They specifically entreat Apollo and Hermes for assistance with meaningful use of light and darkness. They pray:

O you who inhabit the beautifully built, great cavern, grant that the house of a man may happily look up and that it may see the brilliant light of freedom from a dark veil with loving eyes.

(τὸ δὲ καλὸς κτίμενον ὑ μέγα ναίων στόμιον, εὐ δῶς ἀνυδείν δώμον ἄνδρός, καὶ νῦν ἐλευθερίας φῶς λαμπρὸν ἱδίειν φίλιοις ὅμωσιν ἐκ δυνομέρας καλύπτρας.

807-811)

In an allusion to Apollo's cave, they call upon the god with good reason, for it is he who orders Orestes to commit the deed. But he is the god of light, and they thus employ appropriate imagery to beseech him. "Light" (φῶς) has been associated with salvation for the house; here it is explicitly linked to freedom, freedom from their present rulers and from any more bloodshed (804-805). Furthermore, because of the connotations that this particular word for light has acquired, the chorus remind us that it is Agamemnon taking revenge through his son and thus effecting salvation. "Man" in this passage would therefore refer to both Agamemnon and Orestes. With "brilliant" (λαμπρὸν) the chorus remind us that the
revenge for which they pray is justified. That word recalls the "lights" (λαμβάνεις 590) of heaven that describe the horrible injustice of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus as well as the "lamps" (λαμπτήρες 537) that are lit as a result of anger among the dead.

This hoped-for light of joy, however, contrasts with the present sorrow that the chorus express with the phrase "from a dark veil." The image, indeed, the very words, echo a line in their first ode "darkness covers" (δυσφοι καλόμοις). Their hopes for salvation are, nevertheless, ironic. As in the Agamemnon, so here the same terms for light portend only more evil and darkness; the act of salvation is matricide. Indeed, "from a dark veil," and veil means especially that of a bride, echoes an image used by Cassandra. She says that her oracle will no longer peer out "from a veil" (ἐν καλυμμάτων 1176) "in the manner of a newly-wedded bride" (νεογάμου νόμος δίκη 1179) and then goes on to prophesy the king's death. Here the phrase looks forward to the death of the queen and her lover and all the evils that follow therefrom.

The chorus' prayer to Apollo is immediately followed by an entreaty of Hermes. They ask the son of Maia to settle the problems of the house:

When he wills, he brings to light many an invisible matter, but when he speaks an obscure word, he brings the darkness of
night before the eyes, and during the day he is no more observable. (πολλὰ δ' ἀλα' ἔφανε χρῆιῶν, ἀσκοποῦ δ' ἐποῖς λέγων νυκτὸς προομιμάτωρ σκότου φέρει, καθ' ἡμέραν δ' οὐδέν ἐμφανέστερος. 815-818)98

with these three statements the chorus point to his various powers. The first two refer to his power over speech: the ability to express a meaning clearly and, the opposite, power, to obscure a meaning and deceive a person. The chorus express the latter with the appropriate imagery of darkness. Night and obscure speech then lead the chorus to mention his power to go about unnoticed even in the daylight, and, I would say, he achieves this through his great cunning.99 These powers and their description are of great dramatic significance.

Crestes, with the help of Hermes, is able to see through both Clytemnestra's feigned sorrow over his death and her deceitful language when she realizes that he is alive. The same power would assist the chorus to discern Aegisthus' false words of sorrow. Hermes helps Crestes to bring these statements into the light of understanding and their speakers into the light of revenge. But the imagery implies a further type of assistance. "Invisible" (ἀλα' ) may refer to the dead, as it does in the Eumenides (322). Here, even though the adjective is in the neuter plural, it may refer to the dead king, and thus Hermes,
the guide of souls, conducts Orestes' father into the light.

The second statement imagistically describes the assistance given to Orestes for his deceitful accent and language. But by his speech, Orestes effects not merely the dark night of misunderstanding but also the permanent night of death for Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. Furthermore, the chorus emphasize the justification of these deaths with "darkness" (σκότου), for they earlier associate "darkness" (σκότους) with just retribution for the present rulers. The power of Hermes mentioned in the final statement is most helpful to Orestes; through cunning, he becomes unnoticed as Orestes, son of Agamemnon, even when face to face with his own mother. If the god does bring his assistance, then the chorus will sing a song of freedom (819-820). But again, the imagery of light and darkness portend only more evil to come.

After this ode, Aegisthus appears and public by pours out his grief over the news. When he asks the chorus about the matter, they refer him to the messenger. Aegisthus then states his desire to discover whether the man was present at Orestes' death or if he learned of it "from a dim report" (ἐξ ἀμαρτάς μαθόνος 853). The imagery is most significant, for it emphasizes the false tone of his sorrow over the news and points to the deceitful language
through which Orestes exacts revenge. Indeed, as Aegisthus tries to show that he will not be fooled by the report, he is taken in by the entire ruse. \(^{102}\) Furthermore, this same word "dim" describes the mind of the dead king in line 158; we are thus reminded of his influence only a few lines before the actual revenge. Finally, Aegisthus ironically describes the darkness of his own death that occurs when he does meet the messenger.

As Aegisthus enters the palace, the chorus express their anxiety: either Orestes will bring destruction upon the house of Agamemnon "or kindling fire and light in freedom" (η πῦρ καὶ φῶς ἐπὶ ἀλευθερίαν / δαίμων 253-254), he will regain the throne. The imagery emphasizes their hoped-for joy achieved through justifiable revenge. Fire stands for warmth and comfort while "light" (φῶς) means salvation and joy. \(^{103}\) As in their previous ode (609), the chorus explicitly associate light with freedom. The light and fire, though, may refer to the actual fire of a joyful sacrifice that would occur if Orestes is successful; \(^{104}\) ἐπὶ in this case would mean "because of." Such an interpretation would call to mind Agamemnon's part in the revenge, for the fires of sacrifice in Orestes' short prayer (485) and the fire of a funeral pyre (325) demonstrate the king's continual presence. But "light," in particular, the word φῶς, connotes revenge and all those
that effect it, while the imagery of fire recalls the terrify ing manner or revenge that the chorus desire (268). Finally, the image of kindling a fire looks back to the terrible action of Althea "burning with fire" (πυρδανς 606) and all of its ominous implications for Clytemnestra, Aegisthus, and ironically for Orestes. The images here, indeed the very words, echo those of the queen and her lover when they speak of Agamemnon's murder in the former play. The chorus therefore remind us of the justifiable reasons for the queen's death that follows soon afterwards and of her lover that occurs immediately, while they unwittingly foreshadow the terrible repercussions of Orestes' actions. Their appeal for light is met by the reassuring cry of Aegisthus. 105

When a servant appears, the chorus' hopes are confirmed: Aegisthus is dead. After a powerful dialogue with Orestes, Clytemnestra herself is led off to die. For the chorus all is now well for the house. They therefore sing out an ode of victory and joy as they praise the workings of Zeus, Justice, and Apollo. 106 Now "it is possible to look upon the light; a great bond has been lifted from the house." (πάρα τὸ φῶς ἵδειν, μέγα γάρ ἄφηρέθη / ἔστιν οἶκων 961-962) With this statement, the chorus metaphorically hail the light of freedom that they so earnestly prayed for earlier (809-810), the very light hoped for
since the beginning of the Agamemnon. Indeed, their joyful prayer is reminiscent of the salvation promised in the Eleusinian Mysteries amidst the sudden appearance of light from darkness, when the worshipper received the hope of deliverance. For the chorus, the deliverance from the queen and her lover through murder is similar to a religious salvation. Their words therefore look forward to the actual lights of true joy at the end of the trilogy that also recall the Mysteries. But the word for light here is φῶς, a term fraught with ominous connotations.

The chorus mention the light of joy, and almost immediately Orestes appears, the person who effects this happiness, a "light" (φῶς) himself. He shows the bodies of the two lovers and the robe with which Clytemnestra trapped her husband. He orders that it be spread out "so that father, not my father but he who observes all these things here, Helios, may behold the unholy deeds of my mother" (ὡς ἵσης πατήρ, ὥσ τερον ὁ πάντων ἐποτευόμεν τάδε ὢν Χλίος, ἀναγνωρίζει τῆς ἐμῆς 984-986). The Sun will thus be a witness at his trial that he justly murdered his mother (987-989). Though it is common, from Homer's time on, to call on the sun to witness what takes place before him, the words of Orestes are of great dramatic significance. Like his
mother, he too openly proclaims his action and states that it is just and does both by his appeal to the Sun. But this proclamation recalls similar ominous references to the sun in the Agamemnon. The herald joyfully hails the light of the sun at his homecoming (508), but that sun forebodes evil for the king. He proclaims to the sun that Troy has fallen (575-577), but in the capture of Troy Agamemnon commits sins against the gods for which he pays. The herald relates how the sun rises upon the sea full of dead bodies (658-659), the same sun that looks down upon the corpses of Agamemnon and Cassandra. That prophetess, just before her death, calls on the sun to repay her murderers (1323-1325). Crestes invokes the Sun here to witness his just deed. But that action is matricide, and the sun will witness its retribution in the form of the dark sisters.

The sun, however, has healing connotations. The herald notes that only the sun who nurtures all knows whether Menelaus is alive (632-633) and says that if the sun does notice him, the king has a chance of reaching home (676-679). Indeed, Crestes emphasizes such nurturing qualities when he calls the Sun, "father," a term that would evoke the sympathies of the Sun for Agamemnon. The deity to whom he appeals thus greatly contrasts with the powers that Clytemnestra invokes, "the Erinyes" (1433).
Furthermore, as he appeals to the Sun, he calls to mind another god of light, Apollo, who will defend him at his trial in the next play. The image of the sun, therefore, foreshadows the joy of Crestes after the trial and the pure light that finally comes at the end of the Eumenides.

Though he proclaims that the killing is just, Orestes, unlike his mother, realizes that murder is tainted. In obedience to Apollo's command, he will thus go off to be purified at his temple "and the flame of fire that is called undying" (πυρὸς τε φέγγος ἀφθιτον κεκαλμένου 1037). The imagery of fire has connotations similar to that of the Sun in the above passage. Fire looks forward both to the ritual and legal cleansing of Orestes; as fire points to the continued existence of Agamemnon after his death (324-325, 484-485), so here, that same imagery foreshadows his son's continued existence as a purified man after the murder. The flame of Apollo, though, has even further significance, for it looks ahead to those torches of joy that will accompany other deities at the end of the next play. But the imagery of fire also has terrible connotations both in the Agamemnon and in this play. One of these, the guilt of Orestes, is most appropriate in this passage, for in a few lines, that guilt meets its retribution.
The chorus tell Crestes not to worry; he is the victor who has cleansed the house of evils. He has no time to refute their words, for he sees horrible, "dark-robed" (φαλακτωνες 1049) women. "Dark" (φαλός) is the color worn as a sign of mourning, and thus the adjective recalls the mournful adjective "black-robed" (μελαχωμοις II) in the beginning of the play. But unlike those black-dressed, mortal women who grieve, these women are terrifying deities who attack Orestes. The dark evil in the house is thus lifted into the divine plane, and we are again thrust into the darkness that begins the trilogy. But as the Agamemnon ends with the hope that a mortal will rectify the situation, a hope expressed in terms of light, here Crestes calls upon the god of light, Apollo (1057), who will defend him. The confrontation of the next play is thus foreshadowed in terms of light and darkness.
Footnotes


5 Cf. Fowler, 64-65.

6 Cf. Lebeck, The Oresteia, 97.

7 Conington, p.6, 1.35.

8 Meautis, 216-218.

9 Meautis, 214.

10 Croiset, 212; cf. Kitto, 77.

11 For this discussion of oracular language, see Verrall, p.5, 11.32-35; cf. Conington, p.8, 1.35.

12 Meautis, 216. He notes that the chorus' words gain their true meaning only when we realize that Crestes hears them and reflects upon the situation in Argos.

13 Lebeck, The Oresteia, 100.
14 Fowler, 63.

15 Cf. Lebeck, *The Oresteia*, 100.

16 There are many difficulties with the text here, but, as throughout my paper, I follow Page and use the comments of others where applicable. All readings give some idea of retributive justice working in different stages.

17 For the interrelationships, see T.G. Tucker, *The Choephoroi of Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1901) pp.22-23, ll.59ff.

18 Cf. Tucker, pp.22-23, ll.59ff.


20 Peradotto, 391. He also finds fault with Booth's interpretation of *enkomone*.

21 Tucker, p.23, l.60.

22 Sidgwick, p.8, l.61.

23 Verrall, p.8, ll.59-63.


26 Cf. Conington, p.10, l.61.


28 Sidgwick, p.8, l.63. He also notes that "of the darkness" is in accord with Greek usage that mentions only one of two limits, hence my translation.

29 For this translation, see Fraenkel, III, p.481, n.2.

31 I prefer to follow G. Murray, Aeschylus Tragoediae (2nd. ed. OXT Oxford 1966) 1.131 rather than Page who reads: φίλου τ' Ὀρέστην ψως τ' αναψων. In the former's reading, the image is more direct: Orestes is a ΨΩΣ, and such direct imagery is part of Aeschylus' style.


33 Tucker, p.45, 1.157; Conington, p.27, 1.158; Paley, pp.471-472, 1.150.

34 Cf. Paley, pp.471-472, 1.150.


36 For this discussion, see Tucker, p.67, 1.267; Verrall, p.36, 1.267; Sidgwick, p.23, 1.268.

37 There are textual problems with 1.285; it does not fit grammatically. Editors, as Page notes in the apparatus criticus, have solved the problem in various ways. H.L. Ahrens deletes the line; Hermann places it after 1.288, and Dobree posits a lacuna after 1.284. Despite the obvious difficulty, I feel that the line should be retained for the appropriateness of the image in the context. I follow Tucker, p.71, 1.284 and Sidgwick, p.25, 1.288 in the translation of ὅμωντ' as a concessive clause.


40 Tucker, p.71, 1.282. He notes Eumenides 1.785.


42 Sidgwick, p.25, 1.288.


45 Tucker, p. 71, 1.283.

46 Tucker, p. 71, 1.284. He notes a connection between the apparitions of line 285 and those that only Orestes sees at the end of the play.

47 Cf. Tucker, p. 72, 1.285.

48 Feradotto, 392.

49 Verrall, p. 40, 1.285.

50 Cf. Thomson, p. 72, 1.287 and Lebeck, The Oresteia, 108.

51 For this discussion, see Tucker, p. 76, 11.305-476 and J. Lloyd-Jones, The Libation Bearers (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 1970) 25-26. He also notes that "commos" refers to a scene where the chorus and actors alternate stanzas. Though Orestes has made his decision, he shows hesitancy in the commos; indeed, he hesitates at line 309 when he is about to commit the murder. Cf. Lebeck, The Oresteia 114-115.

52 Conington, xvii.

53 Mèautis, 225.

54 Cf. Tucker, p. 79, 1.316 and Fowler, 65.

55 Cf. Feradotto, 391.

56 Cf. Lebeck, The Oresteia, 114.

57 Cf. Fowler, 65.

58 Tucker, p. 80, 1.322.
59 Verrall, p.46, 1.325.

60 As Page notes in the apparatus criticus, lines 415-417 are seriously damaged. For 415-416, I follow Murray's restoration, a probable reading. From the context, particularly the words ἀπόνοιαν ἄχος and δ' αὖ' , we expect the chorus to say something about courage. Since they express their sorrow in terms of darkness, we should expect a light image to show their joy. Thus, even though Page daggers ἴππος τὸ φανεροθαρ , I believe the image of light to be sound. For a different restoration of lines 415-417, cf. W. Headlam, "Aeschylea," CR 12 (1896) 248.


62 Keautis, 225.

63 I say chant-like because of the form and repetition of these lines. In the comos up to now, Electra or Orestes would deliver six or seven lines, and the chorus would comment. Tucker, p.108, ll.454-463. He notes that the three parties form a strophe here, which is then repeated by them in the same order for their appeal to Dike and Ares. Furthermore, I should note the following iterations: a verb of calling is used by each of the parties; "be with your dear ones" (456) is echoed with variation "be against the enemy" (460); Τυγγανοῦ of line 456 reappears in line 460 ἔδω ἐξ νανοῦ and thus encloses the chant in a fitting ring composition.

64 Tucker, p.109, 1.457 and Verrall, p.67, 1.457.

65 Cf. Lebeck, The Oresteia, 121.

66 Lloyd-Jones, p.26, 1.306. He notes that this dialogue continues the subject matter of the comos up to line 510 where the chorus direct Orestes' attention to other matters.

67 Tucker, pp.122-123, 1.522. He maintains only the latter meaning of the adjective; I think both interpretations are applicable.
Cf. Rose, II, p. 172, 1.536; Tucker, p. 125, 1.534; Conington, p. 84, 1.536.


Cf. Feradotto, 392.

Cf. Paley, p. 505, 1.556 and Verrall, p. 80, 1.564. I use the translation of the latter for the causal clause of line 566.


For my translation of πεδαλχυμοι, I use Verrall, p. 85, 1.587.


Cf. Feradotto, 378.

Holtsmark, 215-216, 251.

Cf. Tucker, p. 141, 1.605. Verrall, pp. 86-87, 11.603-610. He notes that "burning with fire" (πυρδαής) directs attention to her knowledge about the power of the brand, knowledge obtained from the Fates; he maintains an etymology for this adjective from "to know" (διην). I am dubious about this derivation.

For the discussion of δαισωδις I refer to the following: Hesychii, I, p. 408 1.35; Rose, p. 179, 1.607; Tucker, p. 141, 1.605; Verrall, pp. 86-87, 11.603-610.

Cf. Croiset, 223.


Verrall, p.95, 1.661 and Sidgwick, p.49, 1.665.

Cf. Lebeck, "The First Stasimon," 182. She points to deceit as one of the parallels between the Choephori and the Agamemnon.

Lloyd-Jones, p.50, 1.727.

Coningotn, p.110, 1.726. He notes that "night one" (\(\upsilon\upsilon\upsilon\chi\upsilon\omega\upsigma\upsilon\upsilon\upsilon\) ) is his name as god of fraud. Rose, II, p.191, 11.726-729 and Tucker, pp.154-155, 1.724 agree with this interpretation.


Verrall, p.104, 1.724.

Page, 1.727 of the apparatus criticus.

Verrall, p.197, 11.747,748. He notes that her speech has realistic irregularity that cannot be explained by the rules of grammar. Cf. Paley, p.521, 1.736.


Kitto, 2nd. ed., 89; Owen, 103; Sidgwick, xvii.

Croiset, 225.


I thus disagree with Verrall, pp.115-116, 11.802-807. He maintains that it can only be Orestes.

Cf. Feradottoo, 391.
In line 816, I follow Murray who retains the reading of M. Verrall, p.117, 1.812; Conington, p.123, 1.816; Paley, p.526, 1.801; Thomson, I., p.156, 1.816 do the same. Page reads ἀνωτέρου but ἐν πώς after Wilsomowitz and changes λέγων to βλέπων. In his apparatus criticus, he notes that no one has been able to explain what ἔπος λέγειν means in this passage. My analysis will show not only how the phrase fits in this context but how it is dramatically appropriate.


Cf. Verrall, p.117, 1.811.

Cf. Paley, p.526, 1.801.


Cf. Meautis, 237.

Cf. Meautis, 243 and Croiset, 228.

Cf. Tucker, p.213, 1.959 and Owen, 106.

For this discussion, see G. Thomson, "Mystical Allusions in the Oresteia," JHS 55 (1935) 24-37.

Lloyd-Jones, p.66, 1.985 and Tucker, pp.218-219, 1.984.

Cf. Verrall, p.141, 1.983 and Croiset 229.

Tucker, p.218, 1.982.

Cf. Verrall, p.141, 1.983; Tucker, pp.218-219, 1.984; Paley, p.540, 1.974.
113 Cf. Neautis, 245.


Chapter III

The Agamemnon opens with the ominous soliloquy of the watchman who sits atop the palace and bemoans its sorrows. In the twilight, he hails the long-awaited beacon, the light of hope, but this light heralds only more evil for the palace. The Choephori begins with Orestes at the dishonored tomb of his father as he prays to Hermes under the earth for revenge. Both Orestes and his vengeance are welcome lights for the palace dark with sorrows; but again these lights effect only more sorrow and greater darkness. At the beginning of the Eumenides, however, the scene is transferred to a sacred spot that establishes a quiet, peaceful mood. It is the shrine of Delphian Apollo, and its priestess opens the play with a prologue that, like the watchman's, foreshadows all the events to come. She begins with a prayer to the gods who have possessed the oracle, especially Apollo. The imagery of tranquility and light in her prayer looks forward to the resolution of the trilogy at the play's end where the ominous image of light is transformed into brilliant torches of true joy. The peaceful atmosphere established by her prayer is shattered when she enters the temple and beholds
horrible black creatures. Her description of them foreshadows their frightening role in the ensuing conflict. In this play, the problems within Agamemnon’s house are brought to a divine level, as darkness and light, so closely connected with the joys and sorrows of that house, become the opposing powers of Apollo and the Furies physically present on the stage.\(^1\)

In her opening prayer, the priestess, relates how the rule over Delphi was passed from one deity to another down to Apollo. There are, however, different versions of how he acquired the oracle; in one he forcefully seizes it from the former ruler, Themis. Aeschylus, though, does not employ this version but instead emphasizes Apollo’s peaceful succession with significant imagery of light. The priestess says:

With the consent (of Themis) and no violence to anybody, another Titan, daughter of Earth, Phoebe, took her seat there. She in turn gave it (Delphi) as a birthday present to Phoebus. The name of Phoebus is derivative.

(шейовапф 6απί προς βλαυ τινος.

Τιτανίς αλλα παίς Θεονός καθέζετο

Φόιβη, δίδωσιν δ’ ή γεγένθειν δόσιν

Φόιβω· το Φόιβης δ’ ονοματ’ εχει παράπυμον.

5-8)

Aeschylus alludes to two Athenian customs: a newborn child was given presents and named after his grandfather. With meaningful variation, Apollo is named after his grandmother, Phoebe.\(^2\) By such allusions, the poet artfully
increases the atmosphere of serenity.

This version of the god's peaceful succession certainly befits the sanctity of the Delphic oracle, but there are further implications. In the space of two lines, the prophetess speaks the word "Phoebus" or the feminine form "Phoebe" three times. As a common adjective it means "bright," and thus she emphasizes the association between the peaceful harmony of sacred Delphi and the image of light, an image so intricately interwoven with the sin, guilt, and horror in Agamemnon's house. The light of peace here foreshadows those torches of actual light that shine at the play's end when the problems within that house have been solved. As an epithet, "Phoebus" refers to "The Bright One" or "The Pure One"; this god of light who effects the terrible fate of Cassandra in the Agamemnon and threatens Orestes in the Choephoroi is here associated with the tranquility of sacred Delphi. Such a connection looks forward to the end of the Eumenides where goddesses of darkness cast aside their terrifying anger and become deities concerned with peace and harmony in a sacred procession of torches.

After the priestess relates how Apollo obtains the oracle, she describes his arrival: "They escort him and pay him great homage, the road-building sons of Hephaestus who made this wild land tame." (πέμπουσι δ' αὐτὸν καὶ
A god of fire, who was earlier associated with the ominous beacon in the Agamemnon (261), is linked to peaceful, religious pursuits: respect for Apollo and road building, a sign of civilization. Again light is linked with tranquility.

When the priestess completes her prayer, she goes into the temple but immediately rushes out again in terror. She then meticulously depicts the frightening scene within, as she foreshadows events to come and recalls those already past. She first tells of a supplicant inside with an olive branch "reverently wreathed with a large tuft of wool, a shining fleece, for in this way I speak clearly" (λημνει μεγιστων σωφρόνως εστημένουν, ἀργήτι μαλλαίτη τείδε γάρ τρανός ἐρώ 44-45). The branch is a reassuring sign to a religious mind, and the large size of the wool would likely demonstrate the earnestness of the supplicant's appeal. She therefore carefully notes how the wool "reverently" surrounds the branch and that this wool is "shining." Yet again the imagery of light is connected with something pure and sacred. The supplicant, of course, is Orestes, and the light image looks forward to his defense by Apollo, god of light, and his joy over the acquittal that follows it.

After she describes the supplicant, she turns to the
other things inside. In curt clauses that reveal her apprehension and ignorance about such creatures, she tries to describe them first by comparison to something familiar: 6

Not women but Gorgons I call them; but yet I do not liken them to Gorgon models, but nor to Harpies, for I once saw a painting of these well-winged creatures carrying off the meal of Phineus.

Gorgons are frightful creatures who dwell in the land of night (Theogony 274-275), and Harpies are equally loathsome winged creatures with a foul smell and a dark hue; 8 indeed one of them is called "Black" (κελαίνω). 9 Both aspects of these creatures lead into the actual description of the Furies. They are totally abominable; ooze flows from their eyes; "and these women are black" (αὕται μέλαιναι). 52 The darkness of these creatures is both real and symbolic. They wear dark robes, as Crestes notes in the Choephori (1049), 10 perhaps even dark masks, and these dark accoutrements reflect their sinister, black nature. We have already heard of their darkness and terrible punishments. In the Agamemnon "black Erinys" (κελαίναι ὧν Ἐρίναις grind down an unjust man (462-466). In the Choephori (283-296) Apollo tells of their punishments that threaten Orestes, and at the end of that play,
these "black-robed" \( \varkappa \alpha \varrho \omega \chi \tau \upsilon \upsilon \varepsilon \varsigma \) creatures attack Orestes. By her reference to their blackness, the priestess significantly recalls these passages. In the first, the man is Agamemnon who is brought down for his injustice by the aid of the Furies. In this play they will try to seize his son, and unlike the "fancies" \( \delta \omicron \lambda \alpha \varsigma \) that Orestes sees at the end of the \textit{Choephoroi}, the Furies here will be present for all to see. The priestess thus prepares us for the frightening action of these creatures as well as their physical appearance. Furthermore, by this image of darkness, the prophetess establishes a contrast maintained throughout the play between conflicting forces in this drama: the light and purity of Apollo versus the foulness and darkness of the Furies.

As the priestess finishes her prologue, she says that she will let Loxias take care of the temple and its problems; with that she leaves the stage. We then see Apollo, Orestes with the Furies sleeping around him, and Hermes. The divine powers who have figured so greatly in this trilogy are now present before us. Apollo reassures Orestes that he will not be forsaken; the Furies will pursue him, but he must seek refuge with Athena. The god of light may reinforce his contrast with the black Furies by wearing a white shining garb; in his speech, he certainly keeps before us their inherent darkness, their separation
from all living creatures, and their nature, hated by gods and men. He says:

Old, ancient maids with whom neither gods, nor man, nor beast associate; for the sake of sins (or sinners) they were born, seeing that they range over evil darkness and Tartarus under the earth.

( γραιαι παλαιαι παιδες, αις ου μεγινυται 
θεαι τις οδω, αμβρωτος ρουδε θηρ ποτε 
κακων 6 εκατι καγενουτι, επει κακων 
σκωτων νεμονται Ταμαρον 6 ουδ θουνος.

69-72)14

The first phrase of this passage may seem odd, but befits the context. In the previous line, Apollo calls the Furies "loathsome maids" (ματαποουσοι κοραι); with the phrase "old, ancient maids," he again employs an oxymoron to demonstrate his contempt toward these creatures.15 Furthermore, the word "old" (γραιαι) calls to mind the Graiae, horrible creatures with one eye who live in a land of night beyond Oceanus.16 Apollo not only reminds us of the terror and darkness inherent to the Erinyes but also prepares us for what he immediately says about them and their habitation. These Furies are so loathsome that they are shunned by all. The god expresses this by the common phrase: "neither gods, nor men associate with them" and strongly emphasizes this separation from all living things by adding nor "beast" (θηρ), a word that includes Centaurs, Satyrs, and such creatures.17

Apollo implies that one important reason for their
isolation is their terrible nature, for he immediately states that the very purpose for their origin is sin and the sinner.\textsuperscript{18} He even emphasizes their inherent evil by the harsh k sounds in line 71.\textsuperscript{19} But their separation from all living creatures and their odious nature ultimately stem from the Furies' habitation, Tartarus. In the \textit{Theogony} (720-721) Hesiod tells us that this place is as far below the earth as the sky is above it. There such terrors as Death and the fearful Hound have their abode, a fit place for the Furies. Indeed Apollo does not state that they merely "live" there but that"they range over" the land, a verb that connotes the actions of a beast of prey.\textsuperscript{20} In Tartarus no sun shines; only darkness permeates its halls. What a contrast to light-filled Olympus\textsuperscript{21} and sun-lit earth.

By his imagery and his very words, Apollo, however, not only emphasizes the nature of the Furies but recalls significant forces in the \textit{Choephori}. Hermes "under the earth" (\textit{χθόνις} 1, 124b, 727), "the night one" (\textit{νύχτιος} 728), and Agamemnon in the "darkness" (\textit{σκότως} 19) assist Orestes in the murder of Clytemnestra. Apollo relates that the Furies themselves threaten him with terrors in the night should he not carry out the deed (283-296). How ironic that those same creatures who live in the darkness under the earth should now pursue Orestes because of
that murder.

After the god's speech, Orestes begs Apollo not to forsake him. The god again reassures him and entrusts him to Hermes to protect and guide. As they leave, the ghost of Clytemnestra appears and tries to rouse the sleeping Furies. Since she is a spirit from the underworld, probably dressed in black, we may consider her, like the Furies, to be a visible image of darkness. Furthermore, though I do not regard sleep by itself as an image of darkness in this trilogy, I shall consider that of the Furies as such because the very spirits of darkness are involved. I shall now discuss the dramatic effect of the physical presence of the queen and of the Erinyes, the significant implications of the Furies' sleep, and Clytemnestra's speeches to them.

In the Choephori the living Orestes piously seeks aid to revenge his father from those in the underworld, namely Agamemnon and Hermes, both of whom are never physically present. In this play, the very spirit of the dead Clytemnestra comes to the stage and angrily goads on the powers of the underworld that are present before our eyes. The very presence of Clytemnestra demonstrates her tremendous anger and desire for vengeance; she makes certain, in person, that her murder is avenged. Her incitement of the Furies reminds us of her close connection to
them in the *Agamemnon*: she justifies the murder of her husband by evoking the Furies (1433) and, in reality, shows herself to be a Fury (1501). Indeed, the Furies are a physical realization of her revenge and wrath, and as such, they keep before us her frightening nature, while they embody an element long at work in *Agamemnon's* house, vengeance.

When we first see these horrifying creatures, they are, rather unexpectedly, fast asleep; the priestess notes that "they are snoring" (*δέγμουσι* 53). This sleep, however, is advantageous to the poet; he can emphasize the terror of these creatures. We can consider their sleep by an analogy to the accepted doctrines about sleep in general. When human beings are asleep, their souls are free to go into regions from which they are normally barred. The souls come very near the realms of darkness from which dreams and ghost arise; to the human soul, such a place is repulsive. When the Erinyes are asleep, their spirit is free to range the realms of darkness. But for them such a place is pure refreshment. Their sleep, therefore, emphasizes their terror.

Furthermore, with the Furies asleep, the poet can describe them and their pursuit in dramatic fashion and build up to their waking presence in a crescendo-like manner. First the priestess describes them; then Apollo
adds to her description as we see them sleeping. Perhaps when the god points to "these ravening" (τάς μάργους 67) creatures, they move like a dog when dreaming. Next, Clytemnestra appears and reproaches them for not pursuing her murderer. At this the Furies begin to awake; in four sets of short lines (117-130), the chorus of Furies groan as the queen further incites them. The crescendo builds as that chorus cry out "Get him; get him; get him; get him; take care!" (λαβέ λαβέ λαβέ λαβέ· φοβίζου, 130) Clytemnestra then graphically depicts how the Furies should destroy Orestes. With that the crescendo reaches its pinnacle and the chorus deliver their first ode.

We shall now examine the light and darkness in Clytemnestra's two speeches that precede that ode. With sarcasm and violence, she reproves the Furies for not avenging her and tries to incite them to action. In the first speech, she tells them to look at her wound, "for the sleeping mind is made bright with eyes, but in the daylight, the fate of mortals is unseen" (εὖδονσα γὰρ φρὴν οἴμασιν λαμπρύνεται, / ἐν ἡμέραι δὲ μοῖρ' ἀπρόδοκος βροτῶν 104-105). We can apply this statement to mortals and thus have a commonly expressed paradox: men can foresee the future while asleep through dreams and the like, but in the daylight, they are blind in this respect. If this is the case with mortals, how much more so with
divinities whose habitation is akin to the darkness of sleep? The queen thus bids them to look at her wound with their mind's eye.27

But the meaning and imagery of her words have wider implications. This paradox reminds us particularly of Clytemnestra's situation in the Choephori. She has a dream that portends her destruction, though she realizes its meaning too late;28 indeed the verb in her statement to the Furies "is made bright" (λαμπρύνεται) echoes "the lamps" (λαμπηρὲς 537) that were lit because of that dream in the night. During the daylight, she is unable to recognize her own son, let alone the fate that he brings her. She also recalls the position of Agamemnon and Aegisthus, both of whom are unable to discern their terrible destiny in the clear light of day. Finally the image of light amid the darkness of sleep, like the beacon in the night, bears terrible connotations. The Furies in their sleep can see her wound and will pursue Orestes. But they too will suffer; their victim will escape, and they will vehemently complain that they were deprived of their ancient privilege. This image of light, unlike the beacon, however, looks forward to a true light of joy, the torches that will illuminate these reformed powers of darkness at the play's end.

Clytemnestra continues to reproach the Furies as
she demonstrates that they owe her repayment for the "many" (πολλά) sacrifices that she made: "and I used to sacrifice banquets solemnized by the night, on the altar of fire, a time common to none of the gods" (καὶ υπενθυμενω βείης ἐπὶ τοξώματε πυρᾶς / ἔθνου, ὤραν οὐδενδὲ κοινὴν θεῶν 108-109). Her imagery is replete with frightening connotations. She emphasizes the nocturnal nature of sacrifices to the Furies. She states that their banquets are "solemnized by the night" and, in quasi apposition to this phrase, adds a connotative word for "time" (ὥρα) that signifies "a rite proper to a particular time." By such reiteration, the queen thus stresses the close connection between the physical darkness of night and the sinister, dark nature of the Furies. Furthermore, Clytemnestra notes that night sacrifices are common to no other god, meaning no Olympian god, for sacrifices to Cthonian deities take place at night. We are therefore again reminded of the Furies' isolation from Apollo and the other heavenly deities.

Among these night sacrifices of the queen, are those ominous sacrifices that she makes upon news of her husband's return. In the Agamemnon the altars "of Cthonian gods" (χθονίων 89) among others are aflame, and her sacrifices occur immediately after the beacon in the night. Indeed the "fire" that Clytemnestra mentions here recalls all the
light and fire that describe these sacrifices in the _Agamemnon_. By stressing her former offerings to the Furies, the queen thus emphasizes her own appalling actions. Indeed the adjective "solemnized by the night" (νυκτὸςομενᾶ) echoes "make to wander by night" (νυκτὶπλαγμος), a word associated with the sin and guilt of Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and Aegisthus (_Agamemnon_ 12, 330; _Choephoroi_ 524, 751). The sacrifices to the Furies thus fittingly recall all the evil that besets Agamemnon's house.

After the Furies groan in their sleep, Clytemnestra again goads them on with a short speech. As she prepares for her husband's death with the beacon and sacrifices of fire, as the chorus in the _Choephoroi_ (268) desire vengeance upon her in the fiery ooze, so she orders the Furies to take revenge upon Orestes in the frightening terms of fire: "Wasting him away with vapor, fire from your womb, pursue him; quench him." (_δίωξι κατασχαυνονουσα, νηθὺςοςνυόλ, ἔποι, μάραυε_. 138-139). A womb of fire is a stark but dramatically appropriate oxymoron; what normally nurtures the goodness of life breeds destructive fire. With this image, Clytemnestra forcefully emphasizes the devastating nature of the Furies. But at the same time, she describes the product of her own womb, Orestes, who brought the destructive fire of revenge upon her. She now orders the Furies to "quench" that fire of her son. Thus the
light of salvation that Orestes hoped to enkindle in the house will be doused by their terrible fire of the Furies.

At this incitement by the queen's ghost, the chorus awake and sing their first ode. They complain that Apollo sullies his altar with a man guilty of murder; new gods do such things. But they will never let Orestes escape. At this Apollo orders the Furies to leave the temple with a violent threat, employing imagery that emphasizes his contrast with these creatures and his protection of Orestes. They must begone "lest receiving the winged, glittering snake that rushes from the bowstring of beaten gold, you actually spew forth, out of pain, the black foam from men" (μὴ καὶ λαβοῦσα πτηνὸν ἄργυροτῆν ὅφιν / χρυσηλάτου θόμινας ἐξορμωμένου / ἀνῆς ὑπ' ἀλγοὺς μέλαν' ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἀφρόν 181-183). Everything about Apollo is bright and shining: his arrows, even his bowstring; these weapons thus provide a physical contrast to the black robes of the Furies. But the very description of his weapons is dramatically significant. He calls his arrow "glittering" (ἄργυροτην) and echoes the adjective "shining" (ἀργήτη) that describes the wool on Orestes' branch. The god thus reiterates that he is the protector of this suppliant. Instead of calling his weapon a "glittering arrow" though, Apollo speaks of a "glittering snake," an apt metaphor since an arrow's action is similar to a
bite or sting. But more importantly, he describes one of his own weapons in terms of a frightening attribute of the Furies who have snakes in their hair (Choephoroi 1049-1050) and so turns part of their own nature against them. Finally, by describing his arrow as "glittering" (Δραγησου) and his bowstring as "of beaten gold" (χρυσηλατου), the poet recalls Apollo's epithets in the Iliad: "of the silver bow" (Δρυμποτοξ 1.37) and "with sword of gold" (χρυσόδορος 5.509, 15.256) and thus adds dignity to his stature.

In contrast to his radiant splendor, Apollo emphasizes the darkness and loathsome nature of the Furies, the very reason that he wants them out of his holy temple (185-197). If his arrow hits them, they will spit out "black foam." This phrase graphically describes the blood or ooze of the Furies that bubbles forth from their wound as foam from a horse's mouth. This blood is "black" (μελαω) since their very nature is "black," as the priestess notes with the same word (μελαων 52). But this foam also refers to the "black" blood that they suck "from men," an equally frightful image. The description of human blood spit out by the Furies looks forward to their threat upon Orestes: to feast upon the blood from his living limbs (264-265). At the same time, the image of "black foam" looks back to the "black blood"
of a slain man in the Agamemnon. In that context, their statement applies to Agamemnon’s murder, but it is general and refers to all men who are killed. By his imagery, therefore, Apollo recalls all the atrocious murders that the Furies exacted and will endeavor to exact in the house of Agamemnon.

After Apollo’s speech, he and the Furies begin their head-on confrontation. The chorus maintain that he is responsible for matricide and reiterate their intention to pursue Orestes. Apollo replies that he ordered a revenge of Agamemnon and again states that he will protect his suppliant. With that the scene changes to Athens where Orestes begs Athena to receive him. The Furies appear and in a lyric again emphasize that Orestes has committed murder and will have to pay. They will wither him up while alive and carry him below to suffer. Indeed anyone who dishonors a god, a stranger, or a parent must pay “for great Hades is the chastiser of men beneath the earth” (μένας γὰρ Ἀιδης ἐστιν εὐθύνος βροτῶν / οὐρανὸς ἐχθρός 273-274). Hades, god of the dead and darkness, has the stature of another Zeus. By such a description of him, the Furies solemnly combine their own darkness to a justification for the retribution that they desire. This solemn conclusion of their lyric is reinforced by an allusion to the beliefs of the Eleusinian Mysteries
(264–275).41

As the Furies justify their punishment with a reference to the god of darkness, Orestes proclaims his purity to Athena with significant reference to the god of light. He says that "the blood of his hand is quenched" (αἷμα καὶ μαραθυνεῖ τὰ χέρια 280) since he has been purified "at the hearth of the god, Phoebus" (πρὸς ἔσται τοῦ θεοῦ / Φοίβου 282–283). To demonstrate his innocence, Orestes uses the same verb "quench" (μάραθω) as that by which Clytemnestra orders his destruction. Like his protector, he turns an image used for the Furies back upon them. As he stresses his own innocence, he also emphasizes the purity and brightness of Apollo with the epithet "Phoebus." He thus continues the contrast between that god and the dark, sinister Furies.

In their reply, the Furies proclaim that no help from Apollo or Athena will save him from perishing as "a blood-drained victim of the powers, a shadow" (ἀναιματον βόσκομα δαιμόνων, σκιά 302). In this context, the word "shadow" would obviously connote something bereft of all substance, but it also implies a significant image of darkness. Appropriately, the Furies of Tartarus turn their victim into something that reflects their own blackness. But, further, the image has reverberations that reach back into the trilogy. In the Choephoroi,
Orestes is a "light" (φῶς 131); now he will be reduced to a mere shadow. In the Agamemnon, the queen calls her husband a "shadow" (σκιά 967) before she murders him, partly in revenge for her daughter's death. The Furies use that same word here to describe Orestes before they would destroy him in revenge for matricide.

The chorus again say that Orestes will not escape, and immediately they begin an ode. With their words and gestures, they cast a magical spell that is to bind and deliver him to their mercy. Their lyric, though, has a second purpose: to demonstrate and exult their own justifiable sphere of influence. We thus see both the frightening terror of the Furies as well as their solemn grandeur.

At the beginning of the ode, they again associate darkness with a justification for their present actions in an image that has significant connotations. They complain that Apollo has snatched away their rightful victim, as they call out: "Mother, O mother Night, who bore me as a punishment to those who see and those who are blind, hear!" (μάτερ ὃ μή Ἔτικες, ὦ μάτερ / Ἡλί, ἀλαοίσι καὶ ἐδορκόσιν / ποινάν, κλαῖ. 321-323) In contrast to Hesiod who relates that Earth bore the Furies (Theogony 184-185), Aeschylus makes Night their mother, a relation that is a major motif in the play. This genealogy and its
positioning is most dramatically effective. From the play's beginning, darkness is increasingly associated with the terror of the Furies. The priestess speaks of the "black" (52) Furies and describes their frightening physical appearance; Apollo then relates that their habitation is the evil darkness of Tartarus (71-72). Now the Furies proclaim that darkness herself, "black Night" (μῆλαινα τῆς Νότ),  from Theogony 123) gave them birth to be a "punishment" for all men, living and dead; this is the connotation of "blind" and "seeing." It is appropriate that Night bears her children for such a frightful task since, in the Theogony, she herself is called "destructive" (δλοφή757) and her children, Death and Sleep are called "terrible" (δολινολ759). The Furies appeal to her because Apollo nullifies their very reason for existence by snatching away their victim, Orestes (323-326). The anxiety over this loss is reflected in their invocation: they call out "mother" twice and add "who bore me." By complaining to Night about Apollo's actions, the Furies keep before us the conflict of light and darkness. But this appeal has other connotations. In the Theogony (123), Night is the daughter of primeval Chaos and so suggests immemorial antiquity. By stressing their close connection to her, the Furies therefore emphatically justify and solemnize their pursuit of Orestes.
This invocation, however, has still further significance since it recalls similar references to night in the trilogy. We should consider in particular two passages of the Agamemnon. In that play (264-265), Clytemnestra associates night with the murder of her husband, committed in part as a revenge for the death of Iphigenia. Now, in the Eumenides, her own avengers beseech Night to assist them in their "justifiable" revenge upon Orestes for the murder of Clytemnestra. Secondly, the chorus hail Zeus and Night as destroyers of Troy (355-361) and thus imply the close connection of these two powers. In this play, however, there is a tremendous gulf between the Olympians and the Furies. Zeus forbids them from entering his council halls (365-366), and they significantly exclude him in their complaint to Night.

Later in the ode, the Furies again express their rightful position with connotative imagery of light. They proclaim: "I was created with no share in, with no portion of white robes." (παλλακόν δὲ πέπλων ἄπλωμοιρος ἀκληρος ἔτόχθην. 352) By their reiteration they emphasize that their lawful position is separate from that of the Olympians. As their habitation is dark and quite opposite to the abode of the heavenly gods, so the Furies have nothing to do with their "white robes." This clothing refers to the vestments worn during the ritual of the celestial
gods and, by contrast, would thus recall the offerings made to the Furies in the dead of night (108). The robes, though, may also point to the clothing worn by the deities of light and remind us of Apollo's glistening weapons; in contrast, of course, the Furies wear black (52, Choephoroi 1049). Thus the contrast between light and darkness, purity and foulness, so essential to the play, is reemphasized.

In the next strophe and antistrophe, the chorus of Furies describe the frightening results of their incantations with appropriate imagery of darkness. The revered glories of men on earth "wasting away decrease unhonored under the earth at our black-robed attacks and the malignant dances of our feet" (τακόμεναι κατὰ γάς μινυθουσι ἄτιμοι / ἀμετέραις ἐφόδοις μελανελμόσιν / ὀρχησοίς τ' ἐπιφθόνοις ποδὸς 369-371). Their dances round a person have such terrible effects that they call them "attacks," and since these movements constitute a kind of magic, their robes are appropriately black. We thus see that darkness, so interwoven with the existence of the Furies, not only reflects their evil nature but is an actual agent in their frightening destruction of a man. Indeed this destruction is twofold: a man is made dishonored, but, even worse, he is cast beneath the earth, i.e. Hades, and in that frightful place suffers shame.
The Furies speak in general terms, but they are of course referring to Orestes. Earlier, they threaten to make him "a shadow" (302); now they proclaim that the very process of effecting this involves darkness. How ironic that powers from Hades will try to destroy Orestes through the spell of a "black-robed" (μελανε(μοις)ν) dance, for in the Choephoroi a group of "black-robed" (μελαγχ(μοις)ις) women join him in seeking assistance from his father in Hades, through a similar ritual in the commons!

The Furies further describe their destruction with significant imagery of darkness:

Falling he does not realize it because a bane of madness. Such a darkness of defilement hovers over a man, and much-sighing common talk proclaims a certain gloomy mist throughout the house.

(πλητων δ' οὐκ οἶδεν τὸν ὑπ’ ἄφρονι λόμαι τοὺς ἐπὶ κυνέφας ἀνδρὶ μόσος πεπόταται, καὶ δυσφεράν τιν' ἡχλὸν κατὰ δώματος αὐθεντήν πολύστονος φάτις.
377-380)

We shall first examine this statement in its general terms, then with its specific implications for Orestes and his house. When a man sins, he incurs punishment and begins to fall toward destruction. He does not notice it, though, partly "because of a bane of madness," i.e. the same folly that causes him to err prevents him from seeing the approach of his downfall. But there is another reason that blinds the man to his fate, the defilement of his sin. The Furies describe this as "darkness," an apt expression
for the pollution of sin and the blinding effect of that pollution. They emphasize the power of this darkness with the phrase "such a darkness," i.e. such a one as has this blinding effect.\(^5\)

For Orestes and his lineage, these words have frightening implications. In the Choephoroi, he was to bring the light of joy and salvation to a house filled with the "gloom" (δυσφοι 52) of sorrow; the Furies now proclaim that he only increased that "gloomy" (δυσφεράντας 379) mist with the defilement of murder. The adjective "much-sighing," then, may describe the sympathy of the people for the plight of Orestes,\(^5\) but it also expresses their own suffering that results from his guilt. Yet μαὶα ὄνοματος/ἀδάματος πολύσονος φάτης may also be interpreted as: "The voice of many a groan proclaims against the house";\(^5\) the Furies thus remind Orestes that he is only one of the many defiled victims of Agamemnon's house whom they destroy.

After they depict the terrible results of their chant, the Furies conclude their ode with themes similar to those of the beginning. With imagery of darkness, they solemnly justify their terrible, appointed tasks, restate their separation from the Olympians, and demonstrate the affinity of their fate to that of their victim. They describe themselves as:
pursuing dishonored, allotted offices that stand apart from the gods by sunless filth, tasks that are difficult and rugged on those who see and those entirely blind alike

Their ancient privilege is appointed by fate and given by the gods; they will have nothing to do with dishonor (392-394), "even though I have a position under the earth and sunless darkness" (καὶ περ ὑπὸ χθόνα τάλιν ἔχουσα / καὶ δυσήλιον κύρφας 395-396).

Earlier in the ode, the Furies state that they have "no portion" in the white garb of celestial deities (352); now they proclaim that their "allotted tasks" are quite different with a connotative metaphor of their habitation. They aptly describe and emphasize the darkness of their home, Tartarus, with the phrases "sunless filth" and "sunless darkness." In this way, the Furies forcefully drive home their contrast with all gods of light-filled Olympus, but in particular, Apollo, god of the sun. Furthermore, they reiterate their separation from the inhabitants of Olympus and all creatures. Their home is far "under the earth," and they go along roads that are "difficult and rugged," impassable (δυσόδομαπαλα) for the living and the dead. 57 (As in line 322, "blind" and
and "seeing" have such connotations.)

But as they refer to Tartarus and rugged paths, the Furies are actually describing their own "allotted tasks" as opposed to those of the Olympians. By the reference to their habitation, they proclaim that the difference between their duties and those of the Olympians is as great as the space that divides Tartarus from heaven. Furthermore, the "sunless filth" reflects the terrible nature of their "dishonored" tasks that contrast with those of the Olympians, in particular, the pure and sacred office of Apollo, god of light. The Furies then indicate the nature of their duties: to make the road difficult for both the living and the dead. Perhaps too they recall their presence in the much troubled house of Agamemnon, for "sunless" (ἁναλωτι 386) is also used by the chorus in the Choephoroi to describe the darkness that covers the house as a result of the king's death (ἁναλωτι 51).

As the Furies describe their terrible "allotted tasks," they justify and demonstrate the affinity of their lot to that of their victim. In the last antistrophe, they stress that their pursuit is justifiable by many references to their lawful privileges (391-394). By describing their task with terms of darkness and by the specific phrase "those who see and those entirely blind" (387), they further this justification, for at the
beginning of the ode they had already described their terrible office with those very words and established the lawful authority of their task by a reference to the darkness of Night (321-323). Their own lot is lawful and frightening, but it is the very fate to which they bind their victim. Just as their proper habitation is full of gloomy "darkness"( κυδόας 396) "under the earth" ( ουδ ξθόνα 395), they threaten their victim with "darkness" ( κυδόας 378) "under the earth" ( κατα γαζ 369).60

At the conclusion of their ode, Athena makes her appearance. She is awestruck by the Furies, creatures that she has never seen before, but in contrast to the vehemence of Apollo, she treats them with respect.61 Indeed, her words of restraint contrast with and heighten the violent incantation of the Furies. She inquires about them and Orestes. The Furies reply first: you will know everything "daughter of Zeus, for we are children of eternal (or wearisome) Night; we are called Curses in our home under the earth" ( Δίς κόρη / ήμετς γάρ έσμεν Νυκτός αλαμός τέκνα, / 'Αραί δ' εν οίκοις τής ύπαλ κεκλήμεθα 415-417). By their response, the Furies again state their legitimate claim to terrible pursuits in contrast to the Olympians. The Furies are very respectful toward Athena in this first dialogue. In answer to her question they say that they will reveal all and later
state outright that they respect her as she comes from worthy parents (435). When they politely address her as "daughter of Zeus," they therefore imply that just as she receives honor because of her parentage, they also deserve reverence as children of Night. Earlier they invoked their mother, Night, as a justification of their terrible pursuits (321-323, see above pp.173-174); here they emphasize both her authority and the terror of those tasks. Night is a deity to be revered, for she is from of old, "eternal" (αἰώνις 416). But that adjective also means "wearisome," and so the Furies reiterate the dread office for which she bore them (321-323). Indeed, in the next line, they proclaim that they are "Curses."

But by their reference to Night and to their home "under the earth" (γῆς ὅπαλ 417), the Furies again remind us that they are frightful spirits of darkness as opposed to and separate from the Olympians. More specifically, they continue the contrast with their foe, Apollo, god of light and purity as they foreshadow their violent confrontation with Athena after the trial.

The Furies present their case of rightful vengeance to Athena after which Orestes makes his reply. He emphasizes his purification and, with a connotative image of darkness, proclaims the justification of his mother's murder. He states that his "black-minded" (καλαίνόσφυν 459) mother killed his father upon his return. The
adjective effectively describes the terror of her intention as well as the guilt and horror of her action.\textsuperscript{63} Indeed again it links Clytemnestra herself with the Furies (see above p. 76), for the same word "black" (μελαναι\textsuperscript{52}) describes these creatures earlier in this play. Finally it reminds us of the terrible darkness that befalls Agamemnon's house as a result of her action as well as that of the frightening, dark Furies that now pursue Orestes at her goading.

But this image of darkness also demonstrates another aspect of Orestes' character, his violent feelings toward his mother.\textsuperscript{64} He thus associates himself ever more closely with Apollo who, with kindred imagery (69, 72, 183), expresses his violence toward her defenders, the Furies.

After Orestes completes this first defence, Athena sets up the court proceedings. The chorus then chant an ode that demonstrates their role and usefulness, particularly as the punishers of guilty men.\textsuperscript{65} In the middle of the lyric, they state that men should learn to act properly under fear of suffering (520-521) and then ask:

\begin{quote}
What city or mortal alike,  
if he in no way nourishes  
his heart in the light,  
would yet revere Justice?  

(τις δὲ μηδὲν ἐν φάει  
κραδίαν ἀνατρέψων  
ἡ πόλις βροτὸς θ' ὀμοιό-  
μένει εἴτ' αὐ ὄβολοι Δίκαια;  
522-525)\textsuperscript{66}
\end{quote}
from the context, this statement means: if a person or state does not fear punishment for wrongdoing, he will certainly not respect justice. The Furies therefore justify their position as creatures who instill that fear. With the image of light, they further the justification of that office and of their particular action toward Orestes, while they recall their own terror. In the Choephoroi, just punishment comes upon those "in the light" (ἐν φῶς 61-62), i.e. the guilty. By using that same phrase, the Furies emphasize that the fear they instill arises from their just punishments of guilty persons. But with the word φῶς, they refer directly to Orestes, for, in the Choephoroi, he is a "light" (φῶς 131). The Furies then imply that he does not nurture his heart in fear and so does not reverence Justice; he stands in the light of guilt, deserving their just punishments. Finally, since the image of light has terrible connotations, what better way to describe the tremendous fear of a person as he contemplates their frightening punishments than "in the light"?

After the Furies conclude their ode, Athena opens the proceedings of the trial. With an evocative image of light, she calls all parties to court: "Let the Tyrrhenian trumpet filled with mortal breath shine forth a blast at full pitch to the people." (Τυρρηνική / ὁ ἄλπιγι βροτείου πνεῦματος πληρομένη / ὑπέρτατον γῆρυμα φαίνετο στραταί.
567-569) "Shine forth" is a metaphor for the sound of the instrument but may also refer to the brilliant material of which it is made. This radiant imagery of light is full of anticipatory joy, and by associating this light with the brazen trumpet that was her own, Athena emphasizes her glorious role in effecting that joy. The image of light looks forward to the true joy that Orestes will feel at the end of this trial over which Athena herself presides; the light combined with the glorious sound of the trumpet foreshadows the torches of joyful light and the blessings that the Furies chant at the play's end, both of which are effected through Athena's tactful persuasion.

Once the proceedings are opened, the chorus of Furies question Orestes about the facts. He in turn calls upon Apollo to defend him. The god states that Zeus ordained the murder and fortifies his argument by declaring that the mother is no true parent of the child. He points to Athena as a living testimony: "she was not nurtured in the darkness of a womb" (οὐκ ἐν σκότοις υπόθοδος τεθραμμένη); no goddess gave her birth. This argument is important since Athena employs it when she casts her vote (735-736), but the imagery is also most significant. In this trilogy, all who are nurtured in the womb's darkness threaten the darkness of sorrow and destruction. Agamemnon, his family, and those associated with it one
time lay in the womb, and all of them participate in the suffering and downfall of his house. Even Apollo who threatens the Furies with destruction (181-184) was also born from Leto's womb as the Hymn to Apollo relates (45). The Furies themselves imply that they rested in a womb by their repeated reference to birth from mother Night (321-322, 415, 745, 791-793, 821-823, 844, 876), and they threaten destruction upon Orestes and the land of Athens (720, 782-787, 812-817); indeed their very womb is destructive (138). Athena is the only one who is not kept in the womb's darkness and the only one who uses restrained and persuasive speech to effect the true light of joy and harmony at the conclusion of the play.

When Apollo finishes his defense, the vote is taken. Meanwhile, Athena proclaims the establishment of the Areopagus and emphasizes the salutary fear that will be part of it: "In it the reverence of citizens and kindred fear will prevent wrongdoing by the day and night, the kindly time, alike." (ἐν δὲ τῷ σέβας / ἀκτὸν φόβος τῇ γυμναι ἐν μὴ ἀδίκειν / σχάζει τῷ τῇ ἡμῶρ καὶ καὶ τῇ εὔφροσυνῃ δομῇ. 690-692) With the phrase day and night, Athena emphasizes that justice will be present all the time, even at night, the very season of crime. The imagery, however, has wider implications. By associating fear with respect and night, she not only states that a
certain type of fear is necessary for the state's well-being, but implies that fear, inspired by the Furies, daughters of Night, is essential. These words thus foreshadow her invitation to the Furies to be resident guardians of Athens and the transformation of the Furies into a beneficent force. 71

But her imagery also looks back into the trilogy. With "day" (ἡμαρ) and "night" (εὐφρόνη), she recalls the words of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. In the Agamemnon, the queen expresses the anxious hope for her husband's murder by ironic reference to "night, the kindly time" (εὐφρόνης 265), while her lover later hails the "kindly light of day" (φέγγος εὕφρον ἡμέρας 1577) that witnesses that atrocious crime. The repercussions of that murder will now be sorted out not by another act of violence but by a just and legal body of men. By the implications of her imagery, then, light increasingly becomes a symbol of true joy, and night becomes truly the "kindly time."

For this fear and respect within the Areopagus to be effective, however, Athena says that her citizens must not make innovations into the laws. She explains the reason: "Stainting bright water with evil floods and mud, you will never find a drink." (κακαὶς ἐπιρροαὶ ἑωβόροι στὴν ὕδωρ / λαμπρὰ μιαίνειν οὐπόθεν εὐρήεις ποτὸν. 694–695) These lines may refer to a proverb 72
or recall an actual law in Athens\textsuperscript{73} and as such may have political significance. But their imagery is important for dramatic reasons. Particularly in view of Athena's later association of just Zeus with light (797), we understand "bright water" to mean true justice and murky, polluted water to be injustice. Athena therefore states that if a person wishes to attain the true bright waters of justice, he must not taint his actions with the dark murkiness of injustice or unjust reasons. But by her imagery, she specifically condemns the people of Agamemnon's house, for light, indeed the very word "bright" (\textit{λαμπρός}) is associated with their murders performed under the guise of justice. More particularly, she points to the action of Clytemnestra, for, as Cassandra relates in the \textit{Agamemnon}, the queen "makes her husband bright in the bath" (\textit{πόσιν/λουτροίς φαιδρύνασα} 108-1109): she murders him.

When Athena concludes her speech about the Areonagus, the Furies and Apollo briefly argue over the reasons why they should win the case. Athena then declares her vote for Orestes and asks that the votes be counted. As this is being done, Orestes declares: "O Phoebus Apollo, how will the court action be decided?" (\textit{ο Φοιβός Άπολλων, πώς ἀγὼ κρίθησαι;} 744) and adds: "Now for me the issues are either the noose or to look upon the light." (\textit{νῦν ἀγχόντις μοι τέρματι, ἡ φάσσε ἑλέπειν.} 746) \textsuperscript{74} The
Furies proclaim: "O Night, black mother, do you see these events?" (ὡς Νύκτι, μέλαινα μητέρ, ἀρ' ἀραιός τάσε; 745) At the climax of the trial, we again discern the contrast between the two conflicting forces of the play: the purity and light of Apollo is emphasized by the image in "Phoebus"; the darkness and terror of the Furies is stressed by the images of "Night" and "black." But by these anxious imprecations, both parties recall the strength of their case: Apollo orders Orestes to murder his mother; Night bears the Furies for the odious task of hunting down the guilty.

When Orestes speaks of the trial's outcome, he says that it will mean either death by hanging, a most miserable form of death, a last resort in despair or life. To express the latter idea, he employs the meaningful phrase "look upon the light." At the end of the Agamemnon (1646), the chorus use this same expression to demonstrate their hope that Orestes be alive and bring home the light of salvation and joy. Orestes thus recalls the salvation that he was to effect, indeed, the light of salvation longed for since the beginning of the trilogy. By the same token, he also foreshadows the joy and salvation that come with his acquittal only a few lines later and the joyful torches that accompany the reformed, beneficent Furies at the play's end.
When the verdict of acquittal is pronounced, Orestes immediately praises Athena, Apollo, and Zeus as saviors of him and his house. The Furies, however, are full of grief and anger, for their victim has gone free. In a series of speeches with Athena, they demonstrate these feelings while the goddess uses persistent persuasion to pacify them gradually.76

In their first reaction, the Furies exclaim that they have been dishonored and, as a result, will bring a plague upon the city. At the end of this passionate reply, they cry out in their grief: "O unfortunate daughters of Night, suffering from ruin, sorrowing from dishonor." (ἵω μεγάλατοι κόραι δυστυχεῖς / Νυκτὸς ἀτιμοπει­

εῖς. 791-793) In the anxiety over their disgrace, they emphasize their parentage, as they do earlier (321-322, 745), and so recall the terrible dark office that legally belongs to them.

In her speech, Athena tries to persuade the Furies that they are not dishonored. Since the votes of the trial were equal, they were not defeated, "but (they lost) for the bright testimony of Zeus was present" (ἀλλ’ ἐκ Δίδα γὰρ λαμπρᾶ μαρτύρια παρῆν 797).77 So often in this trilogy, mortals and the divine power, Apollo, associate light, at times the very adjective "bright" (λαμπρός), with murder performed as just retribution for murder.
The Furies, of course, personify this concept and, by contrast, look to Light and Hades as their authority. Athena, however, praises a different type of justice founded upon another basis. She associates "bright" (λαμπρός) with Zeus' testimony and thus proclaims that the light of true justice depends upon him, a god that now prevents vengeful murders.

Though Athena maintains such a concept of justice, she does not expel the Furies from her city. Instead she begs them to change their hostile attitude. If they do, she promises that they "will have seats and hollows of legitimate earth, sitting upon bright-throned altars" (Ξάρας τε καὶ πνευμάτων ἔνθισμον χρόνος / λιπαροθρόνησιν ἁμένης ἐπ' ἐσχίρας 805-806). In her description of these sacred places, Athena implies what sort of powers she wishes them to be. "Hollows of legitimate earth" reminds us that they will yet be spirits of the underworld, capable of instilling fear and destroying the guilty. But they sit upon altars that are "bright-throned." The adjective could refer to "shiny" marble seats or to the glistening of oil sacrificed to the Furies. By either interpretation, the altars of the Furies that are earlier surrounded by darkness (105) are now described in terms of light. The transfer of imagery indicates a reconciliation both with mankind who look upon the sun and the
gods who are bathed in light. It further represents a change in attitude: the Furies will no longer simply threaten destruction but will shower blessings upon their worshippers as they participate in the true light of justice.

To the imprecations and promises of Athena, the chorus make the same complaints, the same threats, and the same connotative reference to Night (808-823). By their repetition, they emphasize the intensity of their feelings; by the literal repetition of their former words (778-793), they show their complete obstinacy. They answer as if Athena had never spoken.

In reply, Athena again reminds them that they are not dishonored and again advises them not to destroy the land with pestilence. But this time she bolsters her argument with a threat. She trusts in Zeus, and she alone has the keys to the chamber "in which the lightning bolt is sealed up" (ἐν ᾗ κεραυνός ἐστιν ἐσφραγισμένος 828). Her threat, however, is couched in most tactful terms: she does not declare that the bolt will fall upon them but simply reminds the Furies of its presence and immediately adds that there is no need for such a weapon. The mere mention of the lightning bolt is, however, enough to terrify anyone. Toward the end of Zeus' battle with the Titans, Hesiod relates that he no longer holds back
but lets fly his lightning bolt (Theogony 687-693). The bolt is thus the ultimate weapon of Zeus, and its effects against the Titans and later against the Giants are devastating. The Furies should indeed be fearful. 83

But this weapon has other implications. In the Agamemnon (462-470), the Furies join with Zeus to hurl the lightning bolt against guilty mortals. By threat of this weapon, Athena then implies that the Furies are guilty of excessive terror. These dark powers who once allied with Zeus are now in conflict with him, and, as they opposed the light of Apollo, so now they confront the bright lightning bolt.

As stated above, Athena dismisses the use of this weapon and encourages the Furies to cease their threats. With a splendid image of darkness, she orders them to pacify their anger: "Lull to sleep the black billow's (embryo's) bitter wrath." (κοιμά κελαιανοῦ κύματος πυρβυ μένος. 832) 84 The repetition of the k sounds in the Greek reflects both the harshness of their anger and their unrelenting adherence to that anger. 85 At the same time, the image of the black wave graphically describes the results of their wrath. As a wave breaks onto the shore, it uproots all in its path and submerges everything in the depths of darkness. In their anger, the Furies bring destruction to an entire land, and when they attack an
individual, they drag him down to the darkness of Hades. Indeed, this image of wave and darkness recalls a specific instance of the Furies' anger. In the Agamemnon (1176-1183), Cassandra uses light and wave to describe the prophecy in which she foretells the murder of the king; in that deed the Furies certainly play their part.

But αυγα also means "embryo" and as such creates another image suited to the Furies and their anger. Darkness, terror, and destruction are closely associated with every aspect of the Furies. By calling their seed "black," Athena emphasizes that their very offspring is frightening and harmful. In this context, the "embryo" or "seed" is their bitter rage, and if it takes root in Athenian soil, its fruit will be destruction.86

When Athena speaks of the Furies' rage in terms of an "embryo," she perverts a normally wholesome image of productivity. She thus recalls the queen's words about the fiery womb of the Furies (138). But the action of the goddess is the reverse of Clytemnestra's. The latter goads the Furies from sleep so that they might annihilate Orestes with a blast from their destructive womb. The former urges them to "lull to sleep" the anger of their "embryo."

"Lull to sleep" in the context of a "black billow," though, suggests an image of darkness. Athena thus
transfers an image that expresses and justifies the anger and terror of the Furies into one that describes the cessation of such evils. In this way her imagery anticipates the transformation of the Furies' attitude soon to come. At the same time, the darkness of this verb and the adjective "black" imply guilt on the part of the Furies, just as darkness describes the guilt of their victim (378-379). Athena thus continues to demonstrate the sin of their totally destructive anger, a fault that she implies above in the image of the lightning bolt (828).

Along with her tactful threat and imprecations, Athena again promises honor from her citizens. But this time she specifies sacrifices for births and marriages and adds a further enticement: the Furies will live with her. 87 Her speech has some effect, for in their response (637-847), the Furies alter their tone. They still complain about their dishonor and again call upon "mother Night" (μαθήματος Νύξ 844), an appeal whose implications are quite clear by now. But this time, they make no threats. 88

Athena again pleads with them to make their home in Athens, a city destined for glory. The Furies, however, again seem unmoved, for, in lines 870-880, they repeat, word for word, their previous complaint. The goddess, though, will not tire of persuasion and again bids them to stay. At this the Furies finally cease their passionate
language and begin rational discussion. When they hear that they will have an abode free of all pain, that no one will prosper unless he honors them, the Furies put aside their anger and ask what sort of hymn they should call down upon the land.

Ahtena tells them to invoke blessings from the land, the sea, and the heavens and to pray that "breaths of wind, blowing in the bright sunlight, may approach the land" (Ἀνέμων ἀνέμων ἔλαχα / εὐπλήγης παρατά ἐπιστελεχεῖν θέσα τήν 905-906). So important is the transformation of the Furies into beneficent powers that it involves the blessings of all four elements: earth, air, water, and fire; fire is implied in the words "bright sunlight." But the image of sunlight does more than round out a reference to these elements. Wind blowing in the bright sunlight and approaching the land recalls Cassandra's words in the Agamemnon: "bright as a fresh wind blowing toward the sunrise, it will arrive" (λαμφρός δ' Εἰκεν ἴλαν πρὸς ἀντολάς / πλέων ἑφέσει 1160-1161), words whose imagery of light portends evil from the Furies. This same imagery of light is now transformed to describe the blessings that those powers will invoke and reflects the Furies' change of attitude, as it sets the stage for the real and imagistic light of true joy that illuminates the conclusion of this play.
In their final ode, the Furies solemnly ratify the pact between themselves and Athena. In contrast to their complaints and threats, they demonstrate their transformation by showering blessings upon Athens while, between stanzas, the goddess reiterates her promises to them. The solemnity of the occasion, this initiation of the Eumenides’ cult at Athens, is intensified by a torchlight procession at the end of the ode and by references to the Panathenaic Festival and to the Eleusinian Mysteries.

In their first strophe, the Furies declare their acceptance of life with Athena and pray that "the bright light of the sun cause to spring forth gushing, beneficial good fortune of life from the land" (ἐπισσαίμονος βίου τόχας ἀναμνήσια / γαλαζ ζηλαμβρόσαι / φαιόρδου ἄλλου σέλας 923-926). The Furies transform the image of light, so long associated with guilt, terror, and false joy, into a blessing of genuine happiness. More particularly, they significantly echo certain images in the trilogy. In the Agamemnon, the herald proclaims that no one knows about Menelaus "except Helios who fosters all life on the earth" (633) and adds: "but if any ray of the sun observes him" (676) safe and sound, he may reach home. These are the only places in the trilogy, before the transformation of the Furies, where sunlight has beneficial connotations, and
even then, the image receives only passing reference. The Furies turn this allusion into a solemn invocation of prosperity for the land. Their blessing, of course, looks back to Athena's behest (905-906). But there sunlight is only an expressive image; here the sun refers to the actual rays that will caress the earth and make it productive.

But perhaps most importantly, the Furies, in their prayer, employ the imagery of light and its beneficent connotations both of which are diametrically opposed to their former darkness and terror. Indeed, they transform specific images of their gloom and horror. Formerly, they inhabit the sunless gloom and filth of frightening Tartarus (71-72, 273, 386,396); now they pour out a blessing that is full of kind sunlight. Earlier, Athena describes their anger with "blackness," "wave," and "seed" (832); the Furies now transform these terms into sunlight that nurtures the seeds of the earth and produces "gushing" bounty.

The transformation of light into an image with truly joyful connotations and the transference of imagery associated with the Furies reflect their change of attitude: no longer will they effect only dark destruction but also bright prosperity. Furthermore, this transference demonstrates their joyous harmony with men who live on the sunlit earth and all Olympians who inhabit bright heaven.
Specifically, the imagery expresses peace with Apollo, god of sunlight,\(^94\) and Zeus whose bright lightning bolt earlier threatens them (828).

As the Furies call down blessings of the sun in their first strophe, they pray that its adverse effects be checked in the antistrophe. They ask that "flames that deprive plants of their eyes (buds) not drive through the boundary of the lands" (φλογιστος ὁματοστερεῖς φυτῶν / τὸ μὴ περάν ὄρου τὸπως 939-940). The last phrase, though, may mean "beyond the bounds of its region," and in this way, the Furies watch that the sun does not transgress its limits.\(^95\) By either interpretation, the Furies desire that the scorching heat of the sun not destroy the crops in Athena's land. But again the imagery has greater implications. The adjective "deprive of one's eyes" (ὁματοστερεῖς), of course, refers to the buds of the plants, but, in its literal meaning, it recalls all of the terrible blindings that the Furies effect in this trilogy. They are present when Agamemnon goes blindly to his doom or when Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are deceived by their killer, Orestes. In the Eumenides, they describe the darkness that they throw round a man, Orestes, so that he does not realize that doom is upon him (377-378). Furthermore, flame and fire, both imagistic and real as in Clytemnestra's sacrifices, symbolize murder for murder.
Indeed, the scorching flame that destroys crops recalls the queen's image in the *Agamemnon* that describes her anger and murderous intentions: when the root is present, the foliage returns to the house "stretching over it shade against the Dog Star" (967). By indicating their desire to check "bud-destroying flames," the Furies thus proclaim that they will now inhibit murder for murder among citizens, as they soon make clear (976-987), and the terrible blindness that accompanies it.

With imagery of light, the Furies have demonstrated their harmony with former enemies; in her response to their antistrophe, Athena now openly states that these powers have an honored position with the gods in heaven, the powers below the earth, and mankind (950-952). But their respect rests not only on their ability to bless with light, for the goddess proclaims that they "also deal out a life dim-sighted by tears" (δ' αὖ δακρώνον·  θεον ἀμβλημένον παρέχουσαι 954-955). Despite their transformation, therefore, the Furies yet retain their power of dark punishment; now, though, it will be used for the city's benefit (910-912). Truly, when harmony is achieved, darkness and light are no longer enemies; instead they symbolize all that is desirable for Athens.  

The chorus next call upon their sisters, the Moirai, to shower more blessings. Athena, in response,
appropriately expresses her reaction to all that the Furies accomplish in her lands: "I am made bright with joy." (γάνυμαί 970) She thus openly associates light with the expression of true joy, an association desired from the beginning of the trilogy.

In their second antistrophe, the Furies continue their prayers and call for a cessation of that terrible evil, civil war. For the invocation, they employ a highly evocative image of darkness:

May dust, drinking down the black blood of citizens, not exact greedily, out of anger, punishments of Ate from the city in revenge for blood.

(μηδὲ πικήθα χόνις μέλαν αἴμα πολιτῶν
δι' ὀργαν ποιμάς
ἀντιφάνους Ἀτας
ἀρπαλίσαι πόλεως.
980–983)

"Black" evokes all of the terror of civil war. But this prayer recalls the particular situation within Agamemnon's house where blood is shed in revenge for blood. More specifically, "black blood" looks back to that same image in the Agamemnon by which the chorus describe the finality of death (1020) with ominous implications for the king's vengeful murder. Furthermore, "black" (μέλαν) is the same word that describes the Furies (52) and the blood that they suck out of their victim (183) in the Eumenides. By using that adjective in their prayer, they recall their participation in the murder of Agamemnon, in all of the
blood spilled in his house and in all houses. By their prayer for a cessation of this blood for blood, they again renounce their former totally dark and destructive nature.

In her response, Athena again praises the salutary fear that the Furies instill and advises her citizens to honor these well-meaning powers. The Furies and Athena then begin their farewells. As the goddess moves toward the head of a solemn procession now forming, she tells these powers that she "will show them their chambers in the sacred light of these attendants" (θαλάμους /ἀποδεξιόμεναν πρὸς φῶς ἱερὸν / τῶν ἰεροποιητῶν 1004-1006). By this she refers to the actual glow of torches that accompany the solemn procession, and thus all the imagery of light becomes a spectacle before us. These torches physically represent the transformation of the Furies, the joy resulting from it, and the reverence toward their power.

In her first comment upon these firebrands, Athena stresses their salvific and religious connotations; she calls them a "sacred light" (φῶς ἱερὸν 1005). This particular word for light that has up until this point meant only guilt and destruction for Agamemnon's house now reestablishes its essential connotation of "salvation." Crestes has been saved, and thus the stage has been set for the transformation of the Furies into the Kindly Ones.
The salvation of Orestes entails the salvation for all men. The close connection between Orestes' salvation and the Furies' transformation is emphasized through the image of φῶς. The light that describes him in the Choephoroi (131) is now a sacred light that accompanies these Chthonian deities honored with their own cult.

Athena bids the Furies to enter their new home, and again these powers say farewell amid blessings. The goddess praises their invocation and then goes on to say: "With the luster of light-bringing torches, I shall send you to those regions below and those regions under the earth." (πέμψω τε φέγγει λαμπάδων σελασφόρων / ἐς τοὺς ἔνερθε καὶ κάτω χθονὸς τόπους. 1022-1023) The repetition of three light images in the same line reflects the intense joy of the occasion while the images recall the reasons for that exuberance. In the Agamemnon (489), Clytemnestra calls the beacon "light-bearing" (φαεσφόρων), but it brings no light of joy to the palace. By describing these torches with a similar adjective "light-bringing" (σελασφόρων), the poet reiterates that salvation has finally come to the house of Agamemnon. At the same time, he emphasizes the salvation of all men, for that adjective echoes the beneficent invocation of the Furies for the "sun's light" ( ἄλλου σέλας926).

But the images of these lines signify further cause
for joy. Earlier the Furies inhabit evil, dark Tartarus far below the earth (73, 386, 395-396). They again take up an abode below, as Athena emphasizes with the two phrases "those regions below and those regions under the earth" (1023). But now they enter a home beneath glorious Athens accompanied by, indeed overwhelmed with the light of torches. By stressing their abode under the earth, she proclaims that the Furies are Cthonian deities with the power to instill salutary fear. By leading them to this home amid a blaze of torches, she reminds us that these Cthonian deities are in harmony with gods and men who inhabit sun-filled places.

Athena then calls upon those in the procession to honor the Furies and ends her speech with more evocative imagery of light: "Let the light of fire rush forth so that the well-meaning band of the earth may shine forth forever with good fortune prosperous to men." (τὸ φέγγος ὀμάσθω πυρὸς, ὡς ἄν εὐφρων ἡδ' ὑμίλια χθουδὲς/ τὸ λοιπὸν εἰδύροισι συμφοραῖς πρέπη). Athena may simply refer to the light of torches, and thus she encourages the people to make the Furies more visually conspicuous. But these fires may also be those of sacrifice, and therefore the goddess urges her citizens to honor these powers so that they in turn will shower blessings.
By recalling specific images in the trilogy, though, she reenforces the transformation of the imagery of light and darkness. The surging fire calls to mind Clytemnestra's description of the beacon in the *Agamemnon* (281-311). The queen expresses a frightful kind of joy over her husband's forthcoming murder in terms of a signal fire rushing on. Now, a goddess expresses her genuine joy and that of all her citizens over the transformation of dark powers in similar terms of a surging fire. Again, in the *Agamemnon*, the imagery of light is ironically associated with Clytemnestra's murderous intentions; Cassandra describes her disposition: "with radiant friendliness" (φασιδρόνους δεξαμενα 1229). Now light is linked to the "well-meaning Furies." But this adjective significantly recalls yet another image of that play. The queen prays that the "morn" be like "its mother, night, the kindly time" (μητρός εὐφρόνης 265); ironically that night portends *Agamemnon*'s murder. Now, however, the daughters of Night have become truly "kind" (εὐφρωνη 1030) deities who shower blessings upon men.101

Of course, with reference to light, Athena yet again recalls the harmony between the Furies and the gods of light. But she particularly reiterates that friendliness toward their former arch adversary, Apollo, for she calls the torch's glow "the light of fire" (φέγγος
*njp6c 1029), the same words that describe Apollo's hearth in the Choephoroi (1037).

After Athena's speech, the chorus of attendants pour out a brief but glorious lyric of joy. By the implications of their light and dark imagery, they reemphasize basic themes of the play and of the trilogy. The chorus hail the Furies as "mighty lovers of honor, Night's children, not children" (μεγάλαι φιλότιμοι / Νυκτὸς παιδεῖς ἀπαίδες 1032-1034) and bid them to enter their new home. By such acclamation, they not only demonstrate their respect for the Furies but also imply the reasons for such an attitude. As "children of the Night," these Cthonian deities are powers of darkness, able to instill salutary fear and bring punishment that benefits the city. Furthermore, Night, as an age-old, eternal deity (416), commands respect, so do her offspring. Indeed, they partake of her primeval qualities, for "not children" can be taken in the sense that they have no beginning; they are timeless, coeval with their mother. Yet ἀπαίδες may also mean "childless": the Furies will no longer produce the former fruit of their womb, sheer death and destruction (138, 832).

In the next few lines, the chorus of attendants echo such causes for the respect given to the Furies. They pray that these deities receive honor and sacrifices in
their abode "under the primeval caverns of earth" (γάρ Ὑμὶν κατέβαιν οὐναλισθων 1036). They again bid the Furies to enter their home and proclaim: "You revered deities who enjoy the fire-devouring torch" (αἰμαλ ᾖ πυριδάπτωι λαμπάοι 1041-1042). The attendants had employed the imagery of darkness to imply reasons for which the Furies receive honor (1032-1034); now they proclaim their reverence amid imagery of light. Such imagery recalls the former destructive "fire" (πυρί 138) that pours out of the Furies' womb, more specifically, their involvement in the destruction of Agamemnon. "Fire-devouring" (πυριδάπτωι) echoes "fire-devouring" (πυρδάης 606) of the Choephori, an adjective that describes Althea, to whose frightful actions the chorus of that play liken Clytemnestra's murder of the king. But this imagery of light also recalls the present blessings of the Furies who invoke the nourishing light of the sun (926).

These torches, though, have yet a broader frame of reference they significantly recall the opening of the trilogy and allude to solemn Greek festivals. At the beginning of the Agamemnon, the "torch" (λαμπάδι 28), contrived by the mortal Clytemnestra, appears in the dark; it heralds a "cry" (δλολυγμόν 28) of foreboding joy and the "light" (λαμπάς 93) of awesome sacrifice, as it portends vengeful murder and guilt in Agamemnon's house. At the
close of the Eumenides, "torches" (λαμπάδων 1022) lit by the goddess Athena, appear in the twilight (if Neautis is correct) and signal the attendants to "cry out with a loud voice" (δολοφύτευ 1043), a ritual shout of joy at the institution of a new cult for transformed powers. Since the Furies delight in these torches (1042), the fires may be those of wholesome sacrifice and are thus truly the "holy light" (φῶς λερδν 1005) that Athena calls them earlier. By this intricate parallelism, the poet emphasizes the close association between the torches of Athena and the beacon of Clytemnestra: only after true salvation comes to Agamemnon's house and after the terrible powers within it have been transformed, does light signal the cry of true joy and pure sacrifice.

Since they are coupled with a solemn procession and repeated liturgical cries (1035, 1038, 1043, 1047), these torches of the Eumenides call to mind the lights used in the Panathenaic Festival and the Eleusinian Mysteries. The former, during the Pannychis celebration, involved a procession and torch race with "litanyes" (δολοφύμαια) that followed. The latter included chanting amid a night procession of torches; indeed light and the transformation from darkness to light figured greatly in these rites. Since both festivals involved solemnity and reverential joy, the allusion heightens
those very aspects of this religious procession.

In the closing words, the chorus yet again emphasize the light so greatly desired from the beginning of the trilogy:

Let there be libations for all times, amid lighted torch, with the citizens of Pallas' home; all-seeing Zeus and Moira have thus come to agreement.

(σπονδαὶ δὲ ἐς τὸ πᾶν ἐνθα idioto 0ίκουν
Πολλάδος Ἀστοῖς. Ζεῦς παντόπτας
οὕτω Μοίρα τε συγκατέβα.
(1044-1046) 109

In the context of libations, the torch would imply those fires of sacrifice that citizens will offer to the Furies. σπονδαί, though, may refer to libations as a natural sign of reconciliation; 110 hence, the "peace" 111 between the Furies and Athena's citizens, by implication, those in the house of Agamemnon. But the reconciliation of the Furies with men is closely connected to their harmony with the gods. 112 The chorus therefore realize that as a result Fate and, by implication, her sisters, the Furies, are now reconciled with Zeus. The torch, as an image of light, reiterates the cause for sacrifices to the Furies and their harmony with heaven and earth; these powers have been transformed into kind deities who favor men with the light of joy.

In the Agamemnon, the watchman anxiously awaits a
beacon in the night. Its light, however, does not portend the hoped-for joy and salvation but guilt and destruction. In the Choephoroi, Electra and the chorus pray that Orestes bring that light of salvation to a house darkened by sorrow. All three seek assistance from Agamemnon and Hermes in the realm of dark Hades. But the light of Orestes is tainted with matricide, and avenging dark Furies pursue him. In the Eumenides, the true light of joy and salvation shines at last for Agamemnon's house as Orestes is set free, and the glow of torches lit in the presence of Zeus' daughter celebrate the transformation and reconciliation of the dark Furies into beneficent powers at peace with men and gods. Within this broad spectrum, the images of light and darkness operate in various and intricate ways to enrich the poetry, drama, and meaning of the trilogy.
Footnotes


3 Sidgwick, p.4, 1.5.

4 Verrall, p.5, 1.13.


6 Cf. Verrall, p.13, 11.50-54.

7 I follow the probable restoration of Shutz for the line missing after line 49. Page posits a lacuna there and quotes his reading in the apparatus criticus.

8 Verrall, p.13, 11.50-54.

9 The scholion on Lycophron, 1.165.

10 Müller, 189 and Rose, II, p.235, 11.55-56.

11 Meautis, 252.

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Verrall, p.13, 11.49-59. He notes that the exhibition of the Erinyes on stage was a novelty. Their visible form was not fixed in literature or art. The poet thus prepares the audience for his conception of them by the description of the prophetess. Cf. Méautis, 248.

Cf. Méautis, 252 and Croiset, 244.

In my translation of παῖδες as "maidens," I follow Rose, II, p.235, 1.69 and Sidgwick, p.9, 1.69.

Sidgwick, p.9, 1.69 and G. Dindorf, Scholia Graeca vol.3 of Aeschylus Tragediae (Oxford 1851) p.132, Eumenides, 1.69.

Prometheus Vinctus, 11.792-797.

Verrall, pp.16-17, 11.68-73 and Rose, II, p.236, 1.70.

Verrall, pp.16-17, 11.68-73 prefers the translation "sinners" for μακάνω while Paley, p.552, 1.71 prefers "evil." I believe that both ideas are applicable here.

Cf. Blass, p.79, 11.71f.

Verrall, pp.16-17, 11.68-73.

Blass, p.79, 11.71f.

Fowler, 68.

Verrall, pp.16-17, 11.68-73.

Cf. Owen, 112.

Cf. Verrall, pp.16-17, 11.68-73.

Cf. Méautis, 256.

Cf. Blass, pp. 82-83, 11.103f.


Verrall, p. 23, 1.107.


Cf. Blass, p. 91, 1.182.

Beautis, Eschyle, 258.


Verrall, p. 34, 1.181.

Rose, II, p. 243, 1.183.

Suppliants, 11.158, 231 and Iliad 9, 1.457.

Cf. Lebeck, The Cresteia, 147. She notes that the chorus conclude their lyric with a solemn reference to Hades.

Thomson, "Mystical Allusions," 31-32, 34. There were three unwritten laws: honor the gods, strangers, and parents. Those who violated them were tormented in Hell. In the above lyric, the poet implies a punishment after death. He thus combines the primitive savagery of the Argive legend where these Furies hunt down the murderer in this life and the terrors of the Eleusinian Hell where the Furies stand by the seat of Rhadamanthys waiting to carry off those who committed punishable crimes.
42 Cf. Lebeck, The Oresteia, 150; Sidgwick, p. 23, 1.306; Meautis, Eschyle, 266–267; Muller, 34.


45 Peradotto, 392.

46 Sidgwick, p. 23, 1.322 and Verrall, p. 61, 1.323.

47 Cf. Lebeck, The Oresteia, 127.

48 Lloyd-Jones, p. 31, 1.321.


50 Meautis, "Notes," 39.

51 Paley, p. 584, 1.352 and Sidgwick, p. 27, 11.375–376.

52 Cf. Paley, p. 584, 1.352.


56 Sidgwick, p. 27, 1.378.


Cf. Meautis, Eschyle, 269.

Rose, II, p.256, l.415.

T.B.L. Webster, "Some Psychological Terms," 149. He suspects that φανερωσις signifies the making of a plan as well as the plan itself.


Cf. Meautis, Eschyle, 270.

For the reading of φανερωσις, I follow Murray, 1.522; Verrall, p.94, 1.525; Blass, p.46, 1.522; Paley, p.595, 1.496. Page daggers the word in line 522. In the apparatus criticus, he states that the scholiast for M also reads φανερωσις, but he claims the reading "non intelligitur." As my analysis shows, the image is clearly understood in its dramatic context.

Although "light" (φῶς) is used of salvation in this trilogy, I do not agree with Verrall, pp.93-95, 11.520-531 who notes that the word here is a metaphor for "relief" as opposed to "duress" (στένειν 521). Such a meaning does not befit the context.

Thomson, II, p.213, 1.567.


Verrall, p.127, 1.695.


Paley, p.606, 1.663 and Rose, II, p.276, 1.694.


I translate τέμπατι "issues" in accord with Verrall, p.135, 11.749-750.

Sidgwick, p.46, 1.746 and Paley, p.609, 1.716.
76 Cf. Meautis, Eschyle, 279 and Croiset, 259.

77 For the elliptical remark contained in ἀλλ', see Sidgwick, p.48, 1.797.

78 Sidgwick, p.49, 1.806.

79 Paley, p.613, 1.773.


84 For this alliterative translation, see Sidgwick, p.49, 1.832.

85 Cf. Lloyd-Jones, p.63, 1.832.

86 Cf. Verrall, p.147, 1.835.


89 Cf. Croiset, 261.

90 Cf. Verrall, p.159, 1.905.

91 Cf. Croiset, 261.

92 Cf. Meautis, Eschyle, 281.


95 Thomson, II, p.228, 11.939-940.

96 Peradotto, 393.

97 Cf. Owen, 129-130.

98 For the translation of πεταμι, I follow Sidgwick, p.57, 1.1031.


100 Cf. Goheen, 124.

101 Cf. Peradotto, 393.

102 Verrall, p.179, 1.1034.

103 Cf. Lebeck, The Oresteia, 133.

104 Meautis, "Notes," 52.

105 For this discussion of the resemblances between the opening and closing scenes of the trilogy, cf. Meautis, Eschyle, 281; Peradotto, 393; Shepherd, 5.

106 Meautis, "Notes," 52.


109 Page reads τες το πάν ένδαθες οἴκων. I maintain that such a concept and such imagery are most appropriate here and follow Hermann, I, pp.308-309, ll.1024-1027 who does not dagger these words.

110 Sidgwick, p.57, l.1044.

111 Hermann, II, p.647, l.1024 and Murray, apparatus criticus, l.1044.

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