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Seeing the invisible: Interior Spaces and Uncanny Erinyes in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*

Interior spaces, “seen” and “unseen” in Greek tragedy

It hardly needs to be stated that the visible and the invisible lay at the very heart of fifth-century Greek theatre. Greek theatre took place in the open, in the bright light of day, with the sun illuminating the natural spaces that hosted the event. This is a striking contrast with tragedy's common themes of the dark sides of human nature, the suppressed memories of terrible deeds, the unexpressed desires hidden in the recesses of the human psyche, and the darkness of death and Hades; this contrast between the “seen” and the “unseen” may be one of the genre's most paradoxical features. Flooded by the brilliant natural light of Greece, how did the theatrical event represent physically the hidden, the suppressed, the unconscious, the “unseen”?

Several decades ago, studies informed by structural anthropology showed that the way Greek tragedy used theatrical space was crucial for its representation of the “unseen”. They demonstrated in particular that the fundamental contrasts of light and dark, known and unknown, public and private, seen and unseen, centred around the extraordinarily multivalent space within the stage building (the *skene*) and its contrast with the exterior.¹

In the theatre, interior spaces do not only function as representations of buildings such as houses, palaces and temples, nor as spaces that can be “realistically” entered and exited by characters, like tents and groves. They also function as symbolic interiors capturing “deep” spaces like the mind, the memory, the psyche and bodily innards like the mouth and the womb.²

¹ Dale 1969, Segal 1982, chs. 4–8, Padel 1983, Zeitlin 1985, 74–79, Padel 1990, *passim*, esp. 342–46, Lefebvre 1991, 224–26, Padel 1992, Wiles 1997, ch. 7.

² Cf. Lefebvre 1991, 224–26, Padel 1992, 337, 349, 354, 364, Wiles 1997, 66, Zeitlin 1985, 74–79.

Note: This paper is the result of concurrent research on two parallel projects, on gaze and vision in Greek literature and on conceptualisations of the *daimonic* in relation to space from the archaic to the Christian times. It has also been published, in a slightly amplified version, in the volume *Locating the Daimonic in the Greek World*, eds. Bakola, E. and Lunn-Rockcliffe, S., which has a different scope.

In almost every Greek tragedy, especially those in which 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 *thamos* (“inner chamber”, “room in the deepest part of the house”) used frequently for the stage building as a whole.³ Interior spaces are often connected with depth, confinement, repression and oppression; we may thus understand the connection of interiority with what is forgotten or in distant memory, pushed away from consciousness, suppressed, unconscious, and in the 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).⁴

However, the dramatic impact of interior spaces lies in the fact that they do not only hide such things as past events and 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 usually taken place in the interior.⁵ Although these speeches' vividness (*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.⁶ The *ekkyklema* is thus associated with moments of intense dramatic impact, as something that is supposed to remain hidden and invisible

³ In the *Oresteia* alone, *mychos*: *Ag.* 96, *Cho.* 35, 446, 801, 954, *Eum.* 39, 170, 180; *thamos*: *Eum.* 1004; Elsewhere in Greek tragedy, *mychos*: *A. Pers.* 624, *S. Trach.* 686, *S. Ant.* 1293, *E. Med.* 397, *E. Hel.* 820, *E. Hec.* 1040, *E. Ion* 229, *E. Tr.* 299; *thamos*: *S. Ant.* 804, *S. El.* 190, *E. Med.* 141, *E. Andr.* 787, *E. El.* 132, *E. Supp.* 1022, *E. Ph.* 1541, *E. Ba.* 1370.

⁴ 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, 86–87. For Orestes in the *Oresteia*, see below, pp. 174–76.

⁵ For example, *S. Ant.* 1278–316, *OT* 1579–669, *Trach.* 899–946, *Eur. Or.* 1369–502, *Her.* 909–1015, *Bacch.* 604–41, *Alc.* 141–98.

⁶ *A. Ag.* 1372, *Cho.* 972, *Eum.* 64; *S. Aj.* 344, *El.* 1465, *Ant.* 1293; *Eur. Her.* 1028, *Hipp.* 811.

becomes momentarily visible.⁷ As 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;⁸ in these scenes an attempt is made to capture symbolically this transition into another world, the world of Aides, which was sometimes etymologically explained as coming from *a-* and *idein*.⁹ 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 that which 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*.¹⁰ 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 border between the seen and the unseen.¹¹

In the whole of the *Oresteia*, the interior functions symbolically as much as it functions representationally. The dramaturgical use of the *skene* helps the oppositions of the seen and the unseen, the known and the repressed, the conscious and the unconscious, to be played out. In particular, the *skene* captures – almost as their physical surrogate – an array of concepts

7 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, 360–63. See also Dale 1969, 120–29, Wiles 1997, 162–65.

8 Agamemnon in the “tapestry scene” (*Ag.* 908–75), Cassandra in the *Agamemnon* (*Ag.* 1291), Ajax after his suicide speech *S. Aj.* 864–65 and Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus* (*S. OC* 1555; cf. 1590–1). See Wiles 1997, 165–66, Padel 1992, 98–100, Markantonatos 2002, 110.

9 *Aides, a-idein*: see Jucquois and Devlamminck 1977, 20 and Burkert 1985, 426.

10 For Darius, see Bakola 2014 *passim*.

11 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.* 43–46 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, 186–88.

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 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.¹²

Enter the Erinyes – at the end of the *Oresteia*?

In the *Oresteia*, 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,¹³ is permanently rooted in the interior: namely the Erinyes or Erinyes of the *oikos* (house).¹⁴

However, although the Erinyes are invoked and mentioned from the very beginning of the *Agamemnon* (Ag. 54), they do not have a physical presence 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 to the audience but only to characters who are in a fit of madness.¹⁵ 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 τήνδ' οὐποτ' ἐκλείπει χορὸς
ξύμφογγος, οὐκ εὐφωνος· οὐ γὰρ εὖ λέγει.
καὶ μὴν πεπωκῶς γ', ὡς θρασύνεσθαι πλέον,

12 For the symbolic significance of the interior and its dark depths in the *Oresteia*, see Padel 1992, 73–75, 91–95, 105–8, and 168–92.

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

14 For the Erinyes as interior powers, see Ag. 155, 717–72, 1186–93 (with Fraenkel *ad loc.*), 1500–3; *Cho.* 566, 698–99, 800–2. The Erinyes are primarily powers of the earth (*Eum.* 417), which is also conceptualised as interior space. The only scholar who has emphasized the element of interiority in relation to the Erinyes is Padel 1992, 171–72 and 189–92. For the Erinyes and the house, see Rose 1992, 219–21, Bacon 2001, 50–51. For a recent discussion of the multi-valent functions of the Erinyes in Greek culture, Sewell-Rutter 2007, ch. 4.

15 For this view, see especially Brown 1983. More recently, Padel 1992, 185; Easterling 2008, 222–25; Mitchell-Boyask 2009, 47–48.

βρότειον αἷμα κῶμος ἐν δόμοις μένει,
 δύσπεμπτος ἔξω, συγγόνων Ἐρινύων·
 ὕμνοῦσι δ' ὕμνον δώμασιν προσήμενα
 πρῶταρχον ἄτην ... (Ag. 1186–92)

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)¹⁶

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

ἄ, ἄ·
 σμοιαὶ γυναῖκες, αἶδε Γοργόνων δίκην
 φαίτοιχίτωνες καὶ πεπλεκτανημένοι
 πικνοῖς δράκουσιν· οὐκέτ' ἂν μείναιμι 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!

Scholars usually point out that it is only at *Eumenides* 63 (or 140)¹⁷ 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 here is that the Erinyes are *daimones* and are therefore understood to have a liminal existence between the visible and the invisible.¹⁸ In the theatre, this liminal existence is not confined to the level of words, but is translated into how the Erinyes are staged. In this paper, I will show that, through complex 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 thought until now. Aeschylus thus confirms the Erinyes' near-ubiquitous role by choosing key points of the trilogy to make them

¹⁶ The edition and translation of the Aeschylean texts is Sommerstein 2008, unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁷ For a survey of possible staging approaches, see Mitchell-Boyask 2009, 45–55.

¹⁸ See Dodds 1951, 39–43; cf. 10–15 and nn. 65–66; Burkert 1985, 180–81. For the Erinyes as *daimones*, see Padel 1992, ch. 8 and 93–94, 129–32, 137–38, 141–42, 150–52. See also Padel 1983. For *daimones* in Greek tragedy and in Aeschylus especially, see also Winnington-Ingram 1983, ch. 1 and 80, 112–13, 160–61, 207–8, Burkert 1985, 180–81, Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1990, 36–37, 45, 76–78, 81, 122.

“appear”. Furthermore, 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 a significant apparition of the Erinyes 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 enter the house and will not emerge from it alive.

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

ἰδὼν ὕφαντοῖς ἐν πέπλοις Ἑρινύων
τὸν ἄνδρα τόνδε κείμενον φίλωσ ἐμοί (Ag. 1580–81)

I see this man lying here in the woven robes of the Erinyes, a sight precious to me ...

Why are the fabrics said to belong to the Erinyes and not Clytemnestra? My suggestion is that the play has already 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 commentators as it is not accompanied by words; we only know of it because it is prompted by this speech of Clytemnestra:

δμφαί, τί μέλλεθ', αἷς ἐπέσταλται τέλος
πέδον κελεύθου στορνύναι πετάσμασιν;

εὐθὺς γενέσθω πορφυρόστρωτος πόρος,
εἰς δῶμ' ἄελπτον ὡς ἂν ἠγῆται Δίκη. (Ag. 908–11)

Servants of the house (*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 purely visual action. 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.¹⁹ Figure 1, a drawing of a still from the National Theatre *Oresteia*'s "tapestry scene", might help the reader envisage the moment of the servants' entrance from the house interior as they spread the fabric:



Fig. 7.1: Drawing of a still from the National Theatre *Oresteia*'s "tapestry scene", directed by P. Hall (1981–83), filmed by Channel 4. Image credit: Rosa Wicks.

¹⁹ 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.

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 “ὕφαντοῖς ἐν πέπλοις Ἐρινύων”, i.e. “in the woven robes of the Erinyes”, it is difficult to resist suspecting that these women bear a more ominous significance: are these *dmoiai* something more than mere women who serve the house? More specifically, could this be an apparition of the house’s ominous presences that some characters talk about?

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 describes 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 *Choephoroi*, 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 χρῆμα λεύσσω; τίς ποθ' ἦδ' ὀμήγουρις
στείχει γυναικῶν φάρεσιν μελαγχίμοις
πρέπουσα; (*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:

ἰαλτὸς ἐκ δόμων ἔβαν
χοὰς προπομπὸς ὀξύχειρι σὺν κόπῳ·
πρέπει παρῆς φοίνισσ' ἀμυγμοῖς ὄνυχος ἄλοκι
νεοτόμῳ

...

λινοφθόροι δ' ὑφασμάτων
λακίδες ἔφλαδον ὑπ' ἄλγεσιν,
πρόστερνοι στολμοὶ πέπλων ἀγελάστοις
ξυφοραῖς 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:

δμῳαὶ γυναῖκες, δωμάτων εὐθήμονες ... (Cho. 84)

Servant women, who keep the house in good order

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, this appearance will be perfectly complemented by their characterisation. As many commentators have noted, the chorus of the *Choephoroi* 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 their angry incitements to avenge Agamemnon.²⁰ Their black robes certainly constitute a striking visual link with the chorus of the third play.²¹ We can take these observations much further if we notice that this link is shown not only through the chorus' characterisation and costume, but – and 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 in these women, the *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.

One more apparition: the *dmoiai* in the finale of the *Choephoroi*

After Orestes' murder of his mother inside the palace (*Cho.* 928–30) comes one of the most striking mirror-scenes of Greek drama.²² Standing over the bodies of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, Orestes is wheeled out on the *ekkyklema* in a tableau which strongly evokes the final scene of the *Agamemnon*.²³ The crime of Orestes is unambiguously shown as mirroring his mother's and thus contin-

²⁰ McCall 1990, 27, Bacon 2001, 52–53, Frontisi-Ducroux 2006, 34.

²¹ Cf. Sider 1978, 18–19 and 21–22.

²² Mirror-scenes evoke other, usually highly important, scenes through their similarities and differences. For their importance in Greek drama, see Taplin 2003², ch. 8.

²³ Sommerstein 2010², 23 and 157–59.

uing 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:

ἴδεσθε δ' αὖτε, τῶνδ' ἐπήκοοι κακῶν,
τὸ μηχανήμα, δεσμὸν ἀθλίῳ πατρί,
πέδας τε χειροῖν καὶ ποδοῖν ξυνωρίδα.
ἐκτεínaτ' αὐτὸ καὶ κύκλω παρασταδόν²⁴
στέγαστρον ἀνδρὸς δείξαθ', ὡς ἴδη πατήρ ... (*Cho.* 980–84)

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.²⁵ 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.²⁶ A simpler interpretation is that Orestes does not ask attendants, but the chorus, the servants of the house (the *dmoiiai*), to display the fabric which has just appeared with the bodies from the interior. Furthermore, *Cho.* 983, ἐκτεínaτ' αὐτὸ καὶ κύκλω παρασταδόν, 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.²⁷

Figure 7.2 offers a reconstruction of what these movements would look like in performance.²⁸ 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 *dmoiiai* 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 *Choephoroi*. Orestes, we are led to assume, is himself “caught” “in the

²⁴ West and Sommerstein tentatively print 983a <ἀμήχανον τέχνημα καὶ δυσέκδυτον>, ‘the garment to cover a man which he could not strip off’ (= Aesch. fr. 375 *TrGF* (Σ Euripides *Orestes* 25)), but there is no conclusive evidence for doing so.

²⁵ For these propositions, see e.g. Garvie 1986, 321; Sommerstein 2008, 337–38.

²⁶ Rightly so, Taplin 1977, 358.

²⁷ Cf. Sider 1978, 26 and Tarkow 1980, 161.

²⁸ The sketches of figures 1 and 2 assume the fifth-century theatre of Dionysus Eleuthereus in Athens as their model. They assume that the *skene*-building front was around 20 m. long and the *skene* door opening around 6 m. wide. For these dimensions, see Goette 2007, 117, and Whallon 1995, 236 respectively. For the most recent archaeological survey of the theatre, which argues that the *skene* in the fifth century did not differ in size from the *skene* in the fourth century, see Papastamati-Von Moock 2015, esp. 68–69.

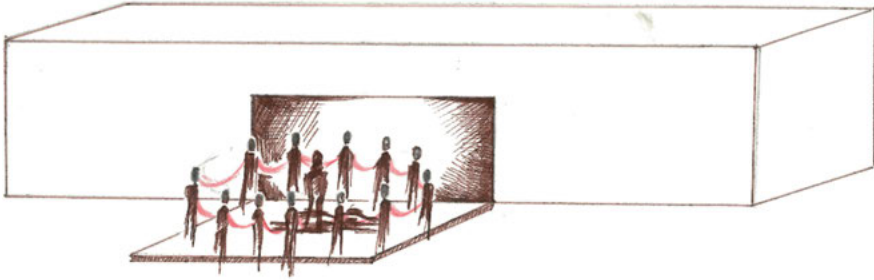


Fig. 7.2: Sketch reconstruction of *Choephoroi* 980 ff. For the blood-red colour of the fabric, see Taplin 1977, 314–15. Image credit: Rosa Wicks.

woven robes of the Erinyes” (ὕφαντοῖς ἐν πέπλοις Ἐρινύων, *Ag.* 1580), who are evoked here by the black-clad *dmoiai* holding the red fabric around Orestes and glorying in Clytemnestra’s murder.

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

ᾶ, ᾶ·
 μοιαὶ γυναῖκες, αἶδε Γοργόνων δίκην
 φαῖοχίτωνες καὶ πεπλεκτανημένοι
 πυκνοῖς δράκουσιν· οὐκέτ’ ἄν 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!

Σμοιαί, “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 *σμοιαί* in the manuscripts (M), but *δμοιαί*. He sees the *dmoiai*, 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 hallucinating. By retrieving the original power of the appellation *δμοιαί*, 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 but notice that this apparition of the Erinyes is strongly connected with the interior of the *skene*. For, as Orestes addresses the *dmoiai*, 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 *ekkyklema*²⁹ 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 conveying 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
ἄδειν ἔτομος ἦδ' ὑπορχεῖσθαι Κότῳ. (*Cho.* 1023–25)

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.

Orestes' words about the singing and dancing of his internal organs resonate with what we as the audience see at this moment enacted on stage. The appearance of the *dmoi*-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.³⁰ In this striking tableau, human interiors, the house interiors and the cosmos/earth interiors that hide these powerful daimonic forces³¹ are merged into the single space of the polysemous, but perennially ominous, dark *skene*, here conveyed by the use of 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

²⁹ See Sommerstein 2010², 23 and 157–59. Contra Taplin 1977, 357.

³⁰ For the interior of the *skene* as representing human interiors, see above, pp. 163–64.

³¹ For the Erinyes as agents and guardians of the earth, see below, pp. 178–80.

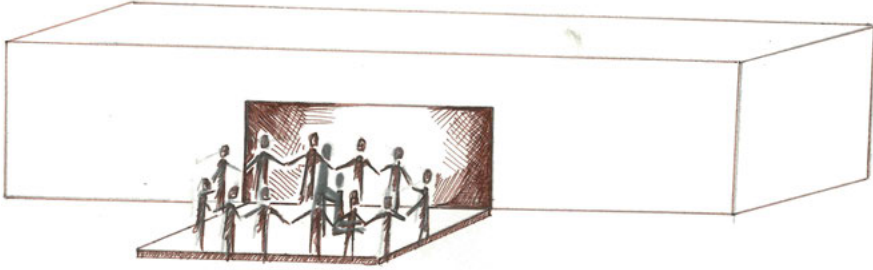


Fig. 7.3: Sketch reconstruction of *Eumenides* 307 ff. Image credit: Rosa Wicks.

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, at *Eum.* 307–96. 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 ἄψωμεν (*Eum.* 307)

Come now, let us also join our hands in dance ...

As these words and the reconstruction in Figure 3 suggests, the Erinyes’ circular formation around Orestes constitutes a strong visual reference to the chorus’ formation in the last scene of the *Choephoroi* (Figure 2, p. 173). 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 one 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 than 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.* 1023–25).

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,

nor the Erinyes' holding of hands. It is a spell, a song – in other words, invisible sound, a mode of communication that does not rely on visual means.³² In the Greek imagination, sound is connected with breath and wind, phenomena through which the Erinyes manifest themselves in Aeschylus.³³ 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 on the border between the two categories of the seen and the unseen, a border which captures the essence of the *Oresteia's* Erinyes.

There is one more significant element in the scene that confirms that we are correct to assume that the Erinyes' liminal existence between the seen and the unseen has not been forgotten, 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:

... πρόσεμι δῶμα καὶ βρέτας τὸ σὸν, θεά

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.³⁴ Just as 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 forces in a liminal state between the unseen and the seen, a state where the audience is seeing things that should remain unseen.

32 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.

33 On the connection between the Erinyes breaths and winds, see *Sept.* 705–8 and Thalmann 1978, 35, 37, 55. For *daimones* and winds, see Bakola, Smith, Piano and Timotin in the forthcoming volume *Locating the daimonic in the Greek world* (above, introductory footnote). For winds and breaths in Greek tragedy and Aeschylus in particular, see Padel 1992, 88–98. The image from *Sept.* 705–8 (and doubtlessly the connection to the Erinyes) is re-used 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). See also *Ag.* 645–57, 1235–36, *Cho.* 33, 1065–67, *Eum.* 52–53, 137–38, 840. Cf. *S. Ant.* 929–30.

34 Cf. Sommerstein 2008², 23 and 157–59.

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 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 are self-destructively shed by other members, especially the blood of Iphigeneia which was shed by her own father, Agamemnon.³⁵ 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 in particular we consider 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 into (re-)enacting 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 actions might be temporarily suspended. However, this explanation would miss something crucial about the characterisation of this figure. The play has prepared us for this moment over eight hundred lines earlier. In the *parodos* of the *Agamemnon*, the chorus had sung the following lines:

μίμνει γὰρ φοβερὰ παλίνροτος
οἰκονόμος δολία, μνάμων Μῆνις τεκνόποιος. (Ag. 154–55)

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

³⁵ Jones 1962, 82–93, Lebeck 1971, 85, Taplin 1977, 313–14, Goldhill 1986, 11, 69, 171, Scodel 1996, 120.

Although on a first level it is obviously Clytemnestra who is being referred to in this passage, since she is the one who remembers and avenges her child Iphigeneia by killing Agamemnon, this passage does not name Clytemnestra 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 character into a single figure. As Fraenkel observed, by virtue of the name Μῆνις (= Fury) and the fact that this female figure was said “to rise up once again” from the depths (παλίνβορος), this passage makes a clear reference to the Erinys.³⁶ It is, therefore, as early as *Agamemnon* 154–55 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 Clytemnestra, 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 symbolically captures the cosmos and the earth.³⁷ 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 Clytemnestra 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.³⁸ The proper use of the wealth of the earth is 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 Erinys. 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 Erinys persuading the destructive and

³⁶ Fraenkel 1950, 92–94.

³⁷ Vernant 1983, 127–75, Segal 1999², 42–47, 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* 888 ff. and *Bacchae* 587 ff. 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.

³⁸ For the concept of the chthonic powers as guardians of the earth and its resources, see Burkert 1985, 200. Cf. Parker 2005, 423–24.

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:

ἔστιν θάλασσα – τίς δέ νιν κατασβέσει; –
 τρέφουσα πολλῆς πορφύρας ἰσάγγυρον
 κηκίδα παγκαίνιστον, εἰμάτων βαφάς·
 οἶκος³⁹ δ' ὑπάρχει τῶνδε σὺν θεοῖς, ἄναξ,
 ἔχειν· πένεσθαι δ' οὐκ ἐπίσταται δόμος.
 πολλῶν πατησμών δ' εἰμάτων ἂν ἠϋξάμην,
 δόμοισι προυνεχθέντος ἐν χρηστηρίοις,
 ψυχῆς κόμιστρα τῆσδε μηχανωμένη. (Ag. 958–65)

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 fully understand these words. Through the mouth of Clytemnestra, the Erinyes says that the Atreid *domos* (house) has subjected the larger *oikos*, the earth, the natural world and its productive powers,⁴⁰ to its own destruction and waste. The earlier choral descriptions of Iphigenia's murder and the Trojan war, both wasteful of the most precious form of wealth, human life, come promptly to mind.⁴¹ Almost paradoxically (but in

³⁹ οἶκος f., printed by Page OCT: ἄκος West and Sommerstein.

⁴⁰ 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, 53–56, 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.

⁴¹ 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. 197–98, 659–60 (cf. Aesch. *Pers.* 59–60, 252, 511–12, 821–26, 922–27, 978, as well as Aesch. *Sept.* 16–20, Aesch. *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, 525–28, 709–11. For the angry reaction of nature to the expedition, see Ag. 187–201, 555–74, 648–73.

line with our understanding of how the Erinyes as guardians of the cosmic order operate), destruction and waste become the Erinyes' instruments in order to ensure punishment of these same crimes.⁴² 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 Erinyes and is on his way to meet his death. In the interior, which captures, as we have seen, both earth and Hades, he is awaited by the Erinys-Clytemnestra.⁴³

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*, in which the slaughtered king and Cassandra are wheeled out of the interior (*Ag.* 1372).⁴⁴ 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 Erinys, the *daimon* of the house.

The process of coming to see the Erinys in 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 *mnamon* (“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

⁴² In order to redress the disturbed balance, the natural order reacts so violently that it causes even more destruction; cf. Burian 2003, 5–6. Madness and the Erinyes work in the same way, they both cause crime and punish it, cf. Padel 1992, 177.

⁴³ 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. 41). This is an action that also evokes the Erinys.

⁴⁴ 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, 82–84.

the splattering of Agamemnon's blood (Ag. 1389–92) is more appropriate to a force of the natural order than a human. Our suspicions are confirmed at Ag. 1428, when the elders recognise the Erinyes' bloody eyes (cf. *Eum.* 54) as the eyes of the queen:

λίβος ἐπ' ὀμμάτων αἵματος εὖ πρόπει
 the flecks of blood show clearly on your eyes.

Eventually, the elders – and we with them – “see” the *daimon* of the house:

δαῖμον, ὃς ἐπίτνεις δώμασι καὶ διφυί-
 οισι Τανταλίδαισιν,
 κράτος τ' ἰσόψυχον ἐκ γυναικῶν
 καρδιόδηκτον ἐμοὶ κρατύνεις·
 ἐπὶ δὲ σώματος δίκαν
 κόρακος ἔχθροῦ σταθεὶς ἐκνόμως
 ὕμνον ὕμνεῖν ἐπέυχεται ... (Ag. 1468–74)

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 song⁴⁵ ... (trans. Sommerstein 2008, slightly adapted)

As this scene reaches its climax, the image of the Erinyes converges entirely with that of Clytemnestra; what the audience has sensed all along, that there was a symbiotic relationship between the “Erinyes 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, the *daimon alastor*,⁴⁶ that she killed her husband:

αὐχεῖς εἶναι τόδε τοῦργον ἐμόν;
 (μὴ) μηδ' ἐπιλεχθῆς
 Ἀγαμεμνονίαν εἶναί μ' ἄλοχον·

⁴⁵ Tuneless singing is a hallmark of the Erinyes, cf. e.g. Ag. 1186–93; *Eum.* 32–96 (the Binding Song). See also Wilson and Taplin 1993.

⁴⁶ The gender should not be an obstacle for the identification of the house's Erinyes with the house's *daimon* and *alastor*. For the identification of the Erinyes with a male subject, see Finglass 2005, esp. 41, and for masculine characteristics of the Erinyes in general, Sommerstein 2010², 161, 181. Dodds 1951, 26, Fowler 1991, 95, Padel 1992, 118, and Ferrari 1997, 23 are certainly right to equate 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.

φανταζόμενος δὲ γυναικί νεκροῦ
 τοῦδ' ὁ παλαιὸς δριμύς ἀλάστωρ
 Ἄτρέως χαλεποῦ θοινατῆρος
 τόνδ' ἀπέτεισεν,
 τέλεον νεαροῖς ἐπιθύσας. (Ag. 1497–1504)

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.

Towards a re-interpretation of the Erinyes and the interior spaces of the *Oresteia*

There are plenty more instances which show sightings of the “invisible” Erinyes, the way they become both “seen” and “unseen”, as connected to the interior.⁴⁷ 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 to 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 pre-occupation 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,⁴⁸ but which rarely figures in mainstream interpretations of the

⁴⁷ For example, the “Beacons speech” (Ag. 281–316) with its image of the approaching fire (which evokes an invisible hand), has rightly been argued to construct Clytemnestra like an avenging Erinyes: see Ferrari 1997, 19–24. Furthermore, the house servant Cilissa, as Bacon 2001, 55 has shown, also evokes an Erinyes. 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.

⁴⁸ More recently, by Easterling 2008; see also Winnington-Ingram 1983, 154–74.

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 were to 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 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.⁴⁹ 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.* 391–93, 1065–67, *Sept.* 705–8), or powers which operate from the earth, such as dream-*eidola* (*Cho.* 32–41, 523–25; *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 validate themselves.

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 chapter, 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 the human psyche and the cosmos are manifest to a great degree in the *skene* interior. What is left to us to do is to recognise 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 Erinyes.

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⁴⁹ This idea is central to Padel 1992.

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