Daimones between the visible and the invisible:
Interior spaces and uncanny Erinyes in Aeschylus’ Oresteia

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The daimonic between the visible and the invisible.

Two scholars have exercised the strongest influence on our understanding of the daimonic in Greek tragedy: Eric Dodds in Greeks and the Irrational, and Ruth Padel with In and Out of the Mind. Both have observed that in Greek tragedy the daimonic is more present in Aeschylus than in any other playwright.¹ This category of the supernatural preoccupies Aeschylean tragedy from the earliest plays, and evolves considerably from play to play as it becomes amplified in terms of its range of meaning and its conspicuousness. This is especially noticeable as we move towards the final Aeschylean work, the Oresteia.

A survey of the surviving Aeschylean plays in order of their appearance gives a strong sense of how the playwright consistently returned to, and reworked his understanding of the daimonic, and in particular how he focused on a specific species of the daimonic: the daimon associated with a family or a race. In the earliest surviving play, the Persians, the role of the daimon is not yet precisely defined: it evokes at times divine envy, at times individual folly and at times predetermined fate. Nevertheless, the references that Aeschylus includes to the perceived lust of the Persian rulers for gaining more and more wealth makes a strong connection between this daimonic force and a type

¹ Dodds 1951: 39-43; cf. 10-15 and nn. 65-6. The concept of daimon is central to Padel’s work on interiority and exteriority; see esp. Padel 1992: ch. 8 and 93-4, 129-32, 137-8, 141-2, 150-2. Padel 1992: 172 concludes that ‘Erinyes was tragedy’s ideal daemon. Aeschylus lays claim to her as tragedy’s defining icon’. See also Padel 1983. For daimones in Greek tragedy and in Aeschylus especially, see also Winnigton-Ingram 1983: ch. 1, 80, 112-13, 160-1, 207-8; Burkert 1985: 180-1; Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1990: 36-7, 45, 76-8, 81, 122. See also Carrière 1966, Schleiser 1983 and Timotin p. 000-000 in this volume.
of irresistible ‘curse’ that is passed down through generational succession.² Several years later, in the trilogy including the *Seven against Thebes*, the *daimon* of the Aeschylean imagination becomes more tangible and vivid, especially as it is unambiguously connected with the royal family. Here, the *daimon* becomes more clearly defined as the ‘Curse’ or ‘Erinys’ that is embedded in the royal household and plagues generation after generation. It is also clearly associated with Eteocles’ dream and the menace of the Iron Stranger.³ Nevertheless, this *daimon* remains an abstract force, and on stage we can only sense its presence through the constant references to the house and through the arming scene that demonstrates the possession of Eteocles’ mind.⁴ It is not until the *Oresteia* that this entity becomes not only even more ubiquitous dramaturgically, taking on the multiple forms of the Erinys, the ‘Wrath of the house’, the ‘priest of Ruin’, the *alastor* and the Curse of the house,⁵ but also comes to be literally embodied on the stage as a plural entity, the band of the Erinyes (cf. Ag. 1186-93), who cast their shadow over the entire *Oresteia*. As stage presences and as the chorus of the *Eumenides*, the final play of

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² Cf. Winnigton-Ingram 1983: ch. 1; Rosenbloom 2006: 43, 77, 85, 91, 99, 109, 126, 131, 139-40. The nature of the *daimon* is contemplated at *Pers.* 93-100, 158-64 (cf. *Pers.* 64-65), 282-3, 345-7, 353-4, 373, 454-5, 472, 513-16, 724-5, 845-6, 911-12, 921, 942-3, 1005-7; the *daimon* takes an embodied form as the Greek that deceives Xerxes (*Pers.* 353–4) and as the dead king Darius that emerges in an apparition (*eidolon*) from his tomb (*Pers.* 640). In both cases, the nature of the *daimon*’s visibility is important. For the Persian lust for expansion and wealth as the force behind the catastrophe, see *Pers.* 753-86.

³ The Erinys as the *daimon* or curse of the family is contemplated at *Sept.* 69-71 (cf. 76), 653-5, 690-711, 715, 720-91, 811-19, 832-47, 886-99, 944-6, 951-60. Its force also underlies *Sept.* 271-8, 640-1. For the dream, see 709-11, 727-33, 788-90, 816-19, 906-9, 941-50. For the Iron Stranger, that is imagined as external force (whilst in reality it is internal): *Sept.* 727-33, 816-17, 884-5, 906-10, 941-4, 951-60, 977, 988. An excellent analysis of the above is Burnett 1973: 351-68. See also Hutchinson on *Sept.* 70; cf. Sewell-Rutter 2007: chs 2 and 3; Torrance 2007: 40-8.

⁴ At *Sept.* 677-end. The house is probably represented by the *skene*, because the *skene* is used at least since the *Persians*, as I have argued at Bakola 2014.

⁵ Among the numerous times the Eriny(e)s are evoked under one of these guises in the first two plays of the trilogy are: *Agamemnon* 58-9, 154-5, 463-6, 645, 717-772, 1186-1193, 1500-1503; *Choephori* 566, 698-699, 800-802. In the process of this chapter, it will emerge that they have an even more frequent presence, both off and on-stage.
the trilogy, they dominate the narrative arc of the three tragedies as it draws to a close and even determine the meaning of its final scene (*Eum. 778*-end).

Throughout the Aeschylean oeuvre, the daimonic constitutes a significant part of the poet’s preoccupation with portraying a cosmic order that is undergoing violent disruption. Following on from this comes a sense of foreboding about what further violence might have to take place for the disruption to be redressed. As we hear the chorus’ thoughts and fears, this feeling remains ever present: we are constantly made to wonder ‘where is it coming from?’ ‘when is it coming?’ 6 This uncertainty is what makes the daimonic, especially in the more concrete form of the Erinyes or Erinyes, so powerfully present. For one of the core features of the daimonic in Aeschylus and in much other literature since Homer, is its indeterminacy. The daimonic, whether associated with a known divinity or not, is a power that we know is there, but we are not sure exactly where, when and how it will operate. 7

If read throughout the Aeschylean corpus, and especially in the *Oresteia*, this basic but crucial part of the ontology of the daimonic yields powerful results: as I will argue, partial sightings or ‘flashes’ of the daimonic on stage in the *Oresteia* constantly confirm its presence and accentuate the suspense about its operation. These sightings are connected primarily with the skilled dramaturgical emphasis on Aeschylus’s part of an especially charged theatrical space: the interior of the theatre building, the *skene*. For, as has long been argued by drama scholars, interiors are in a unique position to capture the hidden, the ‘unseen’, but also that which lies between the ‘seen’ and the ‘unseen’. 8

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6 Prime examples of such foreboding are the parodos of the *Persians* (esp. 8-11, 115-25; cf. Rosenbloom 2006: 39-61) and the parodos, first, second and third stasima of the *Agamemnon*; see Raeburn and Thomas 2011: xxix-xx. Foreboding in the *Seven* also arises from the negativity of the Chorus in the first part of the play.

7 See esp. Dodds and Burkert in n. 1. above.

Beyond space: the daimonic and elements of the insubstantial in Aeschylus.

However, before getting into the sightings of the Erinyes in – and near – interior spaces, I will first seek to establish two supporting dimensions of the argument. The first one is to demonstrate that in Aeschylean theatre the daimonic, and the Erinyes in particular, tend to be conveyed as straddling the visible and the invisible even independently of their positioning within theatrical space. Other chapters in this volume have argued that daimonic entities appear regularly connected with natural and cosmic elements, such as winds and fire. Besides others of their properties, one cannot help but observe that the connection between winds, fire and the daimonic is also facilitated by these elements’ insubstantial nature, the fact that we perceive them to lack tangible substance. It should come as no surprise, therefore, if such elements are employed in the dramatic imagination to give that partial, incomplete vision of daimonic forces that operate around us.

Aeschylean tragedy in particular shows a fascination with the phenomenon of winds. As even our experience from modern visual media suggests, there is something grippingly daimonic about the idea of winds as invisible energy. This can be powerfully effective. We can perceive the initial gathering of the energy, and even its often destructive impacts, but we do not see the agent, because winds are invisible. Hence modern media frequently use the phenomenon of winds and breezes for the creation and heightening of suspense. In the Aeschylean imagination, especially in the Seven Against Thebes and the Oresteia, the imagery of the winds captures the daimonic in a double sense: firstly, as an invisible and irresistible force which grips humans and alters their behaviour; and secondly, as the most prominent daimon of Aeschylean drama, the Eriny(e)s. In the following passage from the Seven against Thebes, the daimon-Erinys-Curse of the family of Labdacids is an invisible but irresistible force that drives the members of the oikos to destruction and self-destruction, and is imagined in the form of a powerful wind. This force will eventually seize the mind of Eteocles and drive him into kin-slaughtering madness:

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9 Smith’s chapter, especially, shows elegantly the existential connection between daimones and the pneumatic in late antiquity, and argues that it has its origins much earlier, in classical times. For the connection, see also Piano 000 and Timotin 000.


The *daimon* may perhaps, given time, change the wind of your spirit, and blow with a gentler breath; but at present it is still seething…

In the *Oresteia*, fire is also suggestive of the Erinyes. The connection of this element with light and darkness, with being able or unable to see (and to understand), seems to facilitate the link with these daimonic forces. The most telling example is probably the imagery of the beacon flames in the so-called ‘beacon speech’ at the beginning of the *Oresteia* (Ag. 281-316). This famous passage describes the news that Troy has just been burnt down by the Argives (who are described as imperialist and sacrilegious at Ag. 320-47, cf. 367-84; 432-74) arriving through the account of an invisible force that transfers the beacon flame from Troy to Argos. As the flame’s final progress is described by the exulting Clytemnestra, it has a threatening feel to it, confirmed by the expression ἐς τόδε σκήπτει στέγος, ‘dashed down on this house’:

κἄπειτ᾽ Ἀτρειδῶν ἐς τόδε σκήπτει στέγος
φάος τόδ᾽ οὐκ ἄπαππον Ἰδαίου πυρός. (Ag. 308-10)

And then it dashed down on this house of the Atreids, this flame descendent of the fire of Ida.

Although the agent behind the transfer of the beacon flame is left vague, the imagery is suggestive and this force becomes unmistakable later on. As Ferrari (1997: 22) notes, ‘the torch belongs to the Erinys’. This is what we, as audience, understand as the trilogy unfolds and as we connect many pieces of the riddle together, realising that the advent of

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10 See Thalmann 1978: 35, 37, 55; for winds and breaths in Greek tragedy and Aeschylus in particular, see Padel 1992: 88-98. The image from *Sept.* 705-8 is re-used later on in the famous passage of Iphigeneia’s sacrifice at Ag. 218-27, where Agamemnon succumbs to the force that strikes his mind. Once again, this force is imagined in the form of the powerful wind *tropaia* (cf. 187). For the Erinyes and destructive breath/wind, see also Ag. Ag. 218-23, 645-57, 1235-6; Cho. 33, 1065-7; Eum. 52-3, 137-8, 840. Cf. S. Ant. 929-30.

11 For the use of fire imagery in the *Oresteia*, see Gantz 1977.
the fire should be associated with the advent of the Erinyes and the redressing of the order of things.\textsuperscript{12}

The analysis of the daimonic in relation to elemental and cosmic phenomena in Aeschylus merits a separate treatment elsewhere. However, such examples provide excellent illustrations of the connection between the daimonic and that which straddles the visible and the invisible, that which is felt but not confirmed, that which no-one knows wherefrom it comes and how it operates. As such, they work as the basis for an exploration of the daimonic in the context of theatre’s engagement with the visible and the invisible – this time through space in connection with vision.

**Interior spaces between the visible and the invisible**

The primary area where Greek theatre engages directly with the idea of vision, both metaphorically and literally, is through interior spaces. In the theatre, interior spaces do not function only as representations of buildings, like houses, palaces and temples, nor spaces that can be ‘realistically’ entered and exited by characters, like tents and groves. They also function as symbolic interiors, capturing symbolically ‘deep’ spaces like the mind, the memory, the psyche and bodily innards like the mind, the mouth and the womb.\textsuperscript{13} In almost every Greek tragedy, especially those where there is focus on a family’s past, including its dark secrets, the succession of generations and dead ancestors, these notions tend to gravitate towards the interior. It is suggestive that interior spaces in Greek theatre are often described as ‘dark’ and ‘deep’, with the terms *mychos* and *thalamos* (‘inner chamber’, ‘room in the deepest part of the house’) used frequently for the stage building as a whole.\textsuperscript{14} Interior spaces are often connected with depth, confinement, repression and oppression. Hence we may understand the connection of

\textsuperscript{12} See especially Ferrari 1997: 20-4. Another striking example of the Erinyes emerging through fire and winds is the storm described at Ag. 650-63.


interiority with what is forgotten or in distant memory, pushed away from consciousness, suppressed, unconscious, and also past. We may also understand its connection with things that are perceived as dangerous and that need to be contained, such as the female. For example, in the opening scene of Euripides’ *Medea*, the excruciated and potentially threatening female psyche is captured through the unseen heroine’s screams from inside the house (E. *Med.* 96-212). In Sophocles’ *Trachiniae* it is captured through the imaginary secret location of Deianeira’s potion, which had been pushed into the depths of memory in the house’s *mychos* (S. *Trach.* 555-81; 686-90).\(^\text{15}\)

However, the dramatic impact of interior spaces lies in the fact that they do not only hide such things as past events, repressed thoughts and secrets, but they also allow them sometimes to creep out, to emerge, to become visible. One of the most dramaturgically effective ways that Greek theatre reveals the hidden into view is through the vivid descriptions and enacted performances of messenger speeches. Through their vivid narrations, messenger speeches ‘act out’ horrific events that are otherwise hidden from audience view, having often happened in the interior.\(^\text{16}\) Although these speeches’ *enargeia* is not quite the same as literally making events visible, such scenes are often combined with the use of the *ekkyklema*, the theatrical platform that was wheeled out of the interior to reveal scenes of murders, madness or other sights of unimaginable terror.\(^\text{17}\) The *ekkyklema* is thus associated with moments of intense dramatic impact, as something that is supposed to remain hidden and invisible becomes momentarily visible.\(^\text{18}\) As

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\(^{15}\) See especially Padel 1983; Zeitlin 1985, and more generally, Scolnicov 1994. The deep interior may capture human interiors regardless of gender: for Pentheus and the interior of the *skene* in the *Bacchae*, see Segal 1982: 86-7. For Orestes, see below, pp. 000.


\(^{18}\) The *ekkyklema* is sometimes regarded as clumsy and primitive machinery and is understood merely as a solution for a practical problem, namely the difficulty of how an outdoor theatre should show scenes that are supposed to have taken place inside. However, a closer exploration of this convention reassures us that the *ekkyklema* does not merely reveal what is hard to see in practical terms, but more accurately, it makes the invisible and the unknown visible and known. It brings these categories of existence to our consciousness. The best analyses of the symbolic function of the *ekkyklema* have been made by experts on Greek theatre space, especially Padel 1990, 360-3. See also Dale 1969: 120-9; Wiles 1997: 162-5.
theatrical property, therefore, it seems to have been a highly sophisticated medium which further attests the fascination of Greek theatre with the meaning and workings of interiority.

Furthermore, interiors often capture the space of the unseen *par excellence*, Hades. Characters like Agamemnon, Cassandra, Ajax and Oedipus depart ominously into the *skene* never to be seen alive again: in these scenes an attempt is made to capture symbolically his transition into this other world, the world of Aides, which was sometimes etymologically explained as coming from *a-* and *idein*. In these and other cases, the *skene* is often explicitly called ‘house of Hades’. Like the entries of such characters into the world of the dead (and the unseen), the emergence from the world of the dead is also characterised by means of what straddles the visible and the invisible: for example, in Aeschylus’ *Persians*, Darius’ ascension from his tomb is represented as a temporary apparition of a phantom, or *eidolon*. Furthermore, Euripides’ *Hecuba* and Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* show that dream-eidola, entities who emerge from the depths of the earth (and enter our vision through the *skene* interior), exist on the borderline between the seen and the unseen.

Similarly, in the whole of the *Oresteia*, the interior functions symbolically as much as it functions representationally. Through it, the dramaturgical play with the seen and the unseen, the known and the repressed, the conscious and the unconscious, is intense. In particular, the *skene* captures – almost as their physical surrogate – an array of concepts that encapsulate that which remains mostly obscure and unseen, but which causes relentless foreboding: namely the family’s past, its repressed secrets, its psyche, and the pathological, destructive and self-destructive drive of its members, especially

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21 For Darius, see Bakola 2014 *passim*.

22 Bakola 2014: 29-33, on the appearance of the dream-eidola of Clytemnestra and Polydorus through the interior. In Greek tragedy, dreams are generally figured as being sent from the earth: cf. *Pers.* 219-23 with Garvie 2009 ad loc.; Ch. 43-6 with Garvie 1986: 54 and 59. For the notion of *eidolon* in Greek imagination and its connection with dreams, souls and other entities of the underworld, see Vernant 1991: 186-8.
through their obsession with wealth and power. Furthermore, the interior becomes connected to the dark space of Hades and the depths of the Delphic earth that sends forth oracular knowledge, and even, in the third play, the world of dreams.23

Enter the Erinyes – at the end of the Oresteia?

Interior spaces are crucial for appreciating the role of the Erinyes in the Oresteia. In the trilogy, the past, the secrets, the psychopathology of the house, the threatening realm of death and of brooding ancestors, come together not just in this space, but also in the image of a certain presence which, both as a singular and as a plural entity,24 is permanently rooted in the interior: namely the Erinys or Erinyes of the oikos (house).25 However, although the Erinyes are invoked and mentioned from the very beginning of the Agamemnon (Ag. 54), like the daimon of the Persians and the daimon-Eriny of the Seven against Thebes, they do not acquire a concrete presence – at least not for a very long time. Scholars unanimously believe that the Erinyes remain invisible for the audience for the majority of the trilogy, namely for over 2800 lines of text; furthermore, that when they first become visible, this is not immediately by the audience but only by characters who are in a fit of madness.26 The first of these is Cassandra, who, before entering the house to join Agamemnon in his death, talks about what she sees in the interior:

τὴν γὰρ στέγην τήνος’ οὐποτ’ ἐκλείπει χορός

23 For the symbolic significance of the interior and its dark depths in the Oresteia, see Padel 1992: 73-5, 91-5, 105-8, and 168-92.

24 For the Erinyes as both singular and plural entities, see Henrichs 1994: 52; Padel 1992: 165; Easterling 2008: 224 n. 21.

25 For the Erinyes as interior powers, see Ag. 155, 717-72, 1186-93 (with Fraenkel ad loc.), 1500-3; Cho. 566, 698-9, 800-2. The Erinyes are primarily powers of the earth (Eum. 417), which is also conceptualised as interior space. The only scholar who has captured this element is Padel 1992: 171-2 and 189-92. For the Erinyes and the house, see Rose 1992: 219-21; Bacon 2001: 50-1. For a recent discussion of the multivalent functions of the Erinyes in Greek culture, Sewell-Rutter 2007: ch. 4.

ξύμφθογγος, οὔκ εὖφωνος· οὔ γάρ εὖ λέγει.
καὶ μὴν πεπωκὼς γ΄, ώς θρασύνεσθαι πλέον,
βρότειον αἵμα κόμος ἐν δόμοις μένει,
δύσπεμπτος ἔξω, συγγόνων Ἐρινύων·
ὑμνοῦσι δ᾿ ὕμνον δώμασιν προσήμεναι
πρώταρχον ἄτην ... (Ag. 1186-1192)

There is a group of singers that never leaves this house. They sing in unison, but not pleasantly, for their words speak of evil. Moreover, this revel-band drinks human blood, thus emboldening itself, and then remains in the house, hard to send away— the band of the house’s kindred Erinyes. Besetting the chambers of the house, they sing a song of the ruinous folly that first began it all... (transl. Sommerstein 2008, adapted)

Orestes is thought to be the second character who ‘sees’ the Erinyes, in the final scene of the Choephori. Having killed his mother inside the house, he then undergoes a fit of madness and ‘sees’ them approaching him:

ἆ, ἆ·

σμοια γυναῖκες, αἵδε Γοργόνων δίκην
φαῖοχίτωνες καὶ πεπλεκτανημέναι
πυκνοῖς δράκουσιν· οὐκέτ᾽ ἂν μείναιμ᾽ ἐγώ. (Cho. 1048-50)

Ah, ah! I see these hideous women looking like Gorgons – clad in dark-grey tunics and thickly wreathed with serpents! I can’t stay here! (transl. Sommerstein 2008)

Scholars usually point out that it is only at Eumenides 63 (or 140) that the Erinyes become visible to the audience, when they emerge from the interior of the Delphic oracle on the ekkyklema and then become a fully-fledged chorus.

As we will see, the way the Erinyes manifest their presence, and as a result, their role in the trilogy, is much more complex than has been realised. The key is the Erinyes’ nature as daimones, and as a result, their borderline existence between the visible and the invisible. In the theatre this borderline existence does not remain on the level of words, but is translated into how these daimones are staged. I will show that through complex

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27 For a survey of possible staging solutions, see Mitchell-Boyask 2009: 45-55.
engagements with the visible and the invisible in relation to the interior of the skene, and by positioning bodies, props and machinery in highly suggestive ways, Aeschylean dramaturgy makes the viewer ‘see’ the Erinyes much more frequently than has been so far thought. Aeschylus thus confirms the Erinyes’ near-ubiquitous role, by choosing key points of the trilogy to make them ‘appear’. Furthermore, the sightings of the Erinyes start hundreds of lines before the Cassandra scene and continue until the figures appear unambiguously as the chorus of the third play, at Eum. 140. Their appearances to the viewer, which are confirmed mostly retrospectively as the trilogy unfolds and as patterns of behaviour and action are repeated and reasserted, are always connected with the skene interior.

Two uncanny apparitions: the servants of the house (dmoiai) in the Agamemnon’s ‘tapestry scene’ and in the opening of the Choephoroi.

The first scene in which I wish to show this is the so-called ‘tapestry-scene’ of the Agamemnon (Ag. 782-974), which scholars rightly see as having a pivotal role in the trilogy. At Ag. 782, Agamemnon returns to his house victorious from the utterly destructive and deadly Trojan expedition. When he prepares to descend from his chariot to enter the house, his wife Clytemnestra asks him not to tread on the ground, but to enter by trampling, and symbolically destroying, the expensive and intricately woven royal purple fabrics spread in front of him (Ag. 905-13). As Clytemnestra lures him onto the fabrics (Ag. 958-74), a strong sense of danger and transgression prepares us for what will follow: Agamemnon will exit into the house and will not emerge from there alive.

These fabrics are very important for understanding how the ‘unseen’ Erinyes reveal themselves in the ‘tapestry scene’. It is, first of all, indispensable to keep in mind that in the trilogy the fabrics are said to belong to the Erinyes:

ιδὼν ύφαντοις ἐν πέπλοις Ἐρινύων
τὸν ἄνδρα τόνδε κείμενον φίλως ἐμοί (Ag. 1580-1)
I see this man lying here in the woven robes of the Erinyes, a sight precious to me... (transl. Sommerstein 2008)
Why are the fabrics said to belong to the Erinyes and not Clytemnestra? My suggestion is that the play had shown us a flash of the Erinyes handling these deadly, net-like fabrics, before Agamemnon was lured and trapped by them in the tapestry scene. Let us ‘rewind’, and look for a suggestive action just before Agamemnon sets his foot on the fabrics. This action has received almost no attention by the commentators, as while it takes place, it is not accompanied by words. We know of it because it is prompted by these words of Clytemnestra:

δμωαί, τί μέλλεθ' , αἳς ἐπέσταλται τέλος
πέδον κελεύθου στορνύναι πετάσμασιν;
εὖθὺς γενέσθω πορφυρόστρωτος πόρος,
εἰς δῶμ᾿ ἄελπτον ώς ἂν ἡγῆται Δίκη. (Ag. 908-11)

_Dmoiai_, why are you waiting, when you have been assigned the duty of spreading fine fabrics over the ground in his path? Let his way forthwith be spread with crimson, so that Justice may lead him into a home he never hoped to see. (transl. Sommerstein 2008, adapted)

The theatrical power of the scene that these words prompt is immense. The servants of the house (_dmoiai_) exit the house interior, and spread the fabrics at Agamemnon’s feet in a scene that must have lasted for only a few ominous seconds of pure visual action (fig. 1). Then, silently, after Agamemnon has trampled on them, these women fold the fabrics behind him and follow Clytemnestra, disappearing with Agamemnon and the fabrics into the dark depths of the house.28

It is important to remember that no action in the theatre is without dramatic significance, and we are surely entitled to read more into this theatrical action than the mere movement of props by stagehands. Knowing that Agamemnon died ‘ὑφαντοῖς ἐν πέπλοις Ἐρινύων’, i.e. ‘in the woven robes of the Erinyes’, it is difficult to resist

28 For the scene, see Taplin 1977: 308-9. Unlike most modern productions, Hall and Harrison’s NT _Oresteia_, influenced by Taplin, allowed adequate time for this important stage action.
suspecting that a more ominous significance is borne by these women. Is this an apparition of the ominous presences inside the house? Are these *dmoiai* more than mere women that serve the house?

This suspicion will be strengthened later on, as we will be alerted again and again to the presence of Erinyes in the *oikos*, for example by Cassandra in the scene mentioned earlier, where she described them as a ‘revel-band’ that ‘drinks human blood, thus emboldening itself, and then remains in the house, hard to send away’ (Ag. 1186-90). For all that the chorus (and the spectators) are urged by the prophetess, they cannot see what Cassandra describes so vividly. Yet, this band of women does not remain completely invisible for very long. This second apparition is flashed before our eyes at the beginning of the second play, the *Choephori*, where the *dmoiai* have become a fully-fledged chorus (*Cho. 23*). When Orestes sees these women emerging from the interior and does not know who they are, he describes them in the following way:

> τί χρήμα λεύσσω; τίς ποθ’ ἤδ’ ὀμήγυρις
> στείχει γυναικόν φάρεσιν μελαγχίμοις
> πρέπονσαι; (*Cho. 10-12*)

*Hey,* what is this I see? What may this gathering of women be that comes here, so striking in their black garments?

Soon afterwards, this is how the women describe themselves:

> ἵλτος ἐκ δόμων ἔβαν
> χοὰς προπομπός ὀξύχειρι σὺν κόπῳ
> πρέπει παρὰς φοίνισσ’ ἀμυγμοῖς ὄνυχος ἄλοκι
> νεοτόμω
> ...
> λινοφθόροι δ’ ὑφασμάτων
> λακίδες ἐφλαδὸν ὑπ’ ἄλγεσιν,
> πρόστερνοι στολμοὶ πέπλων ἀγελάστοις
> ἐξομφοραῖς πεπληγμένοι. (*Cho. 23-31*)

I have come from the house, having been sent to escort the drink-offerings with rapid beating of hands; my cheek stands out red with gashes, with furrows freshly cut by my nails …; the tearing sound of garments rent in grief has ruined
their linen weave - the folds of my robes over my breast, savaged by mirthless disaster.

The play makes it clear that they are the *dmoiai* of the house, whom Clytemnestra had called outside to spread the fabrics earlier on:

δμωαὶ γυναίκες, δωμάτων εὐθήμονες… *(Cho. 84)*

Servant women, who keep the house in good order… (transl. Sommerstein 2008)

What is striking this time is that the women’s appearance is highly ominous, and in fact, highly suggestive of the Erinyes. Black-clad, with gashes on their cheeks, and torn, destroyed fabrics, they come across as no less jarring than the *daimones* of the final play (cf. *Eum.* 52, 55, 352, 370; cf. *Ag.* 463).

Indeed, as we will see later on, this appearance will be perfectly complemented by their characterisation. As many commentators have noted, the chorus of the *Choephori* is one of the most aggressive and forceful choruses in Greek drama; some commentators have even suggested that they are meant to remind us of the Erinyes through because of their angry incitements to avenge Agamemnon. Their black robes certainly constitute a striking visual link with the chorus of the third play. What has not been realised, however, is that this link is shown not only through the chorus’ characterisation and costume, but – perhaps even more so – through their positioning in space and through the tableau that this positioning constructs, especially in relation to the house interior. The confirmation that, in fact, we have another apparition of the Erinyes before our eyes through these women, the *house’s dmoiai of the house of Atreus*, comes in the finale of the second play. As we will realise retrospectively, like the brief appearance of the women with the fabrics from the interior in the ‘tapestry scene’, this entry from the house interior is another instance of the *Oresteia*’s masterful engagement with the Erinyes’ straddling – as *daimones* – the realm of the visible and the invisible.

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29 McCall 1990: 27; Bacon 2001: 52-3; Frontisi-Ducroux 2006: 34.

One more apparition: the dmoiai in the finale of the Choephori

After Orestes kills his mother inside the palace (Cho. 928-30), we are shown one of the most striking mirror-scenes of Greek drama. Standing over the bodies of Clytemnretos and Aegisthus, Orestes is wheeled out on the ekkyklema in a tableau which strongly evokes the final scene of the Agamemnon. The crime of Orestes is unambiguously shown as mirroring his mother’s and continuing the vicious cycle that has plagued the Atreid oikos for generations. Then the fabrics are brought into focus. Orestes hands them to the chorus and says:

![Greek text transcribed]( Cho. 980-984)

Behold also, you who are hearing of these crimes, the contrivance that imprisoned my wretched father, that fettered his arms and bound his feet together. Spread it out and standing around in a circle, display the fabric which covered the man, in order that the Father may see it. (trans. Sommerstein 2008, adapted)

This passage has been heavily debated. Some scholars have posited the existence of female attendants who handle and spread the fabric. Even more scholars have argued that the fabric is just spread in front of Orestes and only surrounded by the women. However, there is a more economical interpretation of the text, which does far more justice to the scene’s dramaturgical meaning. First of all, we have no indication that any attendants exist. A simpler interpretation is that Orestes does not ask attendants, but the chorus, the servants of the house (the dmoiai), to display the fabric which has just

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31 Mirror-scenes evoke other, usually highly important, scenes through their similarities with, and differences from, them. For their importance in Greek drama, see Taplin 2003: ch. 8.

32 Sommerstein 2010, 23 and 157-159.

33 For both propositions, see e.g. Garvie 1986, 321; Sommerstein 2008, 337-338.

34 Rightly so, Taplin 1977, 358.
appeared with the bodies from the interior. Furthermore, ἐκτείνατ᾽ αὐτὸ καὶ κύκλῳ παρασταδὸν (Cho. 983) suggests a circular formation of the women during the demonstration of the fabric. Again, the most economical interpretation suggests that Orestes asks the women to hold the fabric while standing around him in a circle.\footnote{Cf. Sider 1978: 26 and Tarkow 1980: 161.}

Fig. 2 offers a reconstruction of what these movements would look like in performance. The visual symbolism is powerful: the fabric ‘traps’ Orestes, as it had trapped his father in the first play (cf. Cho. 1001-15). The women who hold it are the same δμοιαὶ who in the first play had followed Agamemnon into the interior, and who then staged a sighting of the Erinyes at the beginning of the Choephori. Orestes, we are led to assume, is himself ‘caught’ ύφαντοῖς ἐν πέπλοις Ἐρινύων, ‘in the woven robes of the Erinyes’ (Ag. 1580), who are evoked here by the black-clad δμοιαὶ holding the red fabric around Orestes and glorying at Clytemnestra’s murder.

It is then that Orestes sees the Erinyes, and his words alert us, the viewers, to another apparition of the Erinyes:

\[\text{ userProfileImage: 'Figure 2: (This is a temporary image; I have commissioned a drawing of this scene to an artist)'}\]

\[\text{σμοιαὶ γυναῖκες, αἵδε Γοργόνων δίκην φαῖοχίτωσε καὶ πεπλεκτανημέναι πυκνοῖς δράκουσι· οὐκέτ᾽ ἂν μείναιμ᾽ ἐγώ. (Cho. 1048-1050)}\]

Ah, ah! I see these hideous women looking like Gorgons – clad in dark-grey tunics and thickly wreathed with serpents! I can’t stay here! (trans. Sommerstein 2008)

Σμοιαὶ, ‘hideous’, is West’s emendation of l. 1048, and is accepted by the vast majority of editors. However, the original reading of the manuscripts is much more revealing about what is actually shown in this scene. Orestes does not say σμοιαὶ in the manuscripts (M), but δμοιαὶ. He sees the δμοιαὶ, clad in black garments and with gashes on their faces standing around him in a circle, looking at him and holding the ominous fabric. He then
protests that he sees the Erinyes. As it now emerges, it does not do justice to the scene’s dramaturgy to suppose that Orestes is simply having hallucinations. By retrieving the original power of the appellation δμωαί, we can see how Aeschylus is suggesting that these women constitute yet another sighting of the Erinyes, for both Orestes and for the audience.

Once again, we cannot help noticing that this apparition of the Erinyes is strongly connected with the interior of the skene. For, as Orestes addresses the δμωιαί, he stands over the corpses of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, whom he has just murdered inside the house. He is therefore understood as still being indoors, so the tableau is most likely represented on the ekkyklema36 with the chorus standing around it. This arrangement is crucial: if Orestes is part of an interior scene, so are the Erinyes. Both interior and circular, this spatial positioning has implications beyond capturing Orestes’ entrapment and the continuation of the house’s vicious cycle of crime. It also captures a deeper, psychological symbolism of the interior, as suggested when Orestes declares that his own interiors, mind and heart, have been overpowered by Terror and Wrath:

... φέρουσι γὰρ νικώμενον

φρένες δύσαρκτοι, πρὸς δὲ καρδίᾳ Φόβος

ἀδειν ἔτομος ἤδ’ ύπορχεῖσθαι Κότῳ (Cho. 1023-5)

My mind is almost out of control and carrying me along half-overpowered, and Terror is near my heart, ready to sing and to dance to Wrath’s tune.

(trans. Sommerstein 2008)

Orestes’ words about the singing and dancing of his internal organs resonate with what we, as audience, see at this moment enacted on stage. The appearance of the δμωιαί-Erinyes, themselves embodiments of Terror and Wrath, form a singing and dancing chorus around Orestes and become the spatial externalised representation of Orestes’ state of mind.37 In this striking tableau, human interiors, the house interiors and the cosmos/earth interiors that hide these powerful daimonic forces38 are merged into the single space of the polysemous, but perennially ominous, dark skene – captured here by

37 For the interior of the skene as representing human interiors, see above, pp. 000.
38 For the Erinyes as agents and guardians of the earth, see below, pp. 000-000.
the *ekkyklema*. Mind, house and cosmos become one multivalent space: nested into one another, the interiors of the individual’s psyche, a family’s psyche and the psyche of the cosmos are inhabited and controlled by these daimonic powers. Representations of the interior, the Erinyes are flashes of vision in an otherwise obscure scheme.

**The Erinyes mirrored: the ‘Binding Song’ in the *Eumenides*.**

The chorus’ circular arrangement and Orestes’ claim that his interiors are ready to sing and dance the tune of Wrath in the finale of the *Choephoroi* acquire new life in the *Eumenides*, in another mirror scene of the trilogy. This is the scene of the ‘Binding Song’, which takes place after the action has moved to Athens. Since *Eum.* 140, the Erinyes have formed the chorus proper and have emerged from the interior to hunt Orestes down. Having finally caught up with him, they clasp hands in order to perform their ‘Binding Song’ in a circle around him:

… ἄγε δὴ καὶ χορὸν ἅψωμεν (*Eum.* 307)

Come now, let us also join our hands in dance… (trans. Sommerstein 2008)

As these words and the reconstruction in fig. 3 suggests, the Erinyes’ circular formation around Orestes constitutes a strong visual reference to the chorus’ formation in the last scene of the *Choephoroi* (fig. 2). However, the reference to that scene and the link between the two choruses become even stronger if one considers the effect that the ‘Binding Song’ is shown to have on Orestes. The song is a song of terror and wrath; it overpowers Orestes and drives his mind into a frenzy (*Eum.* 321-96). Retrospectively, what we see enacted here is nothing less but a second enactment of Orestes’ words in the *Choephoroi*: ‘My mind is almost out of control and carrying me along half-overpowered, and Terror is near my heart, ready to sing and to dance to Wrath’s tune’ (*Cho.* 1023-5).
By considering the strong link between the two scenes and paying attention to both their visual and their aural properties we can delve deeper into the Erinyes’ ‘invisible’ nature, which – despite the appearance of the chorus – has not been completely suppressed. By comparing the two tableaux and trying to imagine what we hear, we are first of all alerted to a significant difference between them: although the Erinyes are now properly visible *qua* Erinyes (and not as mere ‘flashes’ through other characters), it is their entrapment which has now become invisible. What traps Orestes in this scene is not the ominous fabric, the ‘woven robes of the Erinyes’, as in the previous two plays. It is a spell, a song – in other words, invisible sound, a mode of communication that does not rely on visual means.\(^{39}\) In the Greek imagination, sound is connected with breath and wind, phenomena through which, as we saw, the Erinyes manifest themselves in Aeschylus.\(^{40}\) The dramaturgical ingenuity with which Aeschylus has connected fabric, singing, curse and breath/wind through the seen and the unseen is striking. We constantly find ourselves in a borderline between the two categories of the seen and the unseen, a borderline which captures the essence of the *Oresteia*’s Erinyes.

There is one more significant element in the scene which confirms that we are correct to assume that the Erinyes’ borderline existence between the seen and the unseen has not been dropped, even after the Erinyes have become a chorus: the fact that once again, we are in an interior space, the interior of Athena’s temple. This is clearly suggested by Orestes’ words at *Eum*. 242:

\[
\ldots \pi ρθειμι δδμαι και βετας το σον, θεα
\]

I have arrived at your house, goddess, and before your image…

Orestes’ words suggest that in this scene he is most likely on the *ekkyklema*, clasping Athena’s statue in the interior of the temple.\(^{41}\) Just like at the end of both the *Agamemnon* and the *Choephoroi*, we have here a character possessed by the Erinyes in an interior scene. The interior here captures both the conditions of Orestes’ psyche, as well as those of the cosmos that envelops him. In all cases, we are experiencing the operation of these

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39 For the staging of the ‘Binding song’, see Mitchell-Boyask 2009: 58-60. For the connection between fabrics and curse in the *Oresteia*, see McClure 1996/7.

40 On the Erinyes, breaths and winds, see above, pp. 000.

forces in a borderline state between the unseen and the seen, a state where the audience is seeing things that should remain unseen.

**Back to the ‘tapestry scene’: the oikonomos-daimon of the house.**

Thus far, in the analyses of the *dmoiai* as uncanny apparitions of the Erinyes, we have noted the strong connection of these *daimones* with the interior. We have also seen that this connection is largely due to their representation as *servants of the house, servants who keep the house in good order, ‘dmoiai’*. If we dig a little deeper into this connection, it becomes evident that the strong connection of the Erinyes with the house as its *dmoiai* provides the key to us realising one more apparition. This time the apparition shows them as a singular entity and through a major character, namely Clytemnestra.

The scene in question is once again the *Agamemnon*’s ‘tapestry scene’. As is now generally recognised, the intricate fabrics that are gratuitously ruined in this scene represent the wealth of the household, including its most precious wealth, the life and lifeblood of its members which is self-destructively shed by other members, especially the blood of Iphigeneia which was shed by her own father, Agamemnon.42 What we see in the ‘tapestry scene’ is the woman of the house enticing its master into the destruction of some of its most precious wealth. However, if we think of Clytemnestra in the natural-realist terms of the ‘woman of the house’ alone, there are significant difficulties with the logic of her actions. If we take into account, especially, the connection of the dark red fabrics with the shed blood of Iphigeneia, Clytemnestra’s invitation to Agamemnon to destroy the fabrics does not make sense. Why does she lure Agamemnon to (re-)enact the destruction of the house’s most precious wealth, the lifeblood of her child?

It is possible, of course, that in this scene the play operates on an entirely symbolic level, so that any realistic logic about Clytemnestra’s motives and action might be temporarily suspended. However, this explanation would miss something crucial about the characterisation of this figure. The play had prepared us for this over eight hundred lines earlier. In the parodos of the *Agamemnon*, the chorus had sung the following lines:

…. μήμει γάρ φοβερὰ παλίνορτος

οἰκονόμος δολία, μνάμων Μῆνις τεκνόποινος. (Ag. 154-5)

…. for there awaits, to arise hereafter, a fearsome, guileful oikonomos, a Wrath that remembers and will avenge a child. (trans. Sommerstein 2008, adapted)

Although – on a first level – it is obviously Clytemenstra who is meant in this passage, since she is the one who remembers and avenges her child Iphigeneia by killing Agamemnon, this passage does not name Clytemenstra explicitly. Instead, it uses a more ambiguous way to describe this female entity of the house, namely the term oikonomos. Why? The reason, I suggest, is that this passage merges more than one characters into a single figure. As Fraenkel observed, by virtue of the name Μῆνις (=Fury) and the fact that this female was said ‘to rise up once again’ from the depths (παλίνορτος), this passage makes a clear reference to the Erinys.43 It is, therefore, as early as Agamemnon 154-5 that the connection between the Erinys and the woman who broods in the house has been made.

We may add that the characterisation oikonomos is as suggestive of the Erinys as it is of Clytemenstra, albeit on a different level. Decades ago, Vernant, Segal and Padel showed that the house interior in Greek imagination has a cosmic and chthonic symbolism, in other words it captures symbolically the cosmos and the earth.44 This symbolism is crucial for understanding the characterisation of oikonomos as referring to the Erinys. The Erinys can be understood to be in charge of the wealth of an oikos, as much as Clytemenstra can, but in her case, the oikos is a much broader entity: it is the cosmic oikos, the earth. As chthonic powers, the Erinyes are understood to be guardians of all natural wealth, because all natural wealth, including human lifeblood and life itself, is understood to come from the earth.45 The proper use of the wealth of the earth is

43 Fraenkel 1950: 92-94.

44 Vernant 1983: 127-75; Segal 1999: 42-7, 122; Padel 1992: ch. 5; cf. Bourdieu 1970 and 1990 (with revised structuralist principles). The oikos is used as a metonymy of (cosmic) order or its disruption in many plays: see especially Sophocles’ Trachiniae and Antigone, but also Euripides’ Heracles 888ff. and Bacchae 587ff. For a wide cross-cultural survey of the symbolism of vernacular architecture from America, Asia and Africa, see Oliver 1987: 153-70. The house is often connected to nature and the universe through another microcosmic model, the human body.

45 For the concept of the chthonic powers as guardians of the earth and its resources, see Burkert 1985: 200; cf. Parker 2005: 423-4.
fundamental for the maintenance of the natural order. The Erinyes are understood to be in charge of this natural order by observing the proper use of its wealth and reacting to its violations.

This realisation helps us to understand why the female figure of the ‘tapestry scene’ evokes not only Clytemnestra, but also the Erinyes. It also helps us understand why this figure provokes the destruction of the wealth of the oikos. Beyond the realistic level, on which we ‘see’ Clytemnestra luring Agamemnon into the house in order to kill him for the sacrifice of her precious child, on a more symbolic level we also ‘see’ the Erinyes persuading the destructive and wasteful members of the Atreid oikos to enact terrible destruction of the most precious wealth, in order to entrap and punish them. That we ‘see’ the Erinyes through the figure of Clytemnestra is nowhere else more manifest than in the central words of the ‘tapestry scene’, which are used to entice Agamemnon to his wasteful destruction by evoking the alleged inexhaustibility of the natural productive powers:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ἔστιν θάλασσα} & \quad \text{– τίς δὲ νιν κατασβέσει; –} \\
\text{τρέφουσα πολλῆς πορφύρας ἱσάργυρον} & \quad \text{κηκίδα παγκαίνιστον, εἰμάτων βαφάς;} \\
\text{οἶκος δ’ ὑπάρχει τῶνδε σὺν θεοῖς, ἄναξ,} & \quad \text{ἐχειν: πένεσθαι δ’ οὐκ ἐπίσταται δόμος.} \\
\text{πολλῶν πατησμὸν δ’ εἰμάτων ἀν ἡπξάμην,} & \quad \text{δόμουισι προυνεχθέντος ἐν χρηστηρίοις,} \\
\text{ψυχῆς κόμιστρα τῆδε μηχανωμένη.} & \quad \text{(Ag. 958-965)}
\end{align*}
\]

The sea is there – and who shall quench it? – nurturing the juices which yield much purple worth its weight in silver, wholly renewable, the dye of vestments. The oikos has an abundance of these with the gods’ help, my lord, for us to possess. This house does not know how to be poor. To contrive a means of bringing this life back, I would have vowed to trample many garments, if that had been prescribed by an oracle. (trans. Collard 2003, adapted)

Unless we recognise the Erinyes, guardian of the earth’s wealth and force of the natural order, looming behind the presence of the queen and the double authority of the voice here, we cannot really understand these words fully. Through the mouth of Clytemnestra,
the Erinys says that the Atreid domos (house) has subjected the larger oikos, the earth, the natural world and its productive powers, to its own destruction and waste. The earlier choral descriptions of Iphigeneia’s murder and the Trojan war, both wasteful of the most precious form of wealth, human life, come promptly to mind. Almost paradoxically (but in line with our understanding of how the Erinys as guardians of the cosmic order operate), destruction and waste become the Erinys’ instruments in order to ensure punishment of these same crimes. The symbolic destruction of the web/net-like fabrics evokes the destruction of generative powers as an ultimate violation of the cosmic order and seals the fate of the Atreid oikos: Agamemnon, guilty of destruction of the most precious human and natural wealth, is trapped in the net-like fabrics of the Erinys and is on his way to meet his death. In the interior, which captures, as we saw, both earth and Hades, he is awaited by the Erinys-Clytemnestra.

46 For the passage’s evocation of the generative powers of not only sea but also land, see Goheen 1955: 121 and n. 17; Segal 1963: 34. This holistic understanding of ‘earth’, and the attribution of generative powers to these elements (which also appear as ominous and destructive) is attested in the closing scene of the Oresteia, Eum. 903-13. Purves 2010: 101-6 and Schibli 1990: 53-6, have also argued that the idea of ‘earth’ may include land, sea and heavens. For insights into the modern use of the term ‘earth’ and its connotations of ‘fertile ground/soil’ as well as ‘environment’, see Cosgrove, 2001: 5-8, esp. 7.

47 The parodos (esp. Ag. 126-66, 206-49), as well as the first (Ag. 369-84, 433-55, 461-74) and the second choral odes (Ag. 688-736), invoke the human cost of the war. For the ideas of youth, natural growth and their abuse, see also Ag. 197-8, 659-60 (cf. A. Pers. 59-60, 252, 511-12, 821-6, 922-7, 978, as well as A. Sept. 16-20, A. Supp. 659-66). For the commodification of life and the violation of the natural processes as a result of the war, see Ag. 207, 359, 438, 525-8, 709-11. For the angry reaction of nature to the expedition, see Ag. 187-201, 555-74, 648-73.

48 In order to redress the disturbed balance, the natural order reacts so violently that it causes even more destruction: Burian 2003: 5-6. Madness and the Erinys work in the same way: they both cause crime and punish it; cf. Padel 1992: 177.

49 Earlier on, Clytemnestra’s request from Agamemnon not to set his foot on the ground (Ag. 906-7) symbolically evoked the pollution that he had inflicted on the earth due to the greed and destruction of the Trojan expedition (see n. 000). This is an action that also evokes the Erinys.
Clytemnestra as the daimon of the house at the revelation of the corpses.

The interior and the looming presence of the Erinys gain awesome power once again in the final scene of the *Agamemnon*, the scene where the slaughtered king and Cassandra are wheeled out of the interior (Ag. 1372). The use of the *ekkyklema* means that this is an interior scene, but that it has been brought ‘out’ for the viewer to see. Accordingly, what the viewer ‘sees’ in the scene of the revelation of the corpses is not just Clytemnestra, but another revelation of the ‘invisible’ Erinys, the daimon of the house.

The process of coming to see the Erinys through Clytemnestra is, once again, gradual. There are hints that her voice has a double register from the very beginning of the scene: standing over the corpses and pointing at the fabric, the murderous female describes herself as having remembered a crime for a long time and having finally exacted punishment from its perpetrator (Ag. 1374-83). These words unambiguously evoke the *mnemon* (‘unforgetting’) and *hysteropoinos* (‘late-avenging’) characterisations that are regularly attributed to the Erinys (Ag. 58, 155, 703, cf. *Eum.* 383, *Pr.* 516, and S. *Aj.*1390). Furthermore, the disturbed natural imagery that she uses to express her joy at the splattering of Agamemnon’s blood (Ag. 1389-92) is even more appropriate to a force of the natural order than a human. Our suspicions are confirmed at Ag. 1428, when the elders recognise the Erinys’ bloody eyes (cf. *Eum.* 54) as the eyes of the queen:

> λίβος ἐπ᾿ ὀμμάτων αἵματος εὖ πρέπει
> the flecks of blood show clearly on your eyes.

Eventually, the elders – and we with them – ‘see’ the daimon of the house:

> δαίμον, δς ἐμπίτνεις δώμασι καὶ διφυί-οις Τανταλίδαισιν,
> κράτος τ᾿ ἴσδψυχον ἐκ γυναικών
> καρδιώδηκτον ἐμοὶ κρατύνεις;
> ἐπὶ δὲ σώματος δίκαν
> κόρακος ἐχθροῦ σταθεῖς ἐκνόμως
> ὤμνον ὄμνεῖν ἐπεύχεται ... (Ag. 1468-74)

50 Most scholars accept that this scene was staged on the *ekkyklema*, the theatrical platform which is rolled outside. See the recent approach by Rehm 2002: 88-4.
Daimon that assails this house and the two Tantalids so different in their nature, and controls it, in a way that rends my heart, through the agency of women whose soul were alike! Standing over the corpse, in the manner of a loathsome raven, it glories in tunelessly singing a song\textsuperscript{51} ... (trans. Sommerstein 2008)

As this scene reaches its climax, the image of the Erinys converges entirely with that of Clytemnestra: what the audience had sensed all along, that there was a symbiotic relationship between the ‘Erinys of the house’ and Clytemnestra, is confirmed as true when we hear from her that it is not as Agamemnon’s wife, but as the ‘ancient, bitter avenging spirit’ of the house, as the daimon alastor,\textsuperscript{52} that she killed her husband:

\begin{verbatim}
αὐχεῖς εἶναι τόδε τοῦργον ἐμὸν;
<μὴ > μηδ᾿ ἐπιλεχθῇς
Ἀγαμεμνονίαν εἶναι μ᾿ ἄλοχον
φανταξόμενος δὲ γυναῖκι νεκροῦ
τοῦδ᾿ ὁ παλαιὸς δριμὺς ἀλάστωρ
Ατρέως χαλεποῦ θοινατήρος
τόνδ᾿ ἀπέτεισεν,
τέλεον νεαροῖς ἐπιθύσας. (Ag. 1497-1504)
\end{verbatim}

You think this deed is mine? <Do not suppose so>, nor reckon that I am the spouse of Agamemnon: no, the ancient, bitter avenging spirit of Atreus, the furnisher of the cruel banquet, has taken the likeness of this corpse’s wife and paid him out, adding a full-grown sacrificial victim to the young ones. (trans. Sommerstein 2008)

\textsuperscript{51} Tuneless singing is a hallmark of the Erinyes, cf. e.g. Ag. 1186-93; Eum. 321-96 (‘the Binding Song’). See also Wilson and Taplin 1993.

\textsuperscript{52} The gender should not be an obstacle for the identification of the house’s Erinys with the house’s daimon and alastor. For the identification of the Erinys with a male subject, see Finglass 2005, esp. 41, and for masculine characteristics of the Erinyes in general, Sommerstein 2010\textsuperscript{2}: 161, 181. Dodds 1951: 26, Fowler 1991: 95, Padel 1992: 118, and Ferrari 1997: 23 are certainly right to identify these daimonic powers of the house, in contrast to the common tendency to distinguish them from one another, e.g. Fraenkel 1950: 711, Sewell-Rutter 2007: 84, Raeburn and Thomas 2011: 225. From Ag. 1567, just before Aegisthus enters, Clytemnestra’s attitude changes and she treats the daimon as a force external to herself.
Towards a re-interpretation of the Erinyes and the interior spaces of the *Oresteia*

There are plenty more instances which show that the sightings of the ‘invisible’ Erinyes, the way they become both ‘seen’ and ‘unseen’, are connected to the interior. As we read on and explore the trilogy further, identifying even more apparitions of the Erinyes, we see many parts with new eyes, while at the same time facing unavoidable questions about the role and meaning of these daimonic entities. Going into an analysis of these scenes and their connections with one another would require a lot more space than this essay allows. However, as a case for these connections has been made, I will now try to give an interpretation of what we are to make of the Erinyes’ seen and unseen nature. What does it mean that they are essentially invisible and seen only in ‘flashes’ or by characters in a state of madness? Moreover, what does it mean that when we see these apparitions of the Erinyes, they are always connected with the interior?

A few fundamental observations should be made. First and foremost, these appearances of the Erinyes lend ever more support to the minority view that the Erinyes form the central axis of the *Oresteia* and represent a perennial preoccupation of the poet throughout the trilogy. This is a view which has been expressed by Ruth Padel and Helen Bacon, and considered by a handful of other scholars, but which rarely figures in mainstream interpretations of the *Oresteia*. The conclusion that the Erinyes have a central role in the *Oresteia* is strengthened by the realisation that the Erinyes are, almost always, ‘there’, if one is able to ‘see’ them. Paying attention to the way theatrical space is used and to what we might ‘see’ as viewers shows that the Erinyes are much more present than if we rely on the words of the play only. Furthermore, appreciating the ubiquity of the Erinyes paves the way for a much deeper understanding of why the *Oresteia* concludes

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53 As mentioned earlier (p. 000), the ‘Beacons speech’ (Ag. 281-316) and the image of the approaching fire (which evokes an invisible hand), has rightly been argued to construct Clytemnestra like an avenging Erinys: Ferrari 1997: 19-24. Furthermore, the house servant Cilissa, as Bacon 2001: 55 has shown, also evokes an Erinys. The full significance of these sightings will be shown in detail and at greater length in relation to the natural and the chthonic in my forthcoming monograph.

54 See above n. 000.
by focusing on them, and not, for example, on the house of Atreus and the acquittal of Orestes.

As to what it ‘means’ that these sightings of the otherwise invisible Erinyes are connected to the interior, I would suggest, as Padel’s *In and Out of the Mind* powerfully argues, that the key factor is their daimonic nature: as cosmic and psychic forces, the Erinyes are fundamentally invisible, and the trilogy carefully plots this through its use of interior spaces. We are not meant to see the forces that operate in the cosmos. Such forces are captured in the *Oresteia* and Aeschylean tragedy more generally through invisible forces like winds (*Ag.* 218-23, *Cho.* 391-3, 1065-7, *Sept.* 705-8), or powers which operate from the earth, such as dream-*eidola* (*Cho.* 32-41, 523-5; *Pers.* 176-99; *Sept.* 708-11, 720-33), or even through fleeting omens which come before the eyes of certain characters (*Ag.* 110-20; *Pers.* 353-60). Daimonic powers, and the Erinyes in particular, become present in and through such visitations. At the same time, it is through cosmic and earthly forces that they reveal their existence, and that they make themselves valid.

Similarly, we are not meant to see the forces that operate in the depths of the human psyche. As I suggested at the beginning of this essay, interior spaces can represent the human psyche and its repressed and unconscious dimensions, the way that it is subject to forces that are not immediately clear to itself. The Erinyes capture both, and their appearances to us confirm that these forces are part of us as they are part of the cosmos. Both human psyche and the cosmos are manifest to a great degree in the *skene* interior. What is left to us to do is to recognize that these forces exist, to peer into the dark mystery of the interior and await some momentary ‘flash’ that will shed a little light on the nature of the ever-present daimonic Erinyes.

**References**


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55 This idea is central to Padel 1992.


-- (2010²) *Aeschylean Tragedy*. London.


-- (2003²) *Greek Tragedy in Action*. London.


