AESCHYLUS’ ORESTEIA:
SILENCE, CRITICISM, TRAGEDY

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

Aeschylus' *Oresteia*: Silence, Criticism, Tragedy

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In a study of the poetic deployment of silence in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, I identify a rhetorical form, which I call "silencing discourse," that is used by characters throughout the trilogy in order to prevent or ineffectuate dangerous utterances. I argue in particular that the behaviour and speech patterns of the chorus of the *Agamemnon* can be characterised by a devoted commitment to silencing discourse and its semantic and semiotic structure. The structure of silencing discourse is then shown to be a major informing element in the staging and the narrative development of the trilogy, particularly in the manner in which Clytemnestra is staged during the parodos of the *Agamemnon*, but also in the characteristic staging of the *Choephori* and the *Eumenides*. Silencing discourse structures the relationship between Apollo and a series of "avenging" figures such as Clytemnestra and the Erinyes. However, Aeschylus intends a critique of the logic of silencing discourse: in his portrayal of Apollo, and then more extensively in his characterisation of the jury of Athenians in the *Eumenides*, Aeschylus introduces the notion of criticism as a corrective to silencing discourse. In addition to providing a certain interpretation of the Athenian democracy, which I touch on lightly, criticism provides an explanation for the relationship between tragedy, or "tragic knowledge," in Jaspers' terms, and the tragic condition.
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Abbreviations


*TrGF* t.II  *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, t.II, ed. K. Kannicht and B. Snell.


Editions of Primary Texts

Aeschylus


Antiphon


Apollonius Rhodius


Aristophanes


Aristotle


Athenacus


Demosthenes


Dionysius of Halicarnassus


Euripides


Harpokration


Herodotus


Hesiod


Hesychius

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Introduction
In this essay I attempt to elucidate two complementary themes with respect to Aeschylus' *Oresteia*: the processes by which silence is produced, and the relationship between tragedy, as a dramatic art form, and "the tragic." Tragedy I define as the staging of the tragic. My position is that Aeschylus' ability to stage the manner in which silence is produced in the *Oresteia* serves as an illuminating allegory for the accomplishment of tragedy as a specific art form.

The *Oresteia* displays a constant concern over silence, the ways in which silence is produced, and the reasons that influence people to remain silent. The *Agamemnon* presents a fully developed exposition on the nature of the production of silence in the figure of its chorus, who is repeatedly concerned to take back what they are saying, to undo through speech what they remember, and in other ways to obliterate from the record of memory certain events and utterances of the past. Their strategy for silencing themselves and others has a clear structure, and because it itself involves the use of speech, we will call it "silencing discourse." Remarkably, the characteristics of silencing discourse serve not only to reveal something important about the chorus of the *Agamemnon*, but they also serve to explain the structure of a significant portion of the *Oresteia* as a whole, including the roles of Clytemnestra, Orestes, the chorus of the *Choephoroi*, the Erinyes, and others. Chapters One through Four investigate the structure of silencing discourse and the manner in which this structure informs the overall layout of the *Oresteia*. Chapters One and Two introduce the logic and structure of silencing discourse, and then demonstrate its overwhelming presence in the parodos of the *Agamemnon*. Within the structure of silencing discourse, two figures are postulated, each of whom has a role to play in influencing silence and producing silencing discourse. I will refer to these figures as the
sovereign and the averter or healer. Chapter Three investigates the first of these figures, and shows that it plays a strong role in the dramatic structure of the *Oresteia*, and Chapter Four investigates the second.

The fact that the *Oresteia* is able to portray, in its narrative, characterisations, and language, the process by which silence is created, indicates the necessity of the second theme of this essay, that is, the nature of tragedy as the staging of the tragic. In presenting his audience with silencing discourse, Aeschylus performs the remarkable act of staging what is logically unrepresentable. Let us define silence as the attribute of an object from which we should have some information but do not. We take it for granted that there are silences. These silences of which we are aware range from the simple refusal of a conversational partner to respond when addressed to grand silences of ontological import such as the silence of God, the silence of meditation, or the silence of being. In each case, when we assume that there is a silence, we *de facto* assume that there is a thing or a person that is silent. But we also know, *de facto* again, that we cannot know anything about the reasons for such and such an entity’s silence. If we had any information about why or how such and such an entity were keeping silent, then that entity would no longer be silent for us. Silence may therefore seem to be an epistemological blank, an essential opacity in our awareness of the world. When Aeschylus presents us with silencing discourse in a way that allows us to discern its logic and its structure, he is doing something very surprising. He is staging the inaccessible. The movement from inaccessibility (as this is exemplified by silence) to a visible presence on the stage encapsulates the relationship between tragedy and the tragic. Chapter Five investigates this relationship, in light of the use of silence in the *Oresteia*.
SILENCING DISCOURSE: OVERVIEW

The *Oresteia* begins with a full exposition of silencing discourse, in the form of the parodos, as I argue in Chapter Two. Silencing discourse has a discernible structure. The rather awkward expression "silencing discourse" is appropriate, since it describes a kind of speaking that attempts to silence either the speaker or someone else. Any time we are about to say something but do not, thinking to ourselves that such-and-such an utterance would be unsafe or tactless, we utter to ourselves a kind of "silencing discourse." Likewise, when we tell a friend or a colleague not to say something, or even advise a student to cut something from a text, the expressions we use to communicate this advice constitute silencing discourse.

It is clear from this that by silencing discourse I am speaking of *exhortations* to silence that are explicitly uttered. In the first example above this utterance was "silent" — that is, it was uttered to oneself, in secrecy, so to speak. But our ability to speak to ourselves without making any external noise should not be mistaken for silence, since *to ourselves* there is still a lot of talking going on inside. Not speaking out loud should not be confused with keeping an inner silence, something which is far more difficult, and for which I find no significant cultural evidence either in the fifth century or in the fourth, with the exception of the silent jury at the end of the *Eumenides*, whose case is touched on at the end of this dissertation. Rather, not speaking out loud should be understood as simply keeping silent about the fact that we are keeping silent. It is part of the tactical armature of keeping secrets, or of following the advice we give ourselves when we utter silencing discourse to ourselves. In this respect the study of drama is most
valuable, because the requirements of the form – that is the optical and temporal demands of performance – make it necessary for the playwright to bring into the open things that would normally be kept hidden. Thus we will find in the Oresteia examples of silencing discourse which should normally never be spoken out loud, but are here displayed in full formation.

I use the expression “discourse” because silencing discourse has an identifiable structure and logical corollaries, which can be obtained by procedures derived from discourse analysis.¹ A basic presupposition of discourse analysis is that every utterance has two persons implicit in it; a sender and a receiver, or the first and second person. These persons are not merely grammatical entities but are logically necessary for the utterance to exist as an utterance – without someone to utter the expression it would not occur, and without someone to receive it, it would not be important. In addition to the first and second persons that are necessary for all utterances, silencing discourse also implies the existence of “third” persons who, while they are not necessary in all utterances, are specifically necessary for silencing discourse. Without them, silencing discourse would make no sense or would be utterly ineffective.

The parts of silencing discourse

Silencing discourse is speech which names another speech as to-be-silenced or censored. If I say “don’t say that!” I name whatever is meant by “that” as not-to-be-said. We will refer to this thing that is named by silencing discourse as the silendum. Chapter One, which analyses what sort of objects were typically the objects of desires for silence in Greek culture, in part offers an analysis of kinds of silenda that were available to fifth-century silencing discourse. In a certain sense, the silendum is named, narrated, or spoken in silencing discourse itself, and is thus
given an existence which is presumably against the wishes of the person uttering the silencing discourse. But it is important to note that the silendum is not itself silencing discourse. Rather, it is some other possible utterance which the utterer of silencing discourse wants to silence.

The verbal form in which silencing discourse is expressed ("don't say that!") we will call simply the "utterance of silencing discourse" or "silencing discourse," even though silencing discourse properly refers not only to the utterance but also to the entire structure of persons and temporal relations that this implies. Silencing discourse has a rhetorical form which can be identified. In addition to the command to be silent, or measures to silence that may take the place of or supplement the command, silencing discourse will often include a reference to other figures who may take revenge for misspeech, or who might as it were heal the lesion caused by the misspeech. These figures, together with the sender and the receiver of silencing discourse, constitute the persons of silencing discourse, and are derivable from its rhetorical form.

The persons of silencing discourse may be grouped into two classes: those who are implicit in all utterances, including the utterance of silencing discourse (here designated as the "first class"), and those who are required in silencing discourse but are not necessarily supposed by other kinds of speech ("second class"). The persons of the first class are the "sender" or "subject" and the "receiver" or "second person," and the persons of the second class are the "secondary receiver" or the "sovereign" and the "healer."
The persons of silencing discourse: first class

Every utterance must have a sender, the “I” or first person who speaks, and silencing discourse is no exception. We will call this person the “utterer of silencing discourse,” or the “sender,” or the “subject.”

In addition to a sender, every utterance must have a receiver, someone to whom the utterance is addressed. We will call this the second person (after the grammatical category “you”) or simply the receiver. The receiver of silencing discourse has the unusual characteristic of having uttered or being about to utter the silendum; he or she is thus also a potential sender within the structure of silencing discourse.

Often the sender and the receiver of silencing discourse are the same person; in these cases, or in cases where the sender and receiver of silencing discourse belong to the same group, we will refer to both positions together as the “subject-position.” This is because both are possible “I’s” or first persons, the one as the actual utterer of silencing discourse, and the other as the potential utterer of the silendum. In addition, these two positions make up an “us” which is implicitly and often violently opposed to the other persons implied in silencing discourse.

The persons of silencing discourse: second class

Silencing discourse also entails two further persons, who are not properly speaking parties to the utterance, but who are necessary for it to have any sense. The first of these we will designate by the term “secondary receiver.” The secondary receiver would overhear the utterance of the silendum, and, having overheard it, would punish either its utterer or everybody else for its
expression. The secondary receiver is necessary to silencing discourse because it is the reason for desiring silence: if you ask “why shouldn’t I say that?” I reply “because Big Brother will hear you and punish you for it.” It is characteristic of the secondary receiver to punish misspeech by “actualizing” or making real some part of the silendum. Often this is an unforeseen or undesired meaning of the expression. Because this act of actualizing is characteristic of a certain mode of sovereignty, we will refer to the secondary receiver as “sovereign.” Because the utterer of silencing discourse gives the secondary receiver as the reason for silence (“do not say that or else the gods will strike you down”), the sender/receiver pair is opposed to the secondary receiver as subjects are opposed to their sovereign.

The final person implicit in silencing discourse is necessary because without him or her silencing discourse would be futile. Because silencing discourse names the silendum, and thus the silendum is no longer strictly speaking unspoken, the utterance of silencing discourse must itself be protected from being punished for misspeech. The utterer of silencing discourse therefore makes appeal to some figure who will render the misspeech ineffectual. In the Oresteia this figure is almost exclusively associated with Apollo in his capacity as Παύλος, the healer. Therefore we will refer to this person as the healer.

This is the structure of silencing discourse. In Chapter Two I demonstrate that large sections of the parodos of the Agamemnon express this structure – in other words, that the parodos of the Agamemnon is a species of silencing discourse. But the plot and the staging of the first two plays of the Oresteia also reflect this structure. For the Oresteia, silencing discourse is not merely a mode of speech but a “reality” in which the characters operate. This is argued in
Chapter Three. It turns out that it is the chorus of the *Agamemnon* (together with Zeus) that makes this so, because of their convicted devotion to the logic of silencing discourse. This is argued with respect to Apollo or the healer in Chapter Four.

From what source does Aeschylus draw his portrait of silencing discourse? Where does the material of silencing discourse come from so that Aeschylus is able to stage it for us? The basic logical fact that silence is an opaque moment in our awareness does not prevent us from imagining what silent entities may be like, or from producing theories about the reasons for their silence. In fact, silence seems to require that we imagine what is behind it, what processes are at work in the silent entity that might produce its silence. Silence cannot be attributed to nothing. Our language is inaccurate when we attribute silence to non-entities, since if something were not there, we could not say that we had no information about it. For this reason, if there is silence, there must be a reason for it, even if the case is a desperate one and we cannot by definition have anything other than a speculative form of knowledge about it. Nevertheless there must be some source for our speculations. Our own experience is of the utmost value. When asking the question, "why is there this silence," which is to say, "why is such and such a thing silent," we may begin our speculations with a subjective investigation: "why and how might I stay silent?"

In this way I can use subjective experience as the paradigm for a theory about silent entities. Another valuable source of information is the stock of failed silences, the places where things and people who were supposed to remain concealed accidentally revealed themselves. This sort of evidence is perhaps most evident in political history, where (occasionally) a ruler or a state may choose to silence himself or others, to eradicate from memory or from present experience an utterance or an image or a person, in order to protect the interests of power. For a Greek of the
fifth century BCE the personal reasons for staying silent were of an ethico-religious nature, and the political structures that encouraged silence were those of tyranny. Aeschylus' notion of silencing discourse is drawn from this double spring.

On the ethico-religious plane, the reasons for silence can be identified with a coercive form of morality that proceeds on the basis of a series of negative injunctions, backed up by the threat of divine vengeance. The strongest proponents of such an approach are Hesiod and Herodotus, although the same spirit will be found throughout archaic culture and the metaphysical underpinnings are to be found in Homer. It can be seen clearly in Hesiod's injunction in the *Works and Days* to kings and judges not to give crooked judgements or accept bribes, because justice and Zeus will wreak vengeance for such crimes. In Herodotus it finds a more sophisticated narrative form, but the central notion, which is that the gods repay acts of hubris and that those that were once great will become small because the will of the gods has it thus, is in harmony with Hesiod's ethics in the *Works and Days*. In Chapter Three I attempt to point out, with reference specifically to Hesiod and Herodotus, but also with reference to Homer and Aristotle, that it is characteristic of archaic ethics in general that one must abstain from "immoral" acts or forms of speech not because there is something inherently better about moral action, but because certain acts are dangerous and certain kinds of utterance incur the envy of the gods. As Aeschylus describes it, silencing discourse represents the application of this kind of ethics to speech.

In Herodotus and Hesiod the injunction against sin which forms the central kernel of their ethical argument is intimately coupled with an epistemological condition. Humans cannot see the divine, and the advice that the divine offers, as at the oracle at Delphi, for example, is often
ambiguous and hard to interpret. This has the effect that the authority in fear of whom we are constrained not to sin is him- or herself silent and non-apparent. Silencing discourse incorporates this as well, and the result is a doubling of silences: on the one hand, we are silent in order to avoid the vengeance of God, but on the other hand, God is himself silent in order to watch us more effectively. (Of course the silence of the gods is self-evident, since they neither speak nor appear to us. The interpretation of this silence as a form of omniscience or omnipresence perhaps represents a fundamental act of piety.) This doubling of silences finds more explicit form in one characteristic political formation of the archaic period, the tyrannical state apparatus. Analyses in Aristotle and elsewhere indicate that one crucial means of maintaining power for a tyrant was to keep his subjects silent. In the stories about them such as those offered by Aristotle, the subjects under a tyranny were silent because they were afraid of being overhead, but this fear of being overheard was itself predicated on the silence of the tyrant, who acquired a sort of omnipresence through his silence. Both the political and the ethico-religious background are important in Aeschylus' image of silencing discourse. Chapter Three outlines these aspects of silencing discourse in detail.

Aeschylus uses this double silence in the formatting of the narrative of the Oresteia, and it is one of the significant ways in which the logic of silencing discourse contributes to the action of the trilogy as a whole. In each of the first two plays of the trilogy the action is centred around a vengeful figure who accomplishes his or her plan by concealing it and keeping it secret from the victim on whom vengeance will be taken. In the Agamemnon, this role is filled by Clytemnestra, who never speaks a clear word about her true intentions, keeping them utterly silent — and keeping herself utterly ambiguous — until her bloody act is accomplished. In the
Choephori, similarly, Orestes and the chorus of libation bearers practice deceit and secrecy in order to bring things to a crisis, at which point the plan is revealed and the act of revenge is fulfilled. Opposed to these silent vengeful figures we find figures who also try to practice silence, but in this case in an attempt to avoid the dangerous implications of their speech or their previous actions. In the Agamemnon, the chorus, who is in fact the most developed practitioner of silencing discourse, senses the gravity of Agamemnon's crime at Aulis, but they hope that its consequences can be averted, and they use forms of speech that reflect this hope. The analogous figure in the Choephori is Clytemnestra, who sends the chorus of libation bearers to the tomb of Agamemnon in order to try to avert the consequences of her act, consequences which have recently been revealed to her in a dream. The logic revealed in silencing discourse actually contributes to the narrative and the dramatic unfolding of the trilogy. In this sense we may speak of the Oresteia as a product of the production of silence.

But the notions of product and production used here must be kept separate from the notion of staging (as in my definition “tragedy is the staging of the tragic”), since the logic of silence as Aeschylus presents it in fact precludes the kind of finite and unique act which is distinct enough to be represented in tragedy. Silence produces either inactivity or nauseous repetition. The chorus of the Agamemnon, which offers us the fullest portrait of a figure committed to the logic of silencing discourse, illustrates this well: because of their total submission to the world-view which is prompted by silencing discourse, this chorus is in fact utterly deprived of the ability to act. The action of the Agamemnon happens without moral crisis, and without any possibility of its being averted. It has the mechanical forward thrust of a force of nature, and the chorus, committed as they are to the logic of silencing discourse, watches it go by
hopelessly, and cannot prevent a thing. For the chorus of the *Agamemnon* silencing discourse is stupefying, petrifying; it reduces its adherent to idle and bathetic inactivity. The end of the *Agamemnon*, in which the chorus falls beneath the tyrannical domination of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, indicates the utter impotence of their position. When, during the Cassandra scene, they are given the opportunity to act, they find themselves incapable of doing so. In this case, the product of silence is nothing, emptiness.

In the *Choephori*, on the other hand, the logic of silencing discourse produces not petrifaction and apathy, but rather a bloody and catastrophic cycle of destruction, in which each crime calls for vengeance and each act of vengeance is a crime. In this play, the primary action consists in the plotting and taking of revenge by Orestes upon his mother. But as the plot comes to fruition we are aware of a cyclical repetition of the crime in the *Agamemnon*: Orestes emerges from the doors of the *skene* with the bodies of his mother and Aegisthus below him on the *ekkyklema* and holds the robe in which Clytemnestra had entangled his father, and for the second time in the trilogy we are faced with a bloody tableau of two bodies, a triumphant killer, and a shroud. But the original *ekkyklema* of which Orestes' appearance at the end of the *Choephori* is a repetition is itself only a repetition of an earlier scene, this time at Aulis, when Agamemnon had ordered his daughter held up to be sacrificed, and her robe flowed down to the ground as she went to her death. The cycle of repetitions is nauseating. The abomination escalates each time, the crime becomes more horrific, but the chief cause of our nausea is not the escalation of crime from murder to matricide so much as the representation, again, of an image we would rather not have seen in the first place. We lose a sense of the specificity of each death, as each crime mirrors and repeats the preceding crime. The reason for this repetition is to be found in the
function of the divine authority because of whom silence or ethical action is enjoined: his role is to fulfil vengeance in a "poetic" manner; that is, it is to realise upon the sinner some aspect of his original sin. Greek has a verb for this process, *kraino*. The *Oresteia* will express it also with the sentiment "the doer will suffer." But while this justice may be poetic, it does not make for engaging narrative action, if we understand narrative action to be action unique enough to catch our interest and complex enough to keep it. A mechanical sequence of repetitive, cyclical and horrible acts has neither psychological interest nor narrative tension. If in the case of the chorus of the *Agamemnon* the product of silence is inactivity, in the case of the *Choephori* the product of silence is eternal return, crimes and retributions to infinity, a tedium of atrocities.

The inactivity of the chorus of the *Agamemnon*, which stems from their own overly enthusiastic application of the principles of silence, in fact facilitates the repetition of bloody crimes which afflict the house of Argos. This is the case because their submission to the logic of silence in fact empowers the context they live in fear of – precisely that context in which each crime calls for vengeance and each vengeance is a crime, *et cetera ad infinitum*. This can be seen by exploring their troubled relationship with Apollo. In fact, Apollo is configured in their silencing discourse as a figure of hope, a figure who holds out the possibility of averting the destruction that they fear will come (again) to the house of Atreus. But when they are given the opportunity, through prophetic inspiration, to see what is coming and to intervene, they suppress this insight, and are therefore reduced to slavery and inactivity. Apollo turns out in the *Oresteia* not to be a figure of hope, but rather to be another figure of vengeful sovereignty, and the necessity of his taking this position is the product of his being silenced, by the chorus, and by others. The result, which in the short term is the inactivity and apathy of the chorus of the
Agamemnon, is in the long term the continuation of the curse on the house, the continuation of the infinite repetition of crimes. Chapter Four investigates the relationship between Apollo and the chorus, and the relationship between Apollo and Cassandra, which presents us with the same face, in the light of these observations.

A consequence of the suppression of Apollo’s healing influence by the chorus of the Agamemnon is the eradication of hope from the universe depicted in the play. What this means is that the conditions which lead to the production of silence, such as the fear of a silent avenger who punishes misspeech and misdeeds, are themselves the product of silencing discourse. Silencing discourse therefore produces the conditions which necessitate itself. The failure of Apollo to intervene, which I outline in Chapter Four, makes it possible for us to see that the conditions that drive the Oresteia are themselves the products of the production of silence. Silencing discourse is the central and fundamental engine of the events of the entire trilogy.

TRAGEDY AND THE TRAGIC

Four out of five chapters, therefore, can be read as pertaining to the production of silence and to the Oresteia as a product of silencing discourse. But, as I have already suggested, silencing discourse on its own cannot produce the material for drama, since on its own it produces only apathy and tedium. A major question remains unanswered. If silencing discourse produces nothing of dramatic interest on its own, how is it possible for Aeschylus to stage silencing discourse, that is, to present to us the production of silence, and to integrate its results into a masterwork of the tragic theatre? The answer to this question will not be elaborated until
Chapter Five, but it must be assumed from the beginning, because it serves as the basic condition under which the parodos of the *Agamemnon*, and its consequences, are possible.

The answer to this question is the same as the answer to the question "what is the relationship between tragedy and the tragic?" "The tragic," as I understand it, is incapable on its own of rising to the level of tragedy. Let us define a tragic condition as a condition in which a person or thing is simultaneously subject to two conflicting rules, laws, or orders. We can define a "law" as a dominant causal regime — that is, a law is a powerful way of influencing character, behaviour, action, and so on. Traces can be found of a tragic condition in many of the remaining plays of Aeschylus (I exclude the *Oresteia* for the moment): the *Persai* sets the Persians' autonomous law of expansion against the law of Olympus and the independent spirit of the Greeks; the *Septem* opposes Eteocles' kingly right to dispose heroes at the gates to the invisible order of fate; and the *Prometheus*, if this may be included here, sets the tyrannical power of might (Zeus) against a reasoned order of politics and right (Prometheus). It is important that in each of these cases the simultaneous subjection of a figure to two opposing laws or orders is not in fact present: rather some course of action has been taken, and one or the other of the opposing laws has been favoured. Often the action of the tragedy will consist in an epochal shift from the dominance of one law to the dominance of another. So in the *Persai*, the occasion for the action is the sudden shift of dominance from the law of Persian greatness and expansion to the law of Olympus and Greek independence. A similar thing can be said about the *Seven*, where the law of Eteocles' kingly autonomy is suddenly eclipsed by the independent and unsuspected order of divine disposition. This epochal shift was recognised by Aristotle in the double forms of
peripeteia (reversal of fortune), which indicates the practical aspect of this shift in order, and anagnorisis (recognition), which in a sense refers to the cognitive aspect of the same shift.

The tragic condition on its own could produce no action and would result in no “tragedy.” Simultaneous subjection to two opposing laws would result in inactivity, a pathological stillness that precludes any action at all. In order for action to be taken, one of the conflicting options must be favoured and acted upon. Thus in Sophocles’ Antigone Antigone chooses the law of the oikos over the law of the polis, while Creon makes the opposite choice. Tragedy, in staging the tragic, must also stage the act or choice by which one of the opposing orders in the tragic condition is favoured, whether this choice is made in ignorance or in full knowledge of its ramifications. Portrayals of the tragic condition per se are rare in Greek tragedy; and we must look, perhaps, to Hamlet and his depressive delaying tactics for a paradigm of the hero subject to it.

The tragic condition can be explained in terms of silencing discourse and its products. In Chapter Five I contend that the opposition of forces or sovereignties that characterises stasis ("civil strife") is in fact an objective product of silencing discourse, and that each party in stasis engages in silencing discourse in the face of the other party. We may see this doubling of silencing, with its concomitant violent acts, as actually constituting a tragic condition applied to an entire political entity. A city in stasis is a city caught in a double bind such that no forward moving action is possible, but only an infinite cycle of bloody recriminations that drag the polity beneath the horizon of collective action. Similarly in a mind subjected to two opposing but equally powerful choices, an incessant and unending back-and-forth of unacceptable alternatives results in paralysis and inactivity. But this suggests that silencing discourse on its own can
produce no tragedy, if tragedy is to have some action of dramatic interest. Something else must be introduced. This "something else" constitutes the defining characteristic of the process of "staging," as opposed to the process of production. A product or a production we can understand as the natural, quasi-automatic result of some process: thus the natural and automatic result of silencing discourse is apathy or stasis. In order to move from these productions to the staging of a tragedy, something else must be introduced. Mere production will produce tedium and boredom, without any literary interest. Staging, on the other hand, brings the tragic condition to light in a dynamic manner, and allows for tragedy as an art form to be interesting and engaging.

Staging, then, is production plus something else. This something else I will designate by the term criticism. I have already suggested that it is often present in the form of a choice, which itself suggests an ancient Greek verb, krino, which means "to choose" in vernacular speech. It has a technical legal sense as well, which is of central importance here. In the legal context, krino designates the function whereby the law is able to extricate itself from a tragic situation and act. The act of choosing was performed in legal disputes only after the procedural means for determining issues of fact and right had been exhausted with no success. Usually the procedure consisted in making the parties to a dispute swear oaths attesting the justice or truth of their claim; if both parties swore oaths attesting opposite claims, the matter was considered procedurally undecidable. At this point the case was referred to a judge or krites – in Athens in fact this is a citizen jury – who has as his duty the business of choosing (krino is the verb) between the disputants.

Criticisim in this sense is therefore the act of deciding between two options that are procedurally undecidable. There are a number of important things to note about this fact. The
first is that criticism is itself radically undecidable. That is, there is no possibility of delimiting a method, or a logic, to criticism. If there were a methodical or procedural possibility of solving the problem that is referred to the critic, then there would be no need to refer it to him. The second thing to note is the nature of its occasion. Criticism occurs at precisely the moment when the situation becomes tragic – that is, criticism becomes necessary where there is a crisis in the ability of a judicial system to determine a course of action because it is faced with two positions which appear to be of equal validity. Let us note that in the ancient judicial system the situation is tragic not for either of the parties in the case, since they are only acting according to autonomous but conflicting laws of self-interest. The situation is tragic for the state itself. It is the judicial decision-making process itself that becomes subject to the conflicting regimes in this case: and it is this conflict of rights or regimes that puts it into a position from which it cannot extricate itself. It therefore refers the matter to a sovereign body that is different from the process itself, a body that has as its mandate to instruct the state on how to proceed. This makes legal action possible again.

I have named the supplement that allows us to make the move from the tragic to tragedy “criticism” partly because of the judicial sense of krino, and partly after a use of the judicial sense of the verb that occurs in the Oresteia. There are two moments in the trilogy when a convergence of conflicting laws threatens to paralyse a character or a state. The first one occurs in the Choephori. Trapped by her son Orestes, Clytemnestra opens her robe to him and challenges him to plunge his knife into the breast that fed him. Orestes turns to his silent companion Pylades for help, who speaks for the only time in the play, enjoining Orestes to follow the commands of Apollo and kill her. Orestes responds, “I judge that your argument
wins" (903) – and proceeds with the matricide. The verb Aeschylus uses for “judge” in Orestes’ reply is krino. Orestes is in a genuinely tragic situation. On the one hand the eloquent presence of his mother confronts him with the horror of matricide, while on the other the words of Pylades remind him of the dangers of disobeying the gods. Confronted with two very strong arguments for and against the act, Orestes chooses to act – and it cannot be clear, from a psychological standpoint, why. Here is an act that goes beyond the conflict of those laws that either command or prohibit it, an act built on a dizzying vertigo of nothing, an incomprehensible choice.

The same thing can be said of the central act of the Eumenides, the Athenian jury’s decision to acquit rather than condemn Orestes of the charge of matricide. Initially Orestes takes his dispute with the Erinyes who are torturing him to Athena for arbitration, but Athena’s response is that she is bound by duty to honour both Orestes’ claim and that of the Erinyes. In other words, she is subject to two regimes, here the rights of a suppliant and the law that the august daughters of Night must be venerated. She resolves this tragic situation by referring the matter to a new institution, namely the democratic jury of the Areopagus, who are literally kritai. They vote – it is a split decision – to acquit him. And their decision (again the verb is krino), combined with some political skill on the part of Athena, resolves the conflict that had arisen. This decision is radically arbitrary - it arises out of the individual and inscrutable thoughts of a number of Athenian men, who never speak a word and whose opinion is expressed only by the casting of a vote.

Chapter Five investigates the procedure of criticism as the means by which the deadlocks of silencing discourse and the tragic condition are overcome, with the result that staging – and thus tragedy – is possible. Pinpointing criticism as the thing which allows tragedy to come into
existence, and finding in the Areopagite jury of the *Eumenides* an original example, is not only attractive from an *a priori* theoretical viewpoint, but also has the advantage of finding in this play what others have also seen, an aetiology of tragedy itself. By seeing criticism as an essential ingredient in the staging of tragedy, I will be able to interpret this moment in the *Eumenides* not only as a kind of Athenian myth-making but as a crucial moment in the self-consciousness of tragedy.

It is worth noting that the two moments of criticism in the *Oresteia* have very different outcomes. In the *Choephori*, Orestes' choice results in his being driven mad by the Furies, the avenging spirits of his mothers' death, and the play ends with the woeful words of the chorus, "this third destruction that comes, shall I call it saviour or doom? – to what end does mighty ruin govern here? – when will it end, lulled at last to sleep?" (1073-1076). On the other hand the *Eumenides*, which also allows the resolution of conflicting laws and the taking of action on the basis of criticism, ends with great optimism, and with the chorus singing, "now there is peace for the people of Athena; all-seeing Zeus and Fate have come together; raise the sacred cry now, in a celebratory song" (1044-1047). Understanding tragedy as the staging of the tragic through the device of criticism allows us a solid generic definition, based on principles immanent to the text, without dragging us into the minefield of evaluating tragedy in terms of "happy" or "sad" endings – a strategy which is doomed to fail. Nevertheless we must not underestimate the optimism of the *Eumenides*, or fail to see in it an expression of value. What happens with the jury of Athenians is infinitely superior to what happens with Orestes at the crisis point of the *Choephori*. Orestes' choice ultimately only summons the spirits of his mother's vengeance: what he gains with a self-conscious and free choice of action he immediately loses with an increase in
the burden of his guilt. After the decision of the Areopagus, on the other hand, and the skillful politicking of Athena, Orestes is free, Athens retains her sovereignty, and the Erinyes find a new and better home at the edge of the hill of Ares.

This rather simple increase in optimism between the *Choephori* and the *Eumenides* may be ascribed to an increase in self-consciousness and self-confidence, both on the part of Athens as a mythical and political entity, and on the part of tragedy as an art form. If the *Choephori* presents us with a momentary glimpse of criticism and serves to assist our understanding of the move from production to staging, from the tragic to tragedy, this only gives it the effect of being more vivid and compelling. But it is not possible to say of it, as Oliver Taplin is able to say of the *Eumenides*, that after it “apology [for tragedy] is no longer needed,” and to preface this remark with the observation:

It seems that, after [the *Oresteia*], tragedy did not have to keep pressing self-referential claims for its importance within the *polis*. The connected trilogy was discontinued; tragedies were not set in the centre of Athens; and the closures of the single tragedies became open, cracked and unhealed. Tragedy is strong enough to do this, to contain the unbearable ...

My theory is that the *Eumenides* achieves this level of importance in the history of tragedy by putting before us what had always been necessary but had perhaps not been self-consciously known before. The presentation before us of the jury of Areopagites, a rather literal personification of criticism as the process that frees us from the tragic condition and makes tragedy possible, represents the discovery of the essential moment of free choice that underlies the possibility of tragedy as a narrative form. If we require the process of criticism to facilitate the move from a tragic condition to the narrative representations of tragedy, this moment of
criticism may not be represented (it is emphatically not represented in the Seven, for example). But by presenting us with this moment the Eumenides makes tragedy self-conscious, and makes visible for the first time what it is that makes tragedy as an art form engaging and vital.

This is why tragedy is ultimately an optimistic art form. Because it suggests that in the staging of the tragic there is an act of liberation, or self-empowerment, by which we as individuals or as collectives are able to move beyond the aporias and double binds which make action impossible. This is true at a logical and an ethical level, and this truth puts the Eumenides in the same class as texts like Kant’s three critiques, which among other things allow for the critical resolution (aufhebung) of antinomies. What are antinomies but logical forms of the tragic? But it is also true at a political level. The moment an undecidable legal problem is referred not to an individual presiding magistrate or monarch but to a body of citizens who represent a crystallisation of the sovereignty of the demos as a whole, as is the case in the Eumenides and in Athens’ legal history, humanity takes another step towards collective self-consciousness, and individuals begin to move away from conditions of subjection towards conditions of autonomy. This represents a move away from the ethics of Hesiod and Herodotus, which had posited an absolute and avenging sovereignty who stood over and against humans and represented the imperative not to sin. The collectivity of criticism relocates authority within the demos, and replaces a transcendent authority with an immanent authority. It is not only within the Eumenides that criticism serves as a liberating moment; the law courts and the assembly at Athens, themselves collective moments of criticism, perform the same function for the city. Athens is the city of tragedy, in more ways than one, and this is an optimistic thing to say.
Our discussion of criticism in Chapter Five will take these observations into account in order to provide a reading of the *Eumenides* in the light of the notion of staging. The *Eumenides* is unique in the *Oresteia* for the full visibility of all the relevant characters. The *Agamemnon* and the *Choephoroi* both “contain” figures that are of supreme importance but do not appear. Apollo and the Erinyes are the foremost among these. In the *Eumenides*, on the other hand, every relevant character or force is brought into view on the stage. Athena, Apollo, and the Erinyes share the stage with Orestes and the jury of Athenians, all subject to the same ambient light. Concomitant with this general visibility is the utter irrelevance of the *skene* after the *ekkyklema* at lines 63-64. Both the *Agamemnon* and the *Choephoroi* had had, as the focus of their action, the emotional and physical barrier represented by the *skene*. In the *Agamemnon* the chorus, the herald, and Cassandra invested all their energy in speculations about what would happen behind the stage doors, and were shocked and traumatised by what came onstage from off. In the *Choephoroi* the reverse was the case. The *skene* represented the place beyond which all the careful planning of the chorus and Orestes would come to fruition, and served as the target of their planned intervention. But there is none of this in the *Eumenides*. If what is off-stage is of vital importance in the first two plays, which depend for their denouement on the presence and unfolding of a secret, in the *Eumenides* there is no dramatic importance attached to what is behind the *skene*.

It is not clear that the *skene* door is ever used again after the initial *ekkyklema* at 64. After the entrance of Orestes, the Furies, Apollo, and Hermes no other entrance occurs through the *skene* door. Apollo does not exit at 93ff. (see Chapter Two). If he does not exit at 93, he does not enter at 179. Clytemnestra’s entrance at 94 is unresolved, but she does not enter through the
Orestes at 235 comes on from a side entrance (so Sommerstein and Taplin, SA), as do the Erinyes, who are following him (244). Athena’s entrance at 396 cannot be from the skene, if that represents her temple (242). She is coming from the Scamander, not from within. Her entrance may be by the crane (Sommerstein ad 396) or on foot by a side entrance (Taplin, SA 387-390). She leaves at 488 through one of the side passages (Sommerstein ad loc.), and her re-entry at 566 must be from here as well. Only Apollo’s entry at the trial remains to be dealt with: the timing is unclear, but he certainly does not come from the door of the skene. Most likely he enters sometime between 566 and 574, by a side entry, the same one used by Orestes at 235, since they are both coming from the same place (Delphi).

The relative timing of the ekkyklema itself is part of the essential change that occurs in the Eumenides. In the Agamemnon and the Choephoroi the ekkyklema occurs at the end of the play, to reveal the aftermath of the bloody act. In the Eumenides the ekkyklema is at the beginning of the play, as though the intention were to indicate that while in the earlier plays there had been secrets, in this final play there will be none. I believe that we may read this basic visibility of all factors in the Eumenides as a metaphor for the process of staging itself. Just as the staging of tragedy implies that the logic of silencing discourse and the tragic situation have in a sense already been superseded, the full visibility of Apollo and the rest in the Eumenides announces that the need for secrecy that had been figured by the use of the skene in the first two plays has now been alleviated, and with it the dominance of unseen powers, impossible to avoid second orders. At the heart of this new, non-tragic visibility is the thing that makes it possible: a silent jury of Athenians, casting their votes into an urn. Criticism allows the tragic to be staged, and, in the staging of tragedy, expresses a free and human autonomy that can only be celebrated.
Thus the *Eumenides* shows us the basic condition of tragedy as an art form, and shows us that the basic condition for tragedy is in fact a fundamental human freedom. In conclusion here, let me note that the *Eumenides* also helps to explain how the *Agamemnon* can be considered a tragedy. I become more and more convinced that the return and death of *Agamemnon* is not the central focus of this play but rather a kind of narrative background against which the sad impotence of the senile chorus is pointed up in brilliant detail. Whatever the moral status of Agamemnon himself (I do not believe that this problem can be solved on the basis of the evidence presented within the play), or the implications in contemporary Athens of the representation of Clytemnestra, the fact remains that the “action” of this play unfolds with an automatic inevitability that, without the delicately constructed ironies of the chorus’ reactions, would be without a great deal of dramatic interest. Without the exchanges between the chorus and the herald, the chorus and Cassandra, the chorus and Clytemnestra, and the chorus and Aegisthus, there would be very little to this play. The brief exchange between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, magnificent as it is, occurs with the glossy patina of a celluloid image, an unreal and ironic ballet projected behind the vivid and tortured chorus, for their perusal. Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* is a tragedy about the practical impotence of the ethics implied in silencing discourse. The full trajectory of this ethical structure is revealed in the fate of this chorus, from their initial moment of regret and awareness of sin in the parodos to their final submission to tyrannical power. Aeschylus’ ability to show this to us indicates the critical moment in this play: it is in the poetic conception itself. His decision to show the logic of silence, rather than be bound by it, itself marks a moment of critical choice and fundamental freedom. The first play of
Aeschylus' final trilogy before the Athenian public is an exposition, and a staging, of the author's own criticism of this ethical structure.

I should say a few words about my stylistic practices. For the most part I have reproduced Greek words in Greek, but where a Greek word begins to fulfil the role of an analytical concept, and is no longer the object of merely philological discussion, I have transliterated the word in italics (this may help to mark its familiarity as an analytical concept as well as its foreignness as a concept drawn from the analysis of Greek). Thus euphemia, moira, aitia, miasma, krainein, dikazein, stasis, and a few others, but παιón or παιάν, which both play a strong role in my analysis but as embedded objects in the Greek context. Paean I take to be an English word, the translation of παιάν.

I have, in addition, taken “chorus” to be singular – thus “the chorus is.” But I have also allowed myself the liberty of referring to the chorus as “them” – thus “the chorus is silent because they are afraid.” Beyond merely stylistic reasons, my justification for this somewhat jarring practice is that the chorus of the Agamemnon, which takes up a great deal of my attention, is unusual in Greek tragedy for the fact that they lose their collective unanimity for a crucial 24 lines at 1348-1371: thus the chorus of the Agamemnon is, to a certain extent, importantly pregnant with tension over the difference between a collective singular and a plural aggregation of individuals.
Chapter One:

The Logic of Censorship
For the gift of silence is free of peril

It is occasionally reported that the role of the chorus and of choral song in the history of the Attic tragedy is reduced over time. Tragedy originates with the supplementation of a dithyrambic chorus by a single speaking actor. This configuration allocates a great deal of importance to the chorus, an importance that remains through the addition of a second and a third speaking actor. But with the plays of Sophocles, and perhaps even more in the plays of Euripides, the chorus' role diminishes. This diminution of the importance of the chorus can be seen in the fact that far more lines are allocated to the chorus of an Aeschylean tragedy than are in a Sophoclean play, and the number is again reduced in Euripides. But the process can also be seen if we consider the reduction of the chorus' narrative significance. In the Suppliants of Aeschylus, for example, the chorus of Danaids fills the role of the main character, while in the Medea of Euripides the chorus serves the purpose merely of a terrified onlooker, capable of comment and reaction, but ultimately not significant to the unfolding of the narrative.

Aeschylus' Oresteia may be interpreted as contributing evidence for this general trend. The parodos of the Agamemnon is extraordinarily long, while the chorus of the Choephori, which participates in one of the greatest kommoi in the history of tragedy, contributes significantly to the action by inciting Electra and Orestes to vengeance, and also through their deception of Aegisthus. The Eumenides, similarly, features a chorus fully integrated into the action; it is their lust for vengeance, after all, that precipitates the action, and without their opposition to Apollo there would be very little play to speak of. But since there is an apparent
co-ordination between the amount of time given to a chorus and its significance to the narrative of a tragedy as it unfolds, we may be surprised to discover that the chorus of the *Agamemnon* does not contribute in a straightforward manner to the narrative of their play, despite the fact that their parodos is perhaps the most majestic choral song extant in Greek tragedy. A close inspection of their role reveals that, rather than contributing to the action, this chorus is characterised by an almost dreamlike distance from what takes place before them. To the basic question “what does the chorus do?” we can only answer “nothing.” Other, of course, than talk.

It might be remarked at this point that in fact the inactivity and non-involvement of the chorus in the action of the *Agamemnon* are not so remarkable, as far as the extant plays of Aeschylus that precede the *Oresteia* are concerned. In what manner does the chorus of Theban women contribute to the action of the *Seven against Thebes*, or the chorus in the *Persians*? In both cases these choruses may seem more like emotional amplifiers and commentators than significant agents in the action, as are the choruses of the *Choephori* and the *Eumenides*. But we must remember that in the *Seven* and the *Persians* the action that “dominates” the play is different from the action that is represented by the play – in the *Seven* the action that “dominates” the play is the fulfilling of the curse of Oedipus on his sons, while in the *Persians* it is the defeat of the Persian Army at Salamis. The action that is represented, on the other hand, in both cases takes place in a vestibule at some remove from the events which dominate. Both chorus and characters share a lack of involvement in the unfolding of this dominant action, which takes place elsewhere, beyond the ability of anyone to affect it. In the *Persians*, we witness the court of the Persian king at the moment that it learns of the disaster at Salamis. The entire drama, and the playing space in which it takes place, is charged with the sorrow of men
and women afflicted by events which they cannot affect—this is as true of the ghost of Darius as it is of the chorus. Something similar may be said of the Seven: while it is true that Eteocles makes a series of choices that govern his fate and that of his brother, the disposition of heroes at the seven gates of Thebes and the order in which they are reported to him makes it impossible for him to do anything other than paint himself into a tragic corner. There is an overarching design that gives this play its dramatic force and that leads the sons of Oedipus into mortal combat against each other that is beyond the ability of all the figures in the play, including the protagonist and the chorus, to manipulate. In both the Persians and the Seven the action that is represented in the tragedy may be characterised as “a city faces and laments the consequences of its submission to forces which are beyond its ability to control.” The chorus is included in this action as much as the parts of the speaking actors. In this sense these choruses are more like those of the Choephoroi and the Eumenides in their full integration into the narrative action as it unfolds. In the Agamemnon, on the other hand, the design which drives towards the death of Agamemnon is given bodily form in the person of Clytemnestra, who does not act in ignorance of the significance of her actions. She is a cosmic force of vengeance, with the full warrant of the curse on the house and the anger of the gods, as she reminds the chorus at lines 1497-1504, saying “it was not me—Agamemnon’s wife—that killed him, but the avenging spirit of the house, taking my form.” The action represented in the Agamemnon—presumably it is something like “Agamemnon returns from Troy and is killed by his wife Clytemnestra”—is an action in which the chorus has, apparently, no part.

This is intriguing, and may serve as an entry point to the analyses presented in what follows. I believe that the chorus’ separation from the action of the Agamemnon is not simply an
abnormality in the history of tragedy. Rather, it serves as the central feature of the poetic plan of the play, and throws light on a variety of issues which are of great significance to our understanding of the trilogy.

It is not the murder of Agamemnon but the inactivity and silence of the chorus that provides the main dramatic interest of the play. Clytemnestra’s plan comes off without a hitch. Save for the chorus’ conversation with Cassandra, when a new dynamic is introduced, the *Agamemnon* has an automatic feel. Events (that is, the realisation that Troy has fallen, the return of the fleet, the approach of Agamemnon to his house, and his bloody death) unfurl themselves with an inevitability that seems to me to be even more pointed and cruel than the inevitability of the *Seven* or of the *Choephori*, and that feels cold and metallic, ruthlessly, mechanistically efficient in its drive towards the denouement. The story is presented in a manner more akin to documentary than to tragedy: we watch the action as it unfolds, knowing how it will end, fearful of how it will end, but there is no moment of crisis in the mind of Clytemnestra, no expression of mistrust on the part of Agamemnon that might make the story in itself intriguing or suspenseful — we never ask the question “will it really happen?” as we might, for example, in the *Choephori* at the moment when Orestes is torn between the horror of matricide and the impossible option of disobeying the Delphic command. The question that poses itself to us as we observe the inevitable movement of Agamemnon towards his death is rather “how can this happen?” — and the narrative derives its interest from the analyses it provides, and the opportunities for analysis that it gives to us. It is a philosophical rather than a dramatic kind of suspense. The absence of any complicating action in the first two thirds of the play is perhaps accentuated by the well-known temporal punctuation with which it is represented: the device of the fire-beacon, a kind of
archaic fibre-optic cable which has the effect of increasing the speed of information to an extremely high velocity, so that Clytemnestra can know of the fall of Troy before dawn the day after it happens, and the similar speed with which Agamemnon returns from Troy (in the space of a single choral song), seem to point up the absence of obstacles or slowing friction for Clytemnestra’s intentions. The efficiency and the relative silence with which Clytemnestra accomplishes what she plans is perhaps also accentuated by the fact that the chorus does little more than stand around and talk. Polonian in their senescent and impotent loquacity, their contrast with Clytemnestra’s relatively silent efficiency suggests an opposition that was to become more and more important in intellectual culture in the later fifth and early fourth century – the contrast between word and deed. In the *Antiope*, Euripides was to present this as a contrast between “manly” action and useless and effeminate chattering:

κόσμος δὲ σιγῆς στέφανος ἀνδρὸς οὐ κακοῦ
τὸ δ’ ἐκλαλοῦ τοῦ θ’ ἣδους μὲν ἀπέττειαν,
κακὸν δ’ ἀμύλημα, ἀθέτεις δὲ καὶ πάλαι.\(^{12}\)

A posture of silence is a crown for a good man. Chattering may have some pleasure in it, but it is poor company, and it is weak for the city. (Fr. 219 Nauck)

This is almost certainly Zethus, Antiope’s athletic son, admonishing his artistic brother Amphion not to spend too much time sitting and practising the lyre. Aristophanes uses a similar contrast in the *Frogs*, where Aeschylus’ use of dramatic silence is contrasted to Euripides’ penchant for the use of rhetoric in his plays (906-920; 954). Here, as in the fragment cited above, silence is associated with martial valour and opposed to chatter (1013-1018). The contrast in the *Agamemnon* between Clytemnestra’s deadly efficiency and the chorus’ talkative impotence foreshadows these later distinctions. But it also helps to emphasise the automatic, almost robotic
unfolding of the fate of Agamemnon by setting it against the dithering verbosity of the old men of Argos.

The inexorable forward movement of Clytemnestra’s plot cannot foster anything other than a kind of numb terror. On its own, it seems perfunctory and cruel, and I believe that the dramatic interest in the Agamemnon lies not in the murder per se but in the chorus and their inability to prevent it or the tyranny of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus that ensues. From the time Agamemnon passes within the house (at around 958-974) until the moment Clytemnestra emerges with his slaughtered body (1372), the chorus is repeatedly primed for action with hints, clues, and direct evidence of what is about to occur. But neither the δείμα προστατίγμα (the “fear that stands guard out front,” 976) that warns them in their hearts in the ode at 975-1034 nor the more or less explicit intimations of Cassandra at 1072-1330 can spur them to action to prevent Clytemnestra’s murders, nor can the very cries of Agamemnon from within the house incite them to act to prevent the tyranny they suspect is coming (1346-1371). Throughout this section of the play, the possibility of averting the disaster looms — and ultimately is not actualised. In this there is a great deal of dramatic suspense. That is, the object of the question “will it happen?” in the Agamemnon is the possible intervention of the chorus. That they never intervene makes the action of greatest dramatic interest an inaction. What does this chorus do? The answer, “nothing,” is not negligible. We need to ask how the chorus is capable of doing nothing.

An analysis of the action in the Agamemnon, then, requires an analysis of inaction. Of course, studying nothing requires a slightly different approach from that used to study something. In this case, rather than starting with the chorus’ action — which is nothing — we will start with its reasons. Paradoxically, considering the mass of words which they speak, the
chorus’ inactivity and disconnection from the action of the play is based on a philosophy which is deeply connected with the notion of silence. The chorus does not act because they have an aversion to hearing and speaking things they deem inauspicious or dangerous. If they are primed to intervene in the action by information about Clytemnestra’s intentions, they do not act because they prefer silence to the information that they do receive. Thus their inactivity arises out of the beliefs that lead them to prefer silence. This ethical attitude has deep roots in Greek culture. But the chorus’ adherence to this position in the Agamemnon is especially remarkable because, as will become clear in Chapters Three and Four, there is a sense in which it actually produces the death of Agamemnon and the divisions that rend Argos in the Oresteia. In this chapter I outline the basic suppositions which underlie the chorus’ attitude. I will refer to their beliefs in this regard as the “logic of silence,” or the “logic of censorship,” since they lead to a preference for silence over speech.

THE LOGIC OF CENSORSHIP

The chorus believes that speech has consequences. The wrong speech, uttered by the wrong person in the wrong form, can cause disaster. This belief gives rise to a particular kind of logic, which is materialised in censorship, the attempt to prevent dangerous utterances from occurring, or, in the event that they have occurred, from taking effect. Censorship can manifest itself as directed against a message (the wrong speech), a subject (the wrong person), or a speech-genre (the wrong form).
Censorship of the message

For the ancients, the concern to prevent dangerous speech is most evident in ritual contexts, where silence is often required. The expressions εὐφημία (euphemia), εὐφημέω (euphemeo; εὐφημεῖτε, euphemeite, “keep an auspicious tongue”) and εὐφημες (euphemos) indicate that what is required is not pure silence per se (an absolute absence of sound is impossible in any case), but rather an abstention from sounds and speech that are not formally part of the ritual. Εὐφημία ἔστω (“let there be auspicious silence”) can be used to introduce a spoken prayer and where the rite can be presumed to be non-verbal, there may always be some sound. Euphemia reduces the possibility of ritually infelicitous sound.

At its most basic level, the ritual injunction against non-formal or non-sacral speech is no more than an attempt to keep categories separate. That is, it is an attempt to maintain the cosmological principle attested by the chorus of the Agamemnon at 1025-1027, where the result is in fact a kind of silence:

εἰ δὲ μὴ τεταγμένα μοῖρα μοῖραν ἐκ θεῶν ἐλήγε μὴ πλέον φέρειν. πρὸς θάλασσα καρδία γλώσσαν ἥν τάδ᾽ ἔχεις.

And if one established apportionment (moira) did not prevent the other from taking more from the gods, my heart, outstripping my tongue, would have poured these things forth ... (Agamemnon 1025-1029)

It would be an act of hubris, a stepping beyond its appropriate boundaries, for the heart to pour forth things not known or sanctioned by the tongue. The chorus’ silence preserves the μοῖρα (moira; “dispensation”) of both heart and tongue.
Censorship at this level is an attempt, then, to prevent things from getting out of place. Should things get out of place, the result would be pollution (*miasma*). The herald expresses this concern at *Agamemnon* 636-649:

εὖφημον ἡμαρ σφ πρέπει κακαγγέλω τούς μιαίνειν. χωφις ἡ τιμὴ θεῶν. 

... τοιῶνδε μέντων πημάτων σασαμένων πρέπει λέγειν παῖαν τόν τ' Ἑρνύων. 

σωτηρίων δε πραγμάτων εὐάγγελον ἥκοντα πρὸς χαῖρονεσ εὐερτοῖς πόλιν. 

πώς κεδνα τοῖς κακοῖς συμμεῖζων, λέγων 

χειμών. ἀραίων οὐκ ἀμήνιτον θεῖοι. 

It is not appropriate to stain (*miasin*) an auspicious day with a tongue full of bad news – for the honour due the gods is otherwise. [...] It is appropriate for one saddled with such sufferings to utter a paean of the Erinyes. But when I come as a happy messenger, bringing news of safety to a city rejoicing in its prosperity, how should I mix fair with foul, relating the storm that afflicted the Achaeans, not unprovoked by the gods’ anger?17

The thrust of this passage, that it is not appropriate to “mix fair things with foul” by singing a song of the Erinyes on a day dedicated to the celebration of victory and the favour of Zeus, supports our general understanding of euphemia as the attempt to keep speech-categories separate and in their appropriate places. The day is εὐφημον (“auspicious”) because it is a day of good news, but also because it is a day which, by virtue of its role as a day of celebration, imposes euphemia – the silence of those who would tell a tale of woe, or a παίαν Ἑρνύων (“paean of the Erinyes”). The censorship at work here – the silencing of bad news – is little more than an attempt to preserve the moira of each message, to honour ἡ τιμὴ θεῶν (“the honour of the gods”).

There is in fact a general desire to maintain silence about negative things in the *Oresteia*, and it is described in the language of euphemia. The chorus of the *Agamemnon* is the most
remarkable for its worries in this regard, but there are others as well. The reason for censoring the message in these passages is often that the wrong things, if said, will bring the Erinyes or some other unnamed evil spirits upon those present at the utterance. Thus at Choephoroi 1044-5, the chorus, after hearing Orestes say things that sound suspiciously like an admission of blood-guilt, advises him to stay silent:

\[
\text{άλλ' εὖ γε \' ἐπηρεάζεσ, μηδ' ἐπιζευγνήσ \ς \.optsma}
\text{άλημη πονηρά \ μηδ' ἐπιγλεσσόι \ κακά.}
\]

But you have done well – don’t put a bit on your mouth with utterances that could harm you, or bring on evil with your tongue.

The Erinyes are about to descend on him, and they will harass him from Argos. Certainly it is not his speech alone that summons them. But the chorus is expressing a belief that the utterances of a guilty man can bring disaster. A similar sentiment is expressed by Cassandra in the Agamemnon, connecting the things said by the house with the presence of Erinyes:

\[
\text{τὴν \ γὰρ \ στέγην \ τὴν' \ οὕτω' \ ἐκλάπει \ χαράς}
\text{ξυμφωνας \ οὐχ \ εὐφωνος' \ οὐ \ γὰρ \ εὖ \ λέγει.}
\]

The ill-sounding (ouk euphōnos) chorus will never leave this house, speaking in harmony with it – for it does not speak well. (Agamemnon 1186-1187)

That is, the house speaks its ill-omened story of child-murder and adultery, which summons the Furies to its roof. To others the house is mute but would, if it were to speak, tell an inauspicious story. This is how it seems to the guard on its roof in the prologue: οἶκος δ' αὖτός, εἰ φθορὴν λάζοι, σαφέστατ' ἂν λέξειν (“the house itself, if it had a voice, would tell the story most clearly,” 37-38). But Cassandra is a prophetess, skilled in reading signs and in expounding their
significance, and she can hear the tale the house tells, as well as the consequences of it. The house speaks ill, and therefore there is a chorus of Erinyes atop it.

The same connection of certain messages with evil results is expressed at Agamemnon 1246-1250. This is a passage crucial to our analysis, and we will return to it repeatedly.

Ka. Ἀγαμέμνονος σὲ φημὶ ἐπόλυσεθαί μόρον.
Χο. εὔφημον, ὥ τάλαπα, κοίμησον στόμα.
Κα. ἄλλ᾽ οὐτὶ παιῶν τίμω ἐπιστατεῖ λόγῳ.
Χο. οὐκ, εἴπερ ἑσται γ᾽ ἄλλα μὴ γένεσθο πως.
Κα. σὺ μὲν κατεύχῃ, τοῖς δ᾽ ἀποκτείνειν μέλει.

Cassandra. I say you will see the doom of Agamemnon.
Chorus. Silence, wretched woman! – keep an auspicious tongue.
Ca. But no paean stands over these words.
Cho. No, if it will come to pass – but be it never so.
Ca. You try to pray against this, but they plan to kill.

"It is well known," writes Fraenkel, “that the naming of a man in a sinister context, as in this line, forthwith sets evil spirits on his track; it is this which makes the protest at 1247 so urgent."18 Whether or not this is as well known as Fraenkel implies (he adduces no evidence), the chorus is certainly concerned that Cassandra’s utterance may in fact bring to pass what she claims to prophesy. Their desire for euphemia is an attempt to keep Cassandra from saying anything that might bring itself to fulfilment. The second pair of lines in this passage develops the theme. Euphemia, we must recall, does not strictly designate silence. Rather, it designates the absence of inauspicious words. But to ask for auspicious utterances is to demand silence with respect to other utterances. 1248 indicates Cassandra’s recognition that no act of censorship can prevent what she prophesies. Aeschylus fr. 350.4τοῖς ἀποκτείνειν μέλει associates the paean with euphemia, and Fraenkel comments at 1248: “the audience of
Aeschylus would certainly feel in the word παράν ... the force of a wish for blessings and for ευφημείν.” But there is no concern over auspicious speech in these words, says Cassandra. It is pointless to try and censor her message. No, replies the chorus, if it is a prophecy; but let it not be so. They try to silence her, and to render her utterance ineffectual. The curse on Cassandra, that she is fated not to be believed, holds.

Cassandra’s line “you try to pray it away (κατεύχη) but they plan to kill (ἀποκτείνειν μᾶλλον)” (1250) sets the central problematic for Aeschylus’ concern over silence in the Oresteia, and it will return repeatedly in what follows. The kind of speech she is referring to with κατευχέονται (“pray against”) we will call “silencing discourse,” that is, speech that tries to prevent other speech from having undesired consequences. Silencing discourse will be shown to be ineffective against the inexorable forward progression of reality (they plan to kill).

Whether or not it sets evil spirits on his track, Cassandra’s naming of Agamemnon is seen as somehow having the potential to cause his death. But Cassandra’s line is a prophecy, not a curse. What emerges from the conjunction of Cassandra’s failed attempt to warn the chorus of the future and their reaction to it (“silence!”) is the peculiar nature of the speech that euphemia strives to censor. On the one hand, the utterance is a sign (an example of “normal” signifying) of the future. But it is seen also as a cause – naming the event might somehow bring it about, and this potential causality of the utterance is the object of the attempted censorship.

In legal terminology, it might be said that the prophecy is αἰτία (aitia), “culpable cause,” as well as sign. Cassandra’s utterance is comparable to the omen of the eagles and the pregnant hare, in which the same symbol (the pregnant hare) both indicates the success of the adventure
against Troy and causes (because it incites Artemis to anger) the blood-guilt and eventual death of Agamemnon.\textsuperscript{20}

This double status as cause and signifier is true especially of the utterances of Apollo throughout the trilogy. He (or his agent) is repeatedly both prophet (the interpreter and giver of signs) and cause. The relationship between Apollo and Cassandra gives rise to the double function of her prophecy (since she is not to be believed, her utterance can be taken as dusphemia, a potentially dangerous expression rather than a warning). The ambiguous prophecies of Calchas are discussed in detail in Chapter Two. Apollo is himself implicated in the death of Clytemnestra. His oracle signifies the necessity of the matricide – but by signifying its necessity the oracle in fact causes it to happen. Apollo thus runs the risk of indictment. Three times he is referred to as aïtios (aitios; “culpable cause”) of this act. Once it is by the chorus at Eumenides 199-200:

\begin{quote}
αὐτὸς σὺ τοῦτων οὐ μεταίτιος πέλη,
ἀλλ᾽ εἰς τὸ πᾶν ἐπηαγαζάς ὡς παναίτιος
\end{quote}

You yourself do not simply share the guilt in this, but you acted altogether as the only guilty party.

A key repetition of ἐπαιτίος (“guilty”) in Orestes’ speech at Eumenides 465-467 connects Apollo’s role in his murder with the role Clytemnestra and Aegisthus share in the murder of Agamemnon:

\begin{quote}
καὶ τῶν δὲ κοινῆς Λοξίας ἐπαιτίος
ἄλγη προσωπῶν ἀντίκειται καρδία,
εἰ μή τι τῶν ἔξωθεν μετά τοὺς ἑπαιτίους.
\end{quote}

And Loxias is guilty (epaitios) of this deed in common [with me], invoking pains to goad my heart if I did not act against those guilty ones (tous epaitious).
At *Eumenides* 579-80 Apollo (arrogantly?) accepts responsibility for the act:

\[\text{αἰτίαν δ' ἔχω}
\text{τής τούτω μητρός τοῦ φώνου.}\]

I bear the responsibility for the murder of his mother.\(^{21}\)

Athenian homicide law explains without ambiguity why Apollo should be spoken of as *aitia*.

The law of Drakon, which remained in force throughout the classical period, makes the plotter or counsellor of a murder potentially guilty, *aitia*:\(^{22}\)

\[(δικαίων δὲ τοῖς βασιλέας αἰτίοις] ἀφόνοι ἀλλα τοῖς ἱερασάμενοι\(^{23}\) ἐ[πιλεύσαντα.\]

The Basileis are to judge responsible for homicide either the actual killer or the planner.

Apollo is named repeatedly as the counsellor of the murder, as at *Eumenides* 593-4:

\[Χα. πείς τοῦ δ' ἐπισίδης καὶ τίνος ζυλείμασιν;
Ορ. τοῖς τούτω θεσφάτουσι.\]

Chorus. By whom were you convinced, and on whose advice?

Orestes. The oracles of this one here [designating Apollo]

The final acquittal of Orestes (the agent of the crime) is in effect an indictment of Apollo, ὁ ζυλεύσας ("the one who told him to do it"), as *aitia* φώνου ("guilty of murder"). Perhaps this is a sacrilegious implication. Certainly it is terrifying, and would fit well with the affective goals of Aeschylean tragedy.\(^{24}\) At any rate it might explain his sudden and inexplicable silence in our script at the end of the *Eumenides*. Silence is the behaviour expected of those guilty of murder.\(^{25}\)

The designation of Apollo as *aitia* is perhaps felt in *Agamemnon* 1246-1250, with a connection to ritual silence. Verrall\(^{26}\) remarks on 1248 that Apollo watches over Cassandra’s utterance not as Παίαν the healer but as Ἀπόλλων the destroyer. But the absence of the healer and the presence of
the destroyer is also the absence of *euphemia* or ritual silence, and the presence of inauspicious speech, the prophecy as sign and cause. The censorship, silence, or *euphemia* that the chorus urges is directed at the capacity of speech to cause suffering through signifying.

Apollo is again implicated in the context of ambiguous speech in *Agamemnon* 1254-1255:

> Κα. καὶ μὴν ἄγαν γ’ Ἔλλην’ ἐπίσταμαι φάτιν.  
> Χο. καὶ γὰρ τὰ ποιόκραντα, δειμασί δ’ ὄμως.

Cassandra. And yet I speak Greek too well.  
Chorus. So does the Pythian oracle, but that is hard to learn from.

For the chorus, *μάθως* (*mathos*; “learning”) is closely associated with *πάθος* (*pathos*; “suffering”); it is through suffering that we arrive at learning and understanding. The Pythian oracle and the utterances of Apollo’s other mouthpieces, Cassandra and Calchas, are only understood through extraordinary suffering. The oracular utterance, because it causes events, produces — by the very fact of being spoken — the suffering that leads to knowledge.

A lexical peculiarity in the chorus’ line here supports our argument. *Τὰ ποιόκραντα* (“the Pythian oracle”) should refer to things that are *confirmed* by the Pythian oracle, not to the oracles themselves. *πράχτος* here is a derivative of *πράως* (*krainen*), a verb which will be important to our discussion in Chapter Three. Its meaning is usually “to express assent to a stated desire or wish,” and it designates the process by which an authority allows the wish expressed by an utterance to become reality. The Pythian oracles are hard to learn not only because they are enigmatic, but because they are realised in suffering, and learning is a function of suffering.
Censorship of the subject

The dangerous capacity of speech to be both sign and cause, which we have seen in forms of censorship directed at the content of an utterance, reappears in forms of censorship directed against certain speaking subjects as well. Within the Oresteia this is most evident in the ritual silence enjoined upon those polluted with blood-guilt. This is the initial situation of Orestes in the Eumenides, although it can be traced elsewhere in the Greek literary and legal tradition, and may, as we have already suggested, affect the dramaturgy of Apollo in the final play of the trilogy.

The man guilty of murder is polluted, and must therefore abstain from speech, as well as social interaction, with others. Orestes' argument at Eumenides 276-291 evinces this. Here he argues that the stain (miasma) of his mother's murder has been washed away (280-281). As evidence, he reasons that since he has spoken to many people and they have not come to harm (283-284), he is able to call on Athena with a pure mouth (καί νῦν ἄφ' ἄγνοιοι στόματος εὐφήμως καλῶ, "and now I call auspiciously (euphemos) with a pure mouth," 287). Here euphemia refers to the utterance of auspicious speech, although if he were still polluted with matricide it would refer to silence. The argument is repeated at 448-452. As proof that his hand is no longer stained, he says

άφιεσθαι εἰς τὸν παλαιονιόν νόμος,
ἔστε ἢν πρὸς ἄνδρος αἳματος καθαρίσιον
συαργά καὶ διαμάξω καὶ θεόκουσι βοτοῦ.
πάλαι πρὸς άλλοις ταῦτ' ἀφιεσθείς ὁικοίσι καὶ βοτοῖσι καὶ ὀσποτικά πόροις.
The law is that he who is blood-guilty should be silent, until there are sacrifices of a young victim, by a man capable of the purification of blood. Long ago I had these rites performed, at other houses, in sacrifices and cleansing springs.

_Eumenides_ 285 indicates clearly that the speech of the polluted can have a damaging effect. The ritual silence imposed on the murderer protects the community from an influx of dangerous forces. Orestes had begun this speech with the enigmatic

> ἐγὼ διδαχθείς ἐν κακοῖς ἔπισταμαι
> ἄπολλος καθαρμοίς καὶ λέγειν ὅπου δίκη
> σιγᾶ τ' ὀμοίως:

I have learned in my troubles many ways of purification, and to speak when it is right, and to be silent equally ... (Eumenides 276-278)

The scholium to these lines explains that the ritually impure may not enter temples, nor look or speak with anyone, “for those who meet with the polluted are harmed.”

The ritual by which murderers were purified regularly involved the practice of silence. After our passage there are a number of references to the procedure. In Euripides’ _Iphigenia in Tauris_ Orestes tells of his reception at Athens, giving an aetiology of the festival of Choes in the process. The Athenians are afraid of him as one hated by the gods, give him a table to sit at apart from the rest, and refuse to speak to him (947-952). Orestes, seeing this, stays silent himself (956). But his silence is only a refusal to speak with the others, not a maintenance of absolute silence – he keeps his silence while “groaning greatly, on account of the murder of my mother” (957). A Cyrenean sacred law from c.320-300 describes the treatment of an ἰκέσιος ... αὐτοφόρος (“suppliant who had committed murder with his own hands”).

> ἀμφικτεύσων ἐς τρι[π]ὶ πολίαν καὶ τεχνιλίαν, ὡς ὁ καταγγέλων ἰκέσιος, ἴσοντα ἐπὶ τῷ ὁδῷ, ἐπὶ νάκτῃ λευκῷ νυκτὶ καὶ χρῖσαι καὶ ἔξυπνος ἐς τῶν δαμοσκεγνίων ὁδόν, καὶ σιγᾶς πάντας ἢ καὶ ἔξω ἑωντὶ ....
[The sponsor] shall present him to the three cities and the three tribes. When he announces that he has come as a suppliant, he shall seat him on the threshold, on a white fleece, and wash and anoint him, and go out into the public road, and all shall keep silent while they are outside ...

In Apollonius’ *Argonautica* IV.693-694, Jason and Medea, still polluted by the murder of Medea’s brother, arrive at Circe’s hall:

\[\text{τῷ δ’ ἀνεύ καὶ ἀναιδωὶ ἐστὶν αἰφιαλεῖ

τιναν, ἢ τε δίκη λυγροὶ ἱκέτηρι τέτικται.}\]

And they silently and voicelessly rushed to the hearth and sat down, as is the proper way with wretched suppliants.

In Euripides and the Cyrenean inscription it is not the suppliant or murderer but his uneasy hosts who are silent; they avoid speaking to the polluted one. But as can be seen from *Iphigenia at Tauris* 955-957 this silence has the effect of reducing the suppliant to silence, and prevents him from polluting them through speech. The ability of the murder’s voice to pollute is amply demonstrated, again, by Euripides’ *Heracles Furens* 1218-1219:

\[\text{η, τί μοι προσεῖνω κείμεν σημαίας φόνου; \[52\]

ός μή μύσας με σώμα Ζάλη προσωπευμάτως;}\]

Theseus, Why do you signal blood-guilt by waving your hand at me? -- is it so that you don’t pass on pollution in your speech?

There is here a recognition that Heracles might pollute Theseus by speaking to him. But the fact that Theseus addresses Heracles supports the suggestion that it is the refusal to speak on the part of the murderer’s hosts that enforces the silence of the suppliant, and not the suppliant himself.

In the *Argonautica* Jason and Medea initiate the silence because Circe has no way of knowing that they are in fact polluted, and protect her by refusing to speak to her.
A number of conclusions are possible from this brief discussion of the silence of the polluted subject. It is apparently possible for the murderer to make noise, as is shown by Orestes groaning greatly in Athens under the ban of the Athenian’s speech (*Iphigenia at Tauris* 957). What he is prevented from doing is *conversing* with those who surround him — that is, from using a language which signifies and which has an immanent addressee (the “you” implied by every utterance). That is, while he is permitted to generate sound, he is not permitted to signify linguistically. This is clear from the fact that it is not the polluted person who silences himself but rather his companions who silence him by silencing themselves. It is in their interest to prevent the extension of the pollution: they therefore remove the suppliant from the context of speech, neutralizing any possibility of language being used as a medium for the stain. In essence, they transform the suppliant into a third person. They can speak about him, but they cannot speak to him. Here one silence becomes two silences: the silence of the host produces or reinforces the silence of the polluted suppliant. This process, whereby two silences are produced in opposition to each other, and whereby each of the silent parties becomes the third person or “object” (“it”) of the other’s speech, is in fact the very process by which the universe of the *Oresteia* will divide itself in two, with well known and devastating results.

**Censorship of speech-genre**

By “speech-genre” I mean simply the linguistic, rhetorical, or generic form which an utterance may take. I can express frustration, for example, in a great number of ways: I can scream curses, I can utter short, clipped and pithy witticisms, or I can launch into a long and mellifluous speech. Each of these different ways of expressing the same emotion is a speech
genre (cursing, "wit," harangue). Some may be appropriate in some contexts, others not. Thus we can speak of censorship of speech-genre. In many cases my language itself – the very words I use – may constitute the speech genre that is censored.

In religious and ritual contexts there is a tendency for censorship directed against speech-genre to be related to censorship directed against either the subject or the message. This happens for two reasons. First, the message, since it is both sign and cause, tends already to be materialised in its linguistic form, and it is often the fact and form of the enunciation which makes it into a cause. That is, if we take the message or “content” as the core of sense which gives the utterance a reason for existing, the form of the utterance appears as contingent furniture, a medium practically necessary but essentially secondary. The problem is that the form of the utterance has an independent materiality of its own – and, because its elements can be taken as having different meanings than that originally intended, the message can become inauspicious despite the good intentions of the utterer of the enunciation. We might put this another way, saying that while all forms of censorship directed against the message are also directed against the speech-genre, not all forms of censorship directed against the speech-genre are directed against the message. In what follows we will try to focus on those forms of censorship which focus only on the form of the utterance, regardless (as much as this is possible) of its sense.

Second, there is a nonessential relationship between certain forms of speech that are subject to bans and certain speaking subjects. If, as has been suggested, it is the tone, pitch or linguistic form of the female voice that makes it subject to censorship in certain ritual contexts,
this is due to a general prohibition against the participation of women in such contexts, not to an abhorrence of the speech of women as such amongst male citizens. Here censorship of the subject appears as a censorship of the speech-genre because of contingent connections between certain subjects and certain genres. Women who spoke like men would still be subject to the same bans.

Nevertheless there are some places where censorship of speech-genre is evident without a deep connection to censorship of the message or censorship of the subject. The brief passage when Cassandra finally breaks her silence in the Agamemnon is one:

K. ὅτοτοτοι πόποι δὰ:
 ὕπολλον ὕπολλον
Xo. τί ταῦτ' ἀνωτότυξας ἄμωι Λοξίου;
 οὐ γάρ τοιούτοις ὦστε Ἰηρητοῦ τυχείν.
K. ὅτοτοτοι πόποι δὰ:
 ὕπολλον ὕπολλον.
Xo. ἦδ' αὖτε δυσφημοῦσα τὸν θεὸν καλεὶ
 οἴδει προσῆκον τ' ἐν γόοις παραστατεῖν.

Cassandra. Ototototoi popoi, earth – Apollo, Apollo!
Chorus. Why do you ototuxe so about Apollo? He is not the sort to involve himself with threnody.
Ca. Ototototoi popoi, earth – Apollo, Apollo!
Cho. Again she calls the god with inauspicious utterance (dusphemousa) – he for whom it is not appropriate to be present during lamentation. (Agamemnon 1072-1079)

Apollo is not a god to associate with “anototuxing.” A form of language has been used which is ritually inappropriate, and so Cassandra is described as not conforming to the criterion of euphemia. Here it is the sound Cassandra makes and nothing else that is considered inauspicious; such sounds do not belong in ritual contexts associated with Apollo.
One of the attributes proper to the practices of the Erinyes and loathsome to the Olympians at *Eumenides* 179-197 is the pitiable moaning of impaled men (189-190). Presumably Apollo also finds the Erinyes' μυγμοί ("groans"), ῤημοί ("moans") and noctolalia (120-130) in his sanctuary offensive. Apollo and his cult seem to imply the identification of certain forms of auspicious speech (the paean is pre-eminent among them in the *Oresteia*), and the abhorrence of others.34

In the *Oresteia* the religious censorship of speech-genre simply refers to relegating the right form of speech to the right context or subject: so at *Agamemnon* 28 the ὀλολυγμός (oolugmos) of Clytemnestra is referred to as *euphemia*:

\[\text{Ἀγαμέμνωνος γυναῖκι σημαίνω σωθός}
\text{εἰνήδε ἐπαντείλασαν ὡς τάχος δόμοις}
\text{ὁλολυγμόν εἰσημοφύτα τὴν αἰμπάδι}
\text{ἐπορθίασίν.}
\]

I signal clearly to Agamemnon's wife to rise from bed and to raise the well-omened oolugmos as quickly as possible in the house, an answer to this light. (26-29)

The oolugmos is never uttered on stage: this would be the wrong context, with the chorus of old men in attendance. But the women's shouts of joy sound through the city, and at the appropriate ritual sites they are described as being *euphemoi*:

\[\ldots \text{γυναικεῖω νόμῳ}
\text{ὁλολυγμόν ἄλλος ἄλλοις κατὰ πτόλιν}
\text{ἐλασινον εἰσημοφύτες.}
\]

In the way of women [using the feminine modes?] they barked out the oolugmos everywhere in the city, speaking auspiciously. (594-596)

The right ritual context makes the right form of utterance auspicious.
But we can say more than this because of the dramatic structure of the first two plays of the Oresteia, which turns this relative, context-dependent meaning of euphemia into an absolute set of correspondences. Genres like the ἀφθονος (threnos, "threnody") are hated by Apollo (Agamemnon 1079), and are therefore contrasted with forms of Apolline speech like the paean; furthermore, in the Agamemnon, where the stage area is dominated by his presence (there is an Apollo Aygyieus by the door; see Chapter Two), euphemia is implicitly associated with his forms of speech. On the stage, a constant form of censorship is in place: the threnos is always to be silenced and relegated to spaces off-stage like the inner courtyard of the house of Atreus and the appropriate ritual sites in the city of Argos. But by extension, only auspicious forms of speech in all senses (message and subject as well as code) are to be allowed before the gates of the house.

The logic of censorship or silence constitutes an ethical position. At first glance, it appears as though the logic of silence is an expression of the fundamental archaic need to keep categories separate, to prevent hubris and hybridity, and to preserve the specific moira of each place and thing. In a certain sense it is nothing more than the application to speech of a form of morality that can be found elsewhere in archaic Greek culture. The desire to preserve categorical purity is a well-known anthropological phenomenon, and has been explored by Mary Douglas, among others. This explains the logic of the need for silence as it influences the chorus of the Agamemnon: the chorus does not act because it does not want to hear or to speak utterances that violate basic categorical divisions. But this explanation is only valid in as much as the chorus’ behaviour is drawn from the common heritage of Greek culture, religion, and morality. In
another play, this would be a sufficient explanation; the behaviour of the chorus could be explained on the basis of traditional cultural norms, and the universe of the play would reflect these norms. But Aeschylus has something more in mind. My argument in the next three chapters is that by suppressing the insights of Apollo at the critical moment (975-1034) the chorus in fact allows the universe which necessitates silence to continue to exist. The chorus’ will to silence, which leads to their inactivity and allows the tragedy to unfold, does more than simply reflect the universe of the *Oresteia*. It *produces* it. While from one perspective it is true that this chorus only behaves the way it does because it is a Greek chorus in a world which is typical of the Greek mythical imagination, it is also true at a more profound level that this chorus, by behaving the way it does, *causes* the world of the *Oresteia* to be the way it is. Thus — paradoxically — the production of silence will produce the conditions which lead to the production of silence. In a second paradox, the logic of silence shares the same basic structure as the *silenda* we outlined above: in addition to *signifying* a world which requires such silence, the will to silence also *causes* such a world. As both sign and cause, the logic of silence is implicitly dangerous. From a certain perspective, then, Aeschylus is criticising the ethical perspective that leads to the chorus’ will to silence, saying in effect that it does not merely reflect the way the world is, but causes it to be so. By doubling the lines of causality (1: silence is produced by a world that requires the separation of categories; 2: silence *produces* the world that requires the separation of categories), Aeschylus is able to show us that we are not victims of the world but have a say in helping to create it. His ability to show this to us is an aspect of the process of staging, which we will turn to in Chapter Five.
Chapter Two:

The Parodos of the Agamemnon and Silencing Discourse
The "logic of censorship" has a corresponding rhetorical form, in which a *silendum* is silenced. This form I propose to call "silencing discourse." It has the structure outlined in the introduction: the sender (subject) of silencing discourse attempts to stop the receiver (you) from uttering the *silendum*, giving as his reason someone who might overhear and punish such an expression (secondary receiver/sovereign), and making appeal to another figure who might be able to intervene to prevent the sovereign's vengeance (healer). This structure proposes an authority who protects the barriers between auspicious and inauspicious speech (sovereign). But it also maintains a degree of hope in the possibility that someone (a healer) may be able to avert the disaster that misspeech threatens. To the degree that the narrative of the *Oresteia* reflects the structure of silencing discourse, it shares a common ethical ground with the archaic ethics that give rise to the logic of censorship (this is developed in Chapter Three); but to the degree that the narrative of the *Oresteia* is dependent upon the application of the logic of silencing discourse to the principle of hope or the healer, the *Oresteia* can be read as a critique of the over-zealous application of that ethical mindset (this is argued in Chapter Four).

The parodos of the *Agamemnon* provides multiple examples of silencing discourse. In this chapter I identify examples in the story of Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia, in Calchas' prophecies at Aulis, and in the chorus' narration itself. The prominence with which silencing discourse is deployed in the parodos suggests the importance it bears to the trilogy as a whole, since this opening ode in a certain sense sets the terms for the rest of the trilogy. But specifically it allows us a crucial insight into the chorus' central dilemma throughout the *Agamemnon*. This chorus knows three things. They know that they owe a degree of loyalty to Argos and to Agamemnon its king; they know that Agamemnon committed a terrible crime when he sacrificed
his daughter at Aulis; and they know that naming an inauspicious thing (such as the sacrifice of Iphigenia) may bring about a violent punishment. In the parodos they try desperately to mediate between these three bits of knowledge. The result, not surprisingly, is a song in which they are at pains to avert the consequences of what they remember, and to not say what they are saying. The conflict they feel between loyalty to Agamemnon and knowledge of his crimes results in their speaking darkly, and in their frequent appeals for a healing influence to undo the memory that afflicts them. To a certain extent, the difficulty and obscurity of the language of the parodos is a result of the chorus' struggles over what they are saying. Deeply confused by the position in which they find themselves, they speak in a deeply confused manner. It is a mark of Aeschylus' craft that this confusion attains an unparalleled poetic majesty, and that this majesty stems from the ominous nature of the chorus' speech, its dark intimations and tremendous circumlocutions.

In this chapter I try to demonstrate the existence of silencing discourse in the parodos; but its argument will flow naturally into that of Chapter Three, that the structures implicit in silencing discourse are reflected in the narrative of the Oresteia and in the ethical and political world view of archaic Greek culture.

**The Sacrifice of Iphigenia**

Our first example of silencing discourse appears in the silencing of Iphigenia at Agamemnon 228-247. The importance of silence in this passage is indicated by its centrality in a perfect ring composition (the passage is to be taken as a unity, despite the change in meter, because of the "audacious" enjambment between the two stanzas):  

\[ \text{λιηας δὲ καὶ κληδόνας πατέψους} \]
But the war-loving arbitrators set at naught her prayers, and her inauspicious cries of "father"—and Agamemnon, after a prayer, signalled to his ministers to take heart and lift her prone above the altar like a she-goat, her robes falling around her, and to protect against any utterance baleful to the house with a guard on her beautiful mouth, with the strength of a bridle, a force causing voicelessness, and pouring her saffron robe to the ground she shot at each of her slaughterers with pitiable bolts from her eyes, standing out as though in a painting, wanting to address them— as she had often sung at her father’s well-laid table, and had loved to honour the final libation of her father with a paean, from her holy virginal voice.

The ring composition can be schematized in the following manner:

(A) speech of Iphigenia (228-230)
(B) simile (231-2)
(C) robes of Iphigenia (233-234)
(D) silence of Iphigenia (234-237)

stanza break
(D) silence of Iphigenia (238)
(C) robes of Iphigenia (239)
(B) simile (240-242)
(A) speech of Iphigenia (243-247)
Iphigenia is silenced because she speaks in a manner which is inauspicious, and that presages ill against the house of Atreus. 235f, where the gag in her mouth is supposed to hold in a voice “hostile to the house,” is not the first time this becomes evident. Rather it is clear from the first line, in the naming of her κληδόνας πατρήμων (“cries of father”), which are already inauspicious.

Denniston-Page comment on κληδόνας πατρήμων: “an extraordinary expression for ‘her cries of father;’” Fraenkel says, “κληδόν in the sense of ‘cry, appeal’ seems to occur only here and Eumenides 397.” This would be a use of the word that is unrepresented outside of Aeschylus. Not surprising, perhaps, for the Agamemnon. But Eumenides 397 is a false parallel, as I will show, and a more natural interpretation of κληδόνας πατρήμων yields better sense and has greater aesthetic effect.

The primary sense of κληδόν (kledon) is ‘rumour’ or ‘tidings.’ So in Odyssey IV.317 Telemachus asks Menelaus for some κληδόνα πατρής (“tidings of his father”). The word with this sense occurs a total of three times in the Oresteia. At Agamemnon 863 Clytemnestra complains about the ills and fears which afflict the woman at home, πολλάς κλίωσαν κληδόνας παλιγκότους (“hearing many malignant rumours”) while her husband is at war. Then at Agamemnon 926-7 Agamemnon objects to the crimson carpet, citing as one of his excuses the danger of rumour: χιωρίς ποδωπήχωσας τε και τῶν παικτῶν κληδόνων ἀυτῶν (“rumour shouts far away from foot-wipings and embroideries”). Finally, in the Choephoroi Aegisthus goes into the palace to see and interrogate the messenger, ἕτ’ αὐτὸς ἦν Θησευκτὸς ἐγγέγεν πατρῶν, ἕτ’ ἐξ ἄμαυρας κληδόνας λέγει
μαθὼν ("to see if he himself was near [Orestes] when he died, or if he speaks having heard from rumours that bear no eye-witness;" 852-3).

Etymologically, κληρῶν is related to κλέος (kleos: "glory") and κλείω (kleio: "celebrate"), and therefore has close ties in sense with φήμη (pheme: see directly below). Choephori 505-506, παιδες γὰρ ἀμφὶ κληρῶνος σωτῆρι Θεᾶς ("for children preserve the glory for a man who has died"), uses κληρῶν in a sense almost identical to that of κλέος.

Herodotus IX.101 seems to equate φήμη with κληρῶν, and establishes its characteristics. Before the battle of Mycale, he relates, a rumour (φήμη) spread through the Greek army that the Persians had been defeated at Plataea (IX.100) on the same day. Herodotus notes in addition that both battles were fought near a sanctuary of Demeter (101), and concludes that the fact that both battles occurred on the same day, the fact that both were fought near a sanctuary, and the fact that the rumour had reached the Greeks at Mycale so quickly make it clear that the divine is present in human affairs (100). His final mention of the rumour of the Persian defeat at Plataea uses the word κληρῶν. Φήμη, and κληρῶν by extension, are remarkable for their unauthorised routes of dissemination and the speed with which they can travel.39

The fact that Herodotus uses κληρῶν once he has established the presence of the divine in human affairs suggests that he already has in mind the second meaning attested for it, that of an omen delivered by chance speech. In Odyssey XVIII.117 and XX.120 we find the formulaic χαῖρεν δὲ κληρῶν οἶος Ὄδυσσεις ("and godlike Odysseus rejoiced in the sign"), in both cases describing Odysseus' response to a speech made more or less innocently by a non-oracular character.40 Omens received from everyday speech can be good or bad. In Herodotus V.72 Cleomenes, attempting to occupy the acropolis in Athens, disregards a warning by the priestess:
this warning is described as a κληρόνων and Cleomenes is forced back, while in Herodotus IX.91-92 the name of an envoy (Hegesistratos) is taken to be a κληρόνων and an οίωνος (οίωνος, "omen"). Prometheus in Prometheus Bound 486 speaks of κληρόνων δυσκόητως ("omens that are hard to interpret"); Pausanias speaks of a μαυτική ἀπὸ κληρόνων ("oracle of chance utterances") existing in Thebes and in Smyrna (IX.11.7), where the material for oracular interpretation was presumably furnished by chance words caught out of the air.41

We should take Agamemnon 228 as referring to omens implicit in the unauthorised utterances of Iphigenia as she is led to her death. The parallel offered for κληρόνων as “entreaty” is Eumenides 397, πρόσωπει ἐξήκουσα κληρόνως ζοη. But here ἐξήκουσα κληρόνως ζοη means “having heard the shout of rumour;” Athena has heard of the confrontation between the Erinyes and Orestes that is occurring in Athens by means of rumour. Rumour is known to shout elsewhere in the Oresteia; at Agamemnon 927, κληρόνων shouts (ἀντει); at Agamemnon 938 φήμη is δημάδεσσις, “tumultuous among the people.” If the κληρόνων Athena was responding to was the “entreaty” or “summons” of Orestes at 287-298, she would surely know something of the situation. As it is, she knows nothing; she calls the tableau of the Erinyes and Orestes a throng, and is amazed, though she is careful to point out that she is not afraid (406-407). Had she responded to Orestes’ invocation, she would surely know something of the suppliant, even if not his name, but she knows nothing; she addresses her first bewildered question (τίνες ποτ’ ἔστε “who on earth are you?” 408) to everyone, the stranger at her altar and the crowd of Erinyes:

πᾶσι ἡ ἐς καινόν λέγων,
ζησότες τε τοιμον τῷδε ἐκφθάνειν ξένη
ἐμὰν Ἰ᾿.
I speak to everyone in common, to this stranger sitting at my statue, and to you ... (408-410)

The summons uttered by Orestes at 287f is a formal religious invocation, as is indicated by his concern over ritual purity (287), and the list of possible places of the goddess.\(^{42}\) Κληρόνος Ἱστη would be a strange way for her to refer to it. Athena has returned to Athens because she has heard a strange story about a suppliant and a crowd of ugly creatures at her sanctuary: she has come to see for herself.

_Eumenides_ 417-18 offers a possible parallel for κληρών as “name” (and we might then say “invocation” by extension):

\[\text{[Xo.] 'Αφαί ἐν οἴκοις γῆς ὑπαί κεκλημέθα.}\]
\[ΑΘ. γένος μὲν οἶδα κληρόνος τ ἐπινόμας.\]

Chorus. We are called “curses” in our homes beneath the earth.
Athena. I now know your family, and the fitting names they call you.

Ἐπώνυμος “in Aeschylus always implies that a name is significant in relation either to the nature or behaviour of its bearer ... or to the reason for its bestowal ... here the name 'Αφαί itself declares the Erinyes’ essential nature.”\(^{43}\) *Nomen est omen.*\(^{44}\) But the nomen here is not an authorised name (they refer to themselves as Erinyes at 331 and 344, and Athena refers to them thus at 950). Rather 'Αφαί is a κληρών, a familiar term or a nickname that they have acquired amongst their familiars (ἐν οἴκοις γῆς ὑπαί). Κεκλημέθα in 417 must be taken “we are named,” and so there is no question of invocations here. By using κληρών Athena is referring to the fact that the appellation “Curse” is in common use, and is appropriate, but has no cultic significance.

I believe we should take κληρόνος πατρόφων at _Agamemnon_ 228 in a sense close to that at _Eumenides_ 418. Iphigenia names her father carelessly, while begging and praying as she is led to
the altar; the utterance of the name is potentially ominous. Translate, "speaking of the father in a manner which forebodes ill," either in an entreaty or simply by crying out his name. *Ḵληρίων* here would then refer to the kind of speaking which can be ominous, or to an omen furnished by careless speech.

If my interpretation is correct the situation described by *Agamemnon* 228-247 is as follows: Iphigenia is brought to the altar; she is by now aware of what is planned for her. She makes entreaties, perhaps to those around her, but possibly also to the gods; she laments and utters the name of her father. (Why not suppose that, realising the firmness of Agamemnon's intent (224-225), she prays to be avenged, naming Agamemnon as her murderer?) This, and her youth, have no effect on the hearts of those who intend to sacrifice her (228-230). But her resistance and her utterances, which are not appropriate to the context (sacrificial victims do not speak, complain, or beg for mercy) and potentially ominous, and hence *κληρίων*, cause Agamemnon to take action in order to preserve the ritual integrity of the ceremony and to ensure a successful outcome (victory at Troy, and a happy homecoming). He has her lifted above the altar, to "prevent resistance, which would have been ill-omened" (231-233). He then has her gagged, "to prevent a voice that would curse the house" (234-238); the curse is the *κληρίων πατρίως*. Faced with the inauspicious words of Iphigenia and her resistance, real or anticipated, Agamemnon utters a prayer (μετ᾽ ιεραίον, 231) — certainly the prayer that initiates the sacrifice but, since the prayer is given before actions taken to reduce Iphigenia’s ability to ruin the proceedings, possibly also an apotropaic prayer directed against the ill-effects of her ill-omened speech, to undo the *κληρίων* they have just heard.
Taking κληρών πατρίδος in this sense in this passage reinforces the poetic unity of the scene. The outer edges of the ring-composition, concerned with her speech, contrast ironically and pathetically with the centre of the composition, a description of her silence. The description of her inauspicious speech in 228-230 is contrasted with the auspicious speech of her singing in her father’s hall after the libations – then she had honoured her father’s prayers, now she has the potential to curse them. The contrast between hymn and κληρών which is set up by the ring-composition is strengthened by a chronological contrast; at Aulis she speaks and then her father prays against that speech, while in the hall at Argos he had prayed and she had honoured that prayer with a song (παιών). The contrast between παιών and κληρών implied here is perhaps emphasised in a piece of remarkable sound-symbolism, as παιών picks up and echoes ironically Iphigenia’s αἴώνα in 229; she had honoured her father’s prayer with a hymn; they set her age at naught.

The contrast between κληρών and παιών, as a contrast between inauspicious and auspicious speech, is echoed in the attempt to censor Cassandra undertaken by the chorus at 1247, to which Cassandra replies, ἄλλ᾽ οὐτὶ παιών τῷ ἐπιστατῇ λογῷ (“But no paean stands over these words,” 1248). Cassandra, like Iphigenia, is sacrificed to the curse on the house of Atreus. Neither is able, through curse or prophecy, to save herself or anyone else. In both cases the paean is contrasted with forms of inauspicious speech, and in both cases the auspicious paean is noted as absent.
THE PARODOS OF THE AGAMEMNON

The silencing of Iphigenia is not the first example of silencing discourse in the parodos of the Agamemnon. The prophecies of Calchas are also examples, as is the strophic section of the parodos as a whole. As we demonstrate this, we will have the opportunity to explore more fully all three characteristics of silencing discourse — the identification of the *silendum* as sign and as cause, the awareness of a secondary receiver capable of fulfilling the *silendum*, and the prayer to another figure to try to avert the ill-effects of the inauspicious utterance. We will begin with some problems of interpretation associated with the omen of the eagles and the hare as it is told in the parodos; this will lead us to characterise the prophecy of Calchas as silencing discourse. The omen of the eagles and the hare serves as the *silendum* Calchas tries to unsay even as he interprets it correctly.

The problems of interpretation raised by the omen of the eagles and the hare (*Agamemnon* 109-158) are legion, and involve questions concerning Agamemnon’s guilt, Artemis’ anger, and the role of Zeus, justice, and sin in the proceedings. The interpretations can be summed up as follows:*

1. Artemis is angry at Agamemnon for some previous sin, for example his killing one of her stags and boasting of it, as is told in Proclus’ epitome of the Cypria. This is rejected by Fraenkel (pp. 97-98) and we will set it aside.
2. Artemis is angry at the portent itself, and not at its analogue.*
3. Artemis is angry at the eagles, and therefore at the Atreidae, since they are the eagles’ analogue. This is also rejected by Fraenkel on sound reasons, and we will set
it aside. A version of this explanation has been revived by Alan Sommerstein, but only as a variation of explanation (2).

(4) Artemis is angry at Agamemnon because of some sin he will commit at Troy. To this we might add some sin committed by the house in the past: "What can this signify but that Artemis is angered by the crime of Atreus ... ? In order that Agamemnon atone for the guilt of his father she demands "another sacrifice" and renders him guilty of his father's crime." If we set aside explanations (1) and (3), the remaining two possibilities can be interpreted as expressing an ambiguity within the narration pointed out by Blomfield:

Observavit Schutzius Aeschylum caussam adtulisse satis futilem, quae Dianam ad cladem in Aulide retinendam impulerit. Iphigeniaeque sacrificium exigendum. Quod nescio an vere animadversum sit; namque hoc portentum non tam caussa quam signum fuit sacrificii ab Atridis mox consummandi. Shutz observed that Aeschylus gives a rather trifling cause for Diana to keep the fleet at Aulis and to demand the sacrifice of Iphigenia. But I'm not sure this observation is correct, since this omen is not so much a cause as a sign of the sacrifice that must be performed by the Atreidae.

Blomfield interprets the omen as instructing the sacrifice of Iphigenia, an important observation (where else does Calchas' radical solution to the situation at Aulis come from?), and we will return to it. But for now we want to underline the ambiguity sensed here and picked up in later commentators, that is, the ambiguity between sign and cause that is evident in the passage and that has caused the debates among its interpreters. So J. Finley can say, "to the logical mind Artemis' anger is rather a consequence than a cause ... but to the mythological mind the goddess stands first in the sequence because the gods are inresident in our acts, revealing what already is." and D. Lucas, "Aeschylus identified, or made Artemis identify, as a
modern poet might, the symbol and the object symbolised,\textsuperscript{56} and A. Lebeck: “The omen, spoken as if it were the cause of anger, is rather a symbol of the cause, for the language of prophecy knows no sharp distinction between symbol and thing symbolised, between effect and cause.”\textsuperscript{57}

There is something to the synthesis of \textit{caussa} and \textit{signum} that these commentators observe, and it cannot be dismissed simply by claiming that “this is a mark of the poetic mind in general” or that “imagistic association should not be allowed to overshadow the tight causal chain essential to the theology of the whole trilogy,”\textsuperscript{58} especially since the nature of causality in the \textit{Oresteia} is precisely what is in question here. It is in fact true that, from a certain perspective, the synthesis or confusion of cause and effect is a mark of the poetic mind, if by that we mean the narrating mind.\textsuperscript{59} But this fact is precisely the thing that constructs the “tight causal chain” that drives the trilogy. Repeatedly, signs are taken for causes, and both the plot and its tragic nature are derived from this. The omen of the eagle and the hare causes the sacrifice of Iphigenia. The sacrifice of Iphigenia is poetically transformed into a picture, a sign (\textit{παίσηνον \ ὑς ἐν γεωμαίς}, 243), and becomes the cause of the death of Agamemnon, because it is this that Clytemnestra is avenging. Likewise, the murder of Agamemnon, transformed into an ominous dream (a sign), causes Clytemnestra to send the chorus of libation bearers in the \textit{Choephori} to the tomb of Agamemnon, where they meet Orestes and are able to plot the queen’s death.

The problems opened up by the omen of the eagles and the hare and its reference are aggravated in the critical literature by a tendency to overlook the fact that the omen is actually narrated three different times; once by the chorus (104-120), once by Calchas in direct speech (126-155), and again by Calchas in indirect speech (198-202). In each case the implications and interpretation of the omen are different, and, although it retains its basic structure and reference
throughout, its significance to the unfolding of the narrative is only made clear by a consideration of the interaction of these different tellings.

We will deal primarily with the second narration and interpretation of the omen (that of Calchas in direct speech, 126-155). In the following pages the double function of the omen as sign and as cause will be explained by the fact that Calchas’ “prophecy” is in fact a form of silencing discourse. Calchas retells the signal he interprets, inserting into his retelling of the communication a third person who has the ability to bring about its full implications. Here the sign is a sign in that it designates the fall of Troy, but it is also a cause of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and eventually of the death of Agamemnon. The fact that Calchas sees the omen as both sign and cause may suggest to us that he is treating it in the manner of a silendum, and that his utterances are better characterised not as prophecy or advice but as silencing discourse.

Two eagles have just been seen in the process of hunting and killing a pregnant hare. Calchas, in his role as ἄγατομαντις (stratomantis, “military prophet,” 122), now utters his interpretation. At 124-130 Calchas explicates the action and the actors in a straightforward and simple manner (two eagles kill a pregnant hare = the Atreidae will destroy Troy and its contents). 131-135, expressed in the form of a wish, point to the possibility that the omen may be a cause of more than it signifies. It appears that Artemis “hates the feast of the eagles” (137), and is angry at the “winged dogs of Zeus” for their sacrifice of a pregnant hare (134-136). The sign, which had involved a simple communication between Zeus and the Atreidae, is put by Calchas in a narrative context that includes Artemis as a secondary receiver. Her response is the subject of the rest of Calchas’ speech, and in as much as Artemis is an eavesdropper capable of stepping in, the omen is a cause as much as it is a sign. It may be at this point that Artemis is in fact angry
with Zeus for his choice of signs, as Alan Sommerstein suggests, and takes her revenge by striking at his minister Agamemnon; the precise contours of the ἄγα γῆς ("divine malice," 131) are not described in our passage. But as Calchas tells it she is angry with the omen itself, and not with some possible signified.

Calchas then expands on the wish uttered at 131-135, explaining how Artemis’ anger threatens to have an adverse effect on the Atreidae: delighting as she does (πει is intensive, and so the understood participle is causal) in unborn and new-born babies (140-142), she will exercise her wrath against the form of the omen by demanding that all of it be fulfilled, both the fortunate and blameworthy aspects.

τούτων αἰτεὶ Σύμβολα κράναι.
δεξία μὲν κατάμεμφα δὲ φάσματα.

[Artemis] demands to fulfill these symbols – the omens are both favourable and blameworthy in aspect. (144-145)

144 means “demands to bring to fulfilment/make actual the symbols of these things.” Σύμβολον in prophetic contexts refers to the sign and not to the things signified, and κραίνω (kraino) in the sense of “execute, accomplish” refers to consent given by some sovereign power (a king or a god) to a plan, wish, hope, or intention expressed by a mortal or a suitor. So at Iliad I.41 (=I.504), Apollo is supplicated τὸ δὲ μοι κρήνην ἔλλυσε ("fulfil this hope for me"), where the hope is τείνων Δαναϊ ἐμὲ δάχνῃ σοι τὸν ἔλλυσιν ("let the Danaans pay for my tears with your arrows," 42); at I.504, Zeus is supplicated in the same words, but in this case the hope is τίμησον μοι νίὸν ("honour my son," 504). In Homer the thing to be fulfilled can be a hope (ἔλλυσε, Iliad 1.41, 504; Odyssey 20.114), a request (ἐποτή: Iliad 5.508), an utterance (ἐποτή, Iliad 9.100-101 and, implicitly, 2.419), or an intention (unexpressed: Iliad 9.310, 626). In Aeschylus’ Seven against
Thebes 549 ἡ μὴ κραῖνοι Ἡσώ ("which may the god not bring to pass") refers to the threats made by Parthenopaeus; and at 801-802 Apollo is described as Ὅδιποο γένει κραίνων παλαιὰς Λαίων δυσβουλίας ("who brings to pass on the race of Oedipus the old follies of Laios"). At Supplicants 964-65 we find that "the vote of the citizens is fulfilled (κραίνεται)" in Pelasgus' protection of the chorus; and at Prometheus Bound 910-11 we have ἀφ᾿ Κρόνου πότε ἡ παντελῶς κραῖνεται ("the curse of Kronos will be thoroughly fulfilled").

In each of these cases we see the basic sense of κραίνω, explained by Benveniste as "(1) the acceptance by a god of the wish formulated by a man, and (2) the divine authorisation accorded to the wish to reach fulfilment." For "wish" we understand any expressed intention or disposition. What happens in these cases is that the grammatical subject of κραίνω gives authorisation to someone else to actualise the content of his expressed wish. That is, the transference of an idea from the region of the represented (thought) to the region of the actual (real) is permitted, figuratively through a nod of the head. Most of the time when a god gives assent to an expression, the person formulating it desires what he signifies. But in the case of the omen related by Calchas, the thing to be authorised (or half of it, at least) is not desired – that part which Calchas designated as κατάμομμα δὲ φάσματα ("blameworthy appearances"). Therefore Artemis does not merely consent to the omen, but demands (αἰτεῖ) to authorise its actualisation.

The actualisation that Artemis demands is, of course, the sacrifice of Iphigenia. It is worth noting at this point that αἰτέω is a denominative form of αἰτίος (culpable). Artemis, like Apollo, is a counsellor and culpable for the crimes committed under her orders. It is a mark of
the ethical progression in the trilogy that while Agamemnon is held responsible for the deed that Artemis demands, Apollo’s agent Orestes, who is equally coerced, is absolved.

The omen, in as much as it has clear referents, is taken by Calchas as a sign of the success of the expedition. But in as much as the omen offends Artemis, it becomes a cause of the events at Aulis. But in Artemis’ demand to fulfil the σύμβολον of the two eagles and the pregnant hare, the coincidence of sign and cause is even closer and more essential. The σύμβολον will be brought to actuality in all its aspects, ill and happy, and since it contains within it the killing of a child, it is both sign and cause of the death of Iphigenia. Artemis’ vengeful ratification of the whole of the omen is very close to the Greek practice of accepting omens and κληρόνες:

Χο. ἄλλα κἀγὼ μὴν ἤποκριτον οὐκ ἀλαῖνομαι Σανεῖν.
Αἰ. δεχομένοις λέγεις Σανεῖν γε, τὴν τύχην αἰροῦμενα.


Here Aegisthus accepts the chorus’ utterance of the word Σανεῖν as ominous of their death: apparently the acceptance of an omen or κληρόνων was a guarantee of its fulfilment. In Herodotus IX.19, the name of Hegesistratus is taken as a κληρόνων and an οἰὼνος, and is formally received as such by the Spartan Leutychides (δέκομαι τὸν οἰὼνον “I receive the omen”). It seems that the acceptance of an utterance as an omen can be done by anyone within earshot, regardless of the intention of the utterance and the location or position of the acceptor. This is the point of the oracle of Hermes at Pharai, where the oracle is received by gathering random voices in the marketplace (Pausanias VII.22.2-3), as well as of the μαντικαὶ ἀπὸ κληρόνων (“oracles based on rumours”) at Thebes and Smyrna (Pausanias IX.11.7). In these cases the oracle is gathered by eavesdropping, so to speak. But the acceptance of an utterance as ominous can, as in the passage
at *Agamemnon* 1652-1653, involve cunning and can be an aggressive way of reversing the speaker’s fortunes. At *Agamemnon* 1653 Aegisthus accepts the word “death” as a sign of his enemies’ deaths. This is precisely the fear at work in the practice of *euphemia*. Some utterance may turn out to be harmful, because assented to by an overhearer.\(^6\) And this is precisely what happens in Calchas’ narration of the omen at *Agamemnon* 144-14; the omen is accepted, against the wishes of both sender and receiver, by Artemis.

In 140-145, then, Calchas narrates Artemis as a third person within earshot of the omen, who, taking offence, receives it, potentially damning the Atreidae to fulfilling *every* possible signification.

In what follows (146-155) Calchas attempts to call off the omen by refusing it, or by asking Apollo as *Paiáv* to refuse it.\(^7\) Elsewhere the paean is contrasted with inauspicious speech (*Agamemnon* 246, 1248); and *Paiáv* as a healer is associated with utterances that soothe cares (*so* *Agamemnon* 99). Here the invocation of Apollo *Paiáv* is part of the same poetic logic that opposes *paión* and *kληθῶν* at 228-247 and *paión* and *δυσφημία* at 1246-1248.

\(\text{ιήσων δὲ καλέω Παίανα,}
\begin{align*}
\text{μὴ τίνας ἀντιπόνους Δαναῖς χρονί-}
\text{ας ἐχειδής ἀπλοῖας}
\text{τεύξῃ σπευδομένα ζυσίαν ἐτέραν ἀνομόν τιν’ ἀδαίτων,}
\text{γεικέων τέκτων σύμφυτον, οὐ δει-}
\text{σήμορα.}
\end{align*}

But I call on Paeon, that she [Artemis] might not send adverse winds, and a long delay, against the Danaans, keeping them from sailing, because she urges a second lawless inedible feast, a kindred worker of strife, without respect for man (146-154).

At this point it is clear that Calchas has read the entire situation. His reference to “another feast” points to the possibility that this part of the omen (*αὐτότοκον ... πτάξα ζυμέωνοι*, “the
killing of a hare with its child" 136) will be fulfilled, and he knows already what this might involve, as 155 οἰκονόμος δολία ("a treacherous house-steward") and μνάμων Μῆρις τεκνόποινος ("a remembering child-avenging wrath") indicate. These lines indicate that the speech of Calchas is dominated not by prophecy or the interpretation of an omen, but by an attempt to prevent through prayer the inauspicious aspects of the omen from being brought to fulfilment. As it is narrated by Calchas, the omen of the eagle and the hare is a sign/cause in two senses. It is a sign of the fall of Troy but a cause of Artemis' anger, and it is a sign of the death of Iphigenia because it is a cause of the death of Iphigenia, as a sign to be fulfilled. Calchas identifies the omen as a silendum: he, at least, would rather it never appeared. The speech of Calchas is dominated by a worry over a secondary receiver to the ominous communication. Because of the importance of the prayers and the narration of a third party who is powerful enough to turn the omen against the Atreidae, Calchas' speech is an utterance homologous with silencing discourse as we outlined that above.

The strophic section of the parodos

If, as I have argued, the speech of Calchas relates the omen of the eagles and the hare in a form which is equivalent to silencing discourse, and if our understanding of τοῦτων άιτεί σύμβολα κράναι ("demands to fulfil the symbols of these things," 144) is correct, then we will have begun to explain the way in which the omen, as retold by Calchas, foretells the fall of Troy (as sign) and the sacrifice of Iphigenia (as sign and cause).

The story, as Calchas' telling focuses it, is one of an unending series of fulfilments – the figure of the μνάμων Μῆρις τεκνόποινος ("a remembering child-avenging wrath," 155) with which
Calchas ends his interpretation refers to Clytemnestra, but she is only a double or emanation of the wrathful Artemis herself, grieved over the death of a child. The "justice" which is adumbrated here (if it is justice at all) is not only that which "makes retribution the just equivalent of that transgression which called it into being, thus illustrating the gnome of δέκατη ναὶδε, like for like." Additionally, what threatens here is what always threatens in the structure of silencing discourse; that the silendum will come true, that the symbolic will become literal. Artemis intervenes only to guarantee this process, against everybody else's wishes.

This is the engine of the curse on the house of Atreus as it is plotted through the Oresteia: a form of inauspicious speech is forced to fulfilment. So the κατάμορφα φάσματα ("blameworthy appearances") associated with the eagles and the hare are actualised in the sacrifice of Iphigenia. My position here is that the same procedure that actualises the sacrifice of Iphigenia is at work in the sacrifice of Agamemnon. If the sacrifice of Iphigenia is the "actualisation" of the omen of the eagles and the hare, the murder of Agamemnon is itself an actualisation, in the specific sense of kraino, of the story or the image (243) of the sacrifice of Iphigenia. That is, the structure which obtains in the transition from omen to sacrifice in the ode also obtains in the transition from sacrifice to murder in the play. The salient aspects of this structure are: (1) A sign/cause is narrated in silencing discourse; (2) there is someone within earshot of the narration capable of actualising it; (3) the silendum (sign/cause) is actualised in a violent manner. These aspects have already been described in Calchas' narration of the omen of the eagles and the hare and its consequences: they need to be pointed out as existing in the ode itself. That the third aspect is present in the Agamemnon is self-evident, since Agamemnon is
killed. Here I argue that the first is present in the parodos. In Chapter Three I argue that the second is present, standing over the chorus in threatening silence.

_The story of the sacrifice of Iphigenia as told by the chorus is within the context of silencing discourse_

Silencing discourse has the following characteristics: (1) there is an attempt to unsay some previous utterance (the _silendum_) by re-narrating it and praying that it be ignored or its symbolic potential be neutralised, either by appeal to the speaker (as at _Agamemnon_ 1246ff), or to some god (as at _Agamemnon_ 146ff); (2) there is an awareness of a third person powerful enough to translate the _silendum_ into reality; (3) there is appeal, through prayer or otherwise, to some healer who might avert the consequences of inauspicious speech.

We will deal with the fact that the ode is an attempt to unsay something first, before discussing the third party to the narration and the healer. We will, in addition, focus on lines 104-257 only, for a number of reasons, one of which is that lines 40-103, while they do begin the story developed at 104ff, are largely cast as part of the chorus' self-introduction and do not belong properly with the rest. Another is that the secondary receiver, viz. Clytemnestra, is not properly installed on stage until 104 (see Chapter Three).

Two elements in the strophic section of the parodos allow us to describe it as an attempt to unsay what it narrates. The first is the refrain of 104-159, and the second is the final stanza of the ode (248-257), which bears remarkable similarities to the silencing discourse we observed in Calchas' words. First, the refrain:

_αἰδηνοῦ αἰδηνοῦ εἶπέ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάω._
Sing, sing the dirge, but may the good prevail. (Agamemnon 121, 138, 159)

The contrast of the first half of the line with the second is a very small version of the second half of Calchas' "prophecy." There Calchas in effect says "Artemis is angry, but may things turn out well." The refrain also sees, as Calchas' prophecy does, a mixed nature in the events it narrates. The imperative ἐδ νικάτω ("may the good prevail") in essence calls off, or tries to, the baneful repercussions of the omen and its result, just as Calchas' ἵππον δὲ καλέω Παιάνα κτλ attempts to enlist someone (Apollo) to intervene with Artemis.

"May the good prevail" is a prayer that the bad (κατάμεμφα φάσματα) be defeated, an averting of the effects of that part of the chorus' narration that is potentially ominous. The part that is potentially ominous, from the chorus' point of view, is the story of the murder of Iphigenia, and of the ςιςαηρά παλῖνορτος οἰκονόμος δολία, μνάμων Μήνις τεκνόποινος ("fearful treacherous house-steward, arising again, a remembering child-avenging wrath") that has just been predicted (154-155), words which designate Clytemnestra herself, or at least the δαίμων of the house, clearly enough. Against this is set αἴλινον αἴλινον εἴπέ, a dirge or lament for the royal house. The αἴλινον, "an ejaculation probably of non-Greek origin whose meaning is lost," is the appropriate response to a baleful situation, and protects the community by occurring in specific ritual contexts and by being performed by specific subjects. The Scholium Vetus to 121 says ὁ αἴλινος καὶ ἐπὶ ἰψήνοι λέγεται ("ailinos" is said in the case of a threnos"). That it is part of the ritual lament is crucial. It siphons off the inauspicious potential of the events at Aulis, and neutralises them in an inoffensive form of language, thus in fact making it possible for τὸ δὲ ἐδ νικάτω ("may the good prevail") to come true.
The second element which allows us to see in the strophic section of the parodos an attempt to unsay its own narrative is the final stanza:

τὰ δ’ ἀνέθην ὄντ’ ἐδοξὸν ὄντ’ ὑπνέων.
τάχρον δὲ Κάλχαντες εὐκ ἄκραντοι.
Δίκαι δὲ τοῖς μὲν παθοῦσιν μαζὺ ἐπηρέασεν τὸ μέλλον δ’ ἐπεὶ γένοντ’ ἀν κλίσεις πρὸ χαιρετῶν ἵσσον δὲ τῷ προστέναιν.
τοῦτο γὰρ ἦξει σύνοφον αὐγαῖς.
πέλειτο δ’ σὺ σάπτει τούτους εἰ πράξεις, ὡς ἴδει τὸν ἄγκριτον Ἀπίας γαί-ας μονόφρων ἐρήμος. (248-257)

What happened next I saw not, and I’ll say not – Calchas’ utterances did not go unfulfilled. Justice’s scale inclines so that learning comes to those that suffer. You will hear the future when it happens. Let it go in advance – it is the same as to groan in advance. Things will emerge clearly in the light of day. But may what happens after this come out well, as this near-by last-ditch bulwark of the Apian earth wishes.

The final stanza of the parodos, and of the narrative which the chorus had taken up again at 184, is an attempt to conceal, silence, and call off the terrible aspects of the events at Aulis. Like the epode of the dactylo-iambic triad (140-159), and like Calchas’ speech, antistrophe ζ is binary in structure: direct speech (248-254) is followed by a prayer that emphasises τὸ δεξίων (“the auspicious”) over τὸ κατίμουμπον (“the blameworthy:” 255-257).

In the first part, a strategy of mystification and aposiopesis is followed. 248 (I neither saw what came next - nor will I say it) is explained in 249-254. The drift of the chorus’ argument in the final stanza is as follows:

I saw not, I’ll say not, [but] Calchas’ utterances have not gone unfulfilled. You will learn by suffering, and as justice wills – so you’ll find out the future when it happens. Worrying about it beforehand is pointless – it’ll be obvious enough when you can see it (or, later this morning).
Several interpretations of 248 τὰ δ' ἔνθεν οὔτ' εἰδον οὔτ' ἐννέπω exist, although only one will stand up under investigation.

(1) τὰ δ’ ἔνθεν refers to everything after the death of Iphigenia, and the chorus does not say it because they did not see it. But it is not clear why the chorus should mention what they do not know and cannot tell. 248-249, on the assumption that 249 is “a safe general statement that Calchas does not make mistakes” (an interpretation which is unlikely; see below), would be related to the rest of the antistrophe by connections that are less than clear, and the stanza would jump around incoherently. Possibly 250-251 would follow, but 251-252ff would be a whole new thought, with no easy connection to what came before.

(2) τὰ δ’ ἔνθεν refers to everything – “not only the sacrifice of Iphigenia, but also its sequel, i.e. those subsequent events which were predicted in the prophecy of Calchas, the undisturbed departure of the fleet, the final capture of Troy (126, γρόνῳ), and also the inevitable consequences of the sin which hound the sinner on to punishment (154f.).” But, if this is true, it is, as Page comments, a “fair question to ask how they could have failed to see” the sacrifice of Iphigenia, unless there is an aposiopesis, and they do not at this point know that Troy has fallen – so οὔτ’ ἐννέπω is a lie or nonsense or both. The same criticism applies to the “inevitable consequences which hound the sinner to punishment” – these also have been already mentioned (154f and 180-183).

(3) τὰ δ’ ἔνθεν is aposiopesis. It refers to the sacrifice of Iphigenia and the chorus is conspicuously suppressing this part of their story (whether they saw it and deny
this, or they saw everything but this and averted their eyes, or saw nothing but are inspired — ἐτί γὰρ Ἡθέθεν μετατρέπεις Πειδώ, “for Persuasion breathes over me from the gods,” 105-6 — is immaterial). This is the only explanation that does not either reduce the line to nonsense or wreak havoc on the unity of the stanza. 248 is therefore an aposiopesis of the sacrifice of Iphigenia (more or less parallel to the guard’s aposiopesis at 36f τὰ δ’ ἄλλα στιγὺ “as for the rest, I am silent”).

If 248 is an aposiopesis, a refusal to narrate what comes next, 249 (τίγγαί δὲ Κάλχαυτος οἴκ ἄκρατοι “the crafts of Calchas are not unfulfilled”) must be more than a safe general statement that Calchas does not make mistakes, for a number of reasons. The chorus does not know for certain, at this point, that Troy has fallen, so they are not in a position to celebrate his gifts at omen-interpretation. And they do not want the μνάματον Μῆπος τεκνόποιος (“a remembering child-avenging wrath”) part of the prophecy to be οἴκ ἄκρατος (“not unfulfilled”). That is the import of 255-256 (see below). The general fact — that Calchas’ utterances never go unfulfilled — is used here for a very pointed purpose, that is, to justify their refusal to go on, and, paradoxically, to fend off part of his prediction. It allows them to suggest what happened while at the same time implying that Calchas’ speech was a cause. That is, not only does the general statement not say what it says, but it blames speech in general for causing disaster.

249 is an extremely complex line. It is, on the one hand, an allusion that makes the aposiopesis of 248 into a paraleipsis by referring to an event that is claimed to be passed over. It is also, by virtue of this, a form of *euphemia*. They will not say what comes next, but they will allude to it in inoffensive praeterlocutions. But it is in addition the *reason* for the aposiopesis in 248 and the need for *euphemia* on this matter — that is, “I saw nothing, and I say nothing because
the arts of Calchas do not go unfulfilled (and I am afraid the same thing may happen to my utterances). Why the fulfilment of Calchas’ utterances should be a reason for silence has been shown above: there is the possibility, when something is said, that it will be overheard by someone who will take it as a κληρὼν and insist on its being fulfilled – all of it, not just the good parts (see above on 126-155). As the chorus tells it, when we take 249 into account, symbols have already been fulfilled twice in their narrative: first, when Artemis accepts all of Zeus’ omen, and a second time when Agamemnon accepts the course of action indicated by Calchas (199-217). In each case an act of signification has been actualised in an unhappy way. In the second case it is Agamemnon in his capacity of king and general who consents to advice directed at him specifically. But it is important to note that the advice comes to him in the form of a story, a narration or retelling of Artemis’ anger and its cause. This is what the chorus is itself trying to avoid: just as Calchas’ interpretation of the omen and Artemis’ anger had led to a crime, they are afraid that their interpretation of that crime will lead to another repetition or fulfilment.

250-254 give an explanation for the chorus’ aposiopesis:

Δίκη δέ τοῖς μὲν παδοῦ·
οις μαθεῖν ἐπιφέπει· τὸ μέλλον δ’
ἐπεὶ γένοιτ’ ἀν κληρὼν πρὸ χαιρέτων.
ἰσον δὲ τῷ προστέαν·
tοφὸν γὰρ ἦξει σύνοφρον αἵματις.

Justice’s scale inclines so that learning comes to those that suffer. You will hear the future when it happens. Let it go in advance – it is the same as to groan in advance. Things will emerge clearly in the light of day.

If 249 does not refer to Troy, neither can 250. The present tense of ἐπιφέπει (“inclines”) here simply denotes a general truth, and Fraenkel ad loc. rightly describes the sentence as gnomic. It is a mere repetition of the sentiment in 174-178. Δίκη (“Justice”) is here because the chorus is
arguing that if a crime was committed, justice will take care of its retribution, and there is no need for them to say anything to aggravate the situation; we learn through undergoing things (punishments, sorrows, etc) and not through hearing stories or prophecies. You will hear the future when it happens, they say, and there is no need for prophecies (compare 1099, προφητας δ' οὔτινας ματέψειμεν “we have no need for prophets”) – and, to make matters worse, prophecies can be causes as well as signs, and we are nervous about their power.

What comes out of all this is that the chorus sees itself as somehow doing the same work as Calchas, but, paradoxically, doing it better by not doing it. Calchas in Aulis only refers to Συσίαν εἴρην ἄνθρωπον τιν’ ἄδαιτον (“another lawless inedible feast,” 150); he puts off naming precisely what is designated by these lines until the events at Aulis force him to do so (199). Where Calchas had been forced to name the unspeakable and to prophesy/instruct the death of Iphigenia, the chorus hopes to avoid this by suppressing the relevant part of their story.

Following on this act of suppression, the chorus expresses a wish that things may turn out well:

πάλαιτο δ' οἷν τάπι τούτωσιν εὖ πράξεις, ὡς
Σέλει τοῦτ' ἄρχοντον Ἀπίας γαι-

ας μονόφθορου ἔρχος.

But may things come out well, as this near-by last-ditch bulwark of the Apian earth wishes. (255-257)

The hope that what comes next (τάπι τούτωσιν) will turn out well is reinforced by the confidence that they have avoided saying anything inauspicious. The appeal for a happy outcome is to Apollo.
The identity of τὸ δ’ ἀγγίστων Ἄπιας γαίας μονόφωρου ἔρκος (“this near-by last-ditch bulwark of the Apian earth”) has been a source of problems for commentators. Fraenkel suggests that it refers to Clytemnestra, following the scholiast’s gloss ἀγγίστων ὑπολειωθέντες, although he acknowledges that the ἀγγίστεια that made her queen would be “of a peculiar sort.” Page argues, on the other hand, that the chorus cannot plead for her, whom they mistrust anyway, to have her way, and that the scholia that read ἐπεὶ μονοὶ ἔρχοντες ἔσωλασσον τὴν Ἑλλάδα (“since only the old men guard Greece”) are right, despite the fact that, in their own words,

...ἀτίται σαφήν μαλαιά
ἡ τὸν ἀγίης ὑπολειωθέντες
μημονιάν ἱσχύν
ἰσοπάλα, γέμοντες ἐπὶ σκῆπτροις ...

Dishonoured by ancient flesh, left out of that host back then, we remain, leaning on our canes and nourishing the strength of children ... (72-5)

– they wouldn’t even describe themselves as a bulwark.

On the other hand, there are numerous good reasons to assume that τὸ δ’ ἀγγίστων Ἄπιας γαίας μονόφωρου ἔρκος is Apollo. We have already seen (at 146-155 and 1246-8) that the healing god (Παιῶς) or his hymn (paean) is associated with attempts to keep inauspicious utterances from reaching fulfilment, and this is precisely what has been going on in 248-257. The association with the healer is also established here by the naming of Argos as Apian earth (256-7). Aeschylus’ information is that Argos is so named after Apis, ἰατρόμαντις (“healer-seer”):

"Ἀπίς γὰς ἐλδυον ἐκ πέρας Ναυπακτίας
ἰατρόμαντις παῖς Ἄπαλλονος χθόνα
τῷ ἔκκαθαρει κυνόδαλον βροτοφόρων.
τὰ ἰ δὴ παλαιῶν ἁμάτων μιμόμασιν
χαράλαβο ὀνείρες ἠμενεῖαι ἀκητῆς,
ὄρακοντο κυνὸδωλον δυσμενῆς ξυνοικίας.
τῶτὼν ἄκη τημαῖα καὶ λυτήρια
πεδίους ἁμάμπως Ἀπίς Ἄργεια χθόνι
For the healer-seer Apis, son of Apollo, coming from the Naupactian shore, cleansed this land of man-eating creatures, that the earth, defiled by the pollution of ancient blood, sent forth — wrathful pains, a hostile communion of serpents. Apis performed surgery and ablutions on the plague, and satisfied the Argive earth, and received as reward a memorial on these shores. (Suppliants 262-270)

Whatever the dramatic reasons for this speech in the Suppliants, the passage indicates a strong association between the son and his father. Ιατρόμαντις is used of Apollo in Eumenides 62:

\[
iατρόμαντις \ δ' \ εστι και τερασωπός \\
και τοισιν ἄλλοις δωμάτωι καζάφιτος. 
\]

He is a healer-prophet, and a seer of portents, and a purifier of homes for others.

The ιατρόμαντις is a "healer-seer" who "diagnoses the disease's cause. He can then prescribe the appropriate cure, which need not take the form of a purification." This is Apollo's role in the first half of the Eumenides, sending Orestes to Athens to find absolution.

Apis, like Apollo, is a purifier (ἐκκαθαρίζει, Suppliants 264; καζάφιτος, Eumenides 62), and both are purifiers of serpents. The serpent in both the Suppliants and the Oresteia is associated with blood guilt (see Suppliants 265). Clytemnestra's dream, as it is interpreted by Orestes at Choephoroi 540-550, connects a serpent with her guilt, and the Erinyes are associated with snakes at Choephoroi 1048-1050. Both Apollo and Apis purify the blood-guilty of the serpents that afflict them.

If the mention of Apian earth suggests some association with Apollo in these lines, I believe that the phrase τόδε ἄρχιστον 'Απίας γαίας μουσφόρου τον ἄρχος in fact refers to him as Agyieus, the "Apollo of the street." There is an Agyieus in front of the door of the house, which Cassandra addresses at 1085-1086:
Apollo Agyieus was a threshold god, represented by an aniconic pillar or conical stone in front of the house. Photius Bibliotheka 535b says:

τὸν Λοξίαν προσεκίουν, ὅπερ τῶν Ὑφόν ἐκαίτος ἰδώντο, καὶ πάλιν Ἰωμόν παρ᾽ αὐτῷ στρογγυλοὺς παιοίτες, καὶ μυθεῖας στήφοντες ἔστατο οἱ παραίτες. Τὸν δὲ Ἰωμὸν ἐκείνου ἀγνώσις Ἀγξίαν ἐκάλουν, τὸν τοῦ παρ᾽ αὐτοῖς Ζεὺς προσηγορίας νέμοντες τῷ Ἰωμῷ.

They used to worship Loxias, of whom each had a statue before his door, and they set a round altar by it and passers-by stop and crown it with myrtle. And they called the altar Loxias of the street, giving the name that the god had among them to the altar.

J.P. Poe has shown that Pollux’ explanation ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς ... ἀγνώσις ἐκείτο Ζωμός ὁ πρὸ τῶν Ὑφόν (“The altar of Agyieus lies before the doors of the skene,” 4.123) accurately reflects fifth century stage convention, and that an Agyieus before the door of the skene “probably did stand on stage whenever the dramatic action took place before a house or palace.” It seems that the pillar was on the stage, that it was taken both as an image and as an altar, and that it does occasionally play a role in the drama. Apollo Agyieus was, as has already been mentioned, primarily a protector of the household, and his aniconic image was “the pledge of his divine protection.” He was also referred to variously as προστατήριος (“standing guard out front”) and ἀποτρόπαιος (“turning away evil”). Farnell (372) finds a late reference to Απόλλων προφύλαξ at Amorgos; and Sophocles Trachiniae 205-211 associates Agyieus as προστατήριος with the paean:

ἀνολολυξάτω δόμος
ἐφεστίας ἀλαλαγᾶς
ὁ μελλόνυμφος: ἐν δὲ κοινὸς ἀρσενῶν
ἵνω κλαγγά τῶν εὐφαρέσταται
�� Απόλλων προστάταιν,
ὅμοι δὲ παιάνα παί-
Let the house expecting a bride lift the *ololygos* with triumphal shouts upon the hearth — and let a song also go up from the men in honour of Apollo the protector (*prosatan*) with his fine bow, and raise the paean, maidens, paean ...

So there would be no surprise (and even good sense) if the chorus at 256-257 referred to Apollo Agyieus as *μονόφθαλμον ἥρως*. Apollo Agyieus, *προστάτης*, *ἀποτεταμμένος* was the final line of defence for the house against evil influences.

The adjective *ἄχριστος* (256) has given a great deal of trouble to commentators who wish to take 255-257 as referring either to Clytemnestra or to the chorus. Page has to take it as "ever present" with Pindar *Pythian* 9.64, and has the chorus describing themselves as "an ever-present sole-guardian bulwark" — these old men who say of themselves that "Ἄρης δ' οὐκ ἔνι ζώει* ("Ares is not in the place" 78)! Fraenkel needs to invent an (admittedly possible) new type of constitutional accession that makes Clytemnestra closest to the throne by marriage, a practice unheard of in Athens and only known in the fifth century in the person of Artemesia of Halicarnassus, who succeeded after her husband's death, not in his absence.99

It is much simpler to take *ἄχριστος* literally. Apollo Agyieus is nearest at hand, since he is right beside the door of the house. Jocasta refers to him in this way in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, where the Agyieus is referred to as Lykeios:90

*ὄτ' οὖν παραινοῦσι'oùdèn eis plēon poû,  
pirosis', ows Lykeios! Ἀπόλλων, ἄχριστος γὰρ εἶ,  
iktīs aphiymi toisôde oûn katetiumasin,  
ōpous lūsin ti' hēmîn evaγγ' pòrēs.*

Since I have no effect counselling him, I come to you, Oh Lyceian Apollo, for you are closest to me, as a suppliant with these prayers, that you may give us some solution that will free us from pollution. (918-922)
It may be of some importance that both Sophoclean prayers to the Agyieus, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 918-922 and *Electra* 634-659, are prayers designed to control the effects of signification, to ensure either that only proper channels of communication are kept open, as in the *Oedipus Tyrannos*, where Jocasta is worried that Oedipus is listening to any rumour that bodes ill (917), or that an omen be realised only as auspicious and not as inauspicious, as in the *Electra*:

> ἀ γὰρ προσεύθων μικτὶ τὴδε φάσματα
diσσοιν ὑσείσων, ταῖτά μοι, Λύκει' Ἀναξ,
eἰ μὲν πέσφινεν ἀγάλα, δὸς τελεσφόρα,
eἰ δ' ἔχερὰ, τοῖς ἐχθροίσιν ἐμπαλιν μένες.

If the images (phasmata) of the two dreams I saw last night bode well, let them be fulfilled. But if they bode ill, set them upon my enemies, Lyceian Lord. (644-7)

In this case there is the same aposiopesis of the omen as that practised by the chorus at *Agamemnon* 248-257, with the same fear, that a third person will turn it against the speaker:

> κλώς ἂν ἦδη, Φοίβε προστατήσιν.
> κεχεκαμένην μου βάξιν. οὐ γὰρ ἐν φίλοις
> ὁ μῦδος. οὐδὲ πᾶν ἀναπτύξαι πρέπει
> πρὸς φῶς παροῦσις τῆσδε πλησίας ἐμοί,
> μὴ σὺν φόδον τε καὶ πολυγλωσσῷ βοή
> σπείρῃ ματάιαν βάξιν ἐς πάσαν πόλιν.

Apollo who stands guard out front, listen to my secret expression – for the utterance is not among friends, nor is it right for me to unfold everything into the light when this one is beside me, lest she sow vain words through the whole city with spite and wordy shouting. (637-642)

The tendency to use the Agyieus as protection against dangerous signification is probably contingent on his role as protector against anything inappropriate that might enter the house, including sound. The herald of Agamemnon’s returning army in fact invokes the Agyieus at *Agamemnon* 512, requesting that he be παιώνιος, the healer, but also, through the association with
the paean, the protector of auspicious speech. I discuss the herald’s sophisticated negotiations
with the chorus over appropriate speech in Chapter Three.

There is a periphrasis similar to the one at 256-257 at _Agamemnon_ 1022-1024. Here
Apollo’s son Asclepius – the healer – is referred to simply as τὸν ἄρχων τῶν φημέων ἀνάγειν
(“who knows how to bring back the dead”). It is significant that this periphrasis occurs as a
παράδειγμα (see Fraenkel ad loc.) in the middle of a stanza connecting an aposiopesis of the
chorus (1025-1034) to the irrevocability of spilt blood. As I argue below, it is this very fact – that
Zeus will not allow the dead to be recalled – that serves to transform silencing discourse from
the reflection of a tragic universe to a means of producing it, since the prohibition against raising
the dead is in fact an act of censorship. The periphrastic naming of the healer fits well with
certain aspects of that figure, in particular his highly dangerous nature, that are sensed by the
chorus and have a great impact on the narrative of the trilogy.

At _Choephor_ 581-584 Orestes combines an exhortation to silence with a reference to an
unnamed god:

 iota δ’ ἐπαινῶ γιλῶσαν εἴψημον φέρειν
 σιγᾶν δ’ ὅπου δεῖ καὶ λέγειν τὰ καἰρὰ∙
 τὰ δ’ ἄλλα τούτων δεῦρ’ ἐποπτεύοισε λέγω,
 ἐξωφράσως ἀγώνας ὀρθώσατι μοι.
I recommend to you to keep an auspicious tongue, and to be silent when it is necessary
and to speak in an opportune manner. As for the rest, I call on this one here to oversee
the other things, who set up these struggles that involve sword-bearing for me.

The identity of the god referred to by τούτω has been a matter of some debate. It is
either Hermes or Apollo Agyieus. Either seems possible on the basis of diction. Garvie points
out the association of ὀφθάλματι with Hermes (compare Eumenides 897), but ἔφημορος ἄγων ὀφθάλματι μοι appears to mean "who set up these struggles that involve sword-bearing for me." most obviously a reference to Apollo, who had given Orestes his current task. And, as I will argue in Chapter Four, ὀφθαλμ- roots have strong associations in the Oresteia with the voice of Apolline prophecy as well. The context – an exhortation to silence – would support the identification of τοῦτῳ with Apollo, who is elsewhere appealed to in silencing discourse.

The chorus' aposiopesis at 248-257, then, contains the same rhetorical elements as Calchas' attempt to avert the implications of the κατάμομμα φάσματα ("blameworthy appearances") at 131-155, both a reluctance to fully name the import of the signs they relate, and an appeal to Apollo to intervene against inauspicious elements being taken as causes.

It may be worth noting, finally, a structural parallelism that emerges if we have Clytemnestra on stage at this point: if a pivotal part of her role in the Agamemnon is to control the door, then we should point out that there is not one but two guardians at the door at work in this passage: Apollo Agyieus and Clytemnestra. With Agyieus invoked to intervene against the ill-omened aspects of the chorus' story, this configuration is a perfect copy of the configuration reflected in Calchas' telling of the omen of the eagles and the hare. There are two figures overhearing the communication between Zeus and Agamemnon: one is Artemis, in a position to cause havoc, and the other is Apollo (Paean), invoked to intervene with her and stop her horrible intent. Similarly here the chorus tries to silence itself in the presence of Clytemnestra and appeals to Apollo Agyieus. In both cases, Apollo proves to be ineffectual or uncaring.
Calchas had narrated the acceptance of the omen of the eagles and the hare by Artemis, hinted at the possible disastrous outcome, and prayed to Apollo to intervene; his failure to do so, and Artemis' eventual success at ἐξυπνοῦσα ηρᾶσαι ("fulfilling the symbols") is narrated – up to a point – by the chorus. The form of the aposiopesis at 248-257 – a refusal to go on and an invocation of Apollo – suggests that they also are concerned that the story of Iphigenia's sacrifice might, if told, become ominous as sign and cause, and that the symbolic might again be translated into the literal. That is the reason for their repeated attempts to silence or unsay their own story. They do not, like Calchas, name the secondary receiver with the power to translate their words into reality, and this leaves us the job of speculating on whom they might have in mind. As the opposition of Clytemnestra and Apollo Agyieus may already suggest, and as I argue in the next chapter, this must be Clytemnestra herself.
Chapter Three:

The Secondary receiver: Sovereignty
Either say something better than silence, or remain silent.

Silencing discourse requires two persons who are external to the logical requirements of the utterance per se: the secondary receiver or sovereign, who overhears and punishes inauspicious utterances, and another, whom we called “the healer,” because his role is important in this capacity in the Oresteia. In this chapter and the next, I will investigate how these two figures are activated by silencing discourse, how they play a role in Greek culture, and how they affect the narrative and thematic development of the Oresteia.

In this chapter I address the sovereign or secondary receiver. This figure takes vengeance for ill speech and ill action, and as such provides the narrative substance of the Agamemnon and the Choephoroi. In the Agamemnon the role of vengeful agent is fulfilled by Clytemnestra, and her actions and motivations therefore constitute the core of the narrative progression of the play. In addition to being the figure whose hidden motivations determine the course of the plot, she is also in a position of unquestioned political dominance throughout the play – not merely before the arrival of Agamemnon, but also after it, when in the exchange with the returning king she demonstrates her superior powers of persuasion and asserts her control of the scene. There, convincing Agamemnon to enter the house treading on crimson fabrics, she configures his submission as willingly yielding sovereign power or κράτος (kraios) to her:

πίσω, κράτος μέντοι πάρες γ' ἐκὼν ἐμοί.
Obey, and yield sovereignty willingly to me. (943)³⁵

In fact Clytemnestra is significantly imbued with κράτος. The chorus concludes the parodos with reference to it:

ημω σεβίζων σών, Κλυταιμνήστρα, κράτος·
δίκη γάρ ἐστι φωτός ἁρχηγοῦ τείν
γυναῖκ', ἑρμημιδέντος ἀρσενοῦ θράονος.
σύ δ' εἰ τε κεδών εἴτε μὴ πεπυσμένη
εὐαγγέλισαν ἐλπίσαν θηπολεῖς,
κλώματ' ἀν εὔφροσιν οὐδ' σημώσῃ θάνος.

I come honouring your sovereignty (kratos), Clytemnestra. For it is just to honour the wife of the leading man, when the throne is deserted by the male. And you, if you’ve heard good news or not, and now sacrifice about the city with hopes of good news – I would gladly hear it. But I will not begrudge you your silence. (258-263)

Clytemnestra’s κράτος and her silence (263) are not unrelated. As I argue below, it is characteristic of silencing discourse to configure the sovereign as silent. In fact we can identify in Greek political and ethical thinking a silent sovereignty of precisely the kind implicated in silencing discourse. In texts beyond the Oresteia it can be identified with a number of figures, including the tyrant, the oriental despot, Zeus, his helper Justice or Δίκη (Dike), and the generic figure of the judge. The first section of this chapter is concerned with these figures. Two things will become clear in the course of these considerations. (1) I argue that the sovereign maintains his sovereignty precisely by being the secondary receiver signified by his subjects’ silencing discourse. That is, the silencing discourse of his subjects in fact facilitates the power of the sovereign. But (2) the sovereign can keep his subjects silent only by himself remaining silent.

Effective authority consists in the illusion of omnipresence, which is in fact achieved by not being evident, not speaking, anywhere. The sovereign must be indefinite with respect to his presence. If we know where he is, we know where he is not, and those places where he is absent
become places where insurrection is possible. On the other hand, if we do not know where he is, we must act as though he is everywhere. In this chapter I argue that two verbs that often characterise the activity of sovereignty, *krainein* (krainein) and *dikazein* (dikazein), practically indicate the silence of that position. The sovereign, to maintain his sovereignty, exercises an authority which is in many aspects purely formal. His judgements are only the authorisation of a course of action proposed by someone else and to be performed by someone else. Here in fact we see how the sovereign becomes the reason for silence: if the sovereign judges by making real what the subject has said, the subject must be extremely careful not to say anything that could be used against him. By saying nothing, the sovereign ensures that his subjects say nothing, and in so doing he protects his sovereignty.

These facets of authority represent the cultural heritage on which Aeschylus draws in his portrayal of silence in the *Oresteia*. Having outlined them in some detail in the first half of this chapter I will then return to the *Oresteia*. The *Agamemnon* and the *Choephoroi* are dominated, in their plotting and their staging, by the dynamics of this kind of authority. The act of vengeance is in both cases the realisation of some symbol. But the characteristic function of the sovereign is to realise symbols (*krainein* or *dikazein*). The articulations of sovereignty that take place in silencing discourse, and their ramifications, serve therefore as the fundamental matrix for the first two plays of the trilogy.

I initially identified silencing discourse in the parodos of the *Agamemnon*. Because of whom is the chorus trying not to say what it is saying? During these early moments of the trilogy, Aeschylus engineers a brilliant irony in his staging. The things the chorus is trying to avoid in the parodos return, devastatingly, at the end of the *Agamemnon*. And it is a sovereign
who causes this. Who exactly this sovereign is is debated within the play, and the identity of the avenger of Agamemnon’s crimes depends on the interests of the person naming it. Aegisthus calls it justice (Dike: 1577 and 1611), Clytemnestra the curse on the house (1475-1480). The chorus remains unsure, but suspects it to be Clytemnestra. Certainly Clytemnestra is intimately involved in the murder of Agamemnon. But at 1497-1504 she claims to have acted as the agent of other more metaphysical forces. Difficult questions such as the attribution of responsibility to agents or planners of an action are not resolvable in the Oresteia until the final play of the trilogy, and they retain a difficult ambiguity even there. But the deep and critical ambiguity of Clytemnestra throughout the Agamemnon, in which she is both the resident sovereignty of the house and only the agent of other forces, is staged during the parodos. In the second section of this chapter I argue that, contrary to some popular readings of the play, Clytemnestra is on stage during the greater part of the parodos, and that she stands in silence listening to the chorus try not to say anything dangerous. This staging is as deeply ambiguous as the legal responsibility of Clytemnestra herself: sovereignty not only needs to be silent but also needs to be invisible. Clytemnestra’s visible presence here seems to indicate that she is not the sovereign in the face of whom the chorus keeps silent. And there is, in fact, another possibility. Clytemnestra may be the healer of whom the chorus speaks at line 98, and she might, in the chorus’ mind, be the one who will put an end to the ills of the house of Atreus. Clytemnestra’s visibility indicates the possibility of healing, but her silence indicates her associations with sovereignty. It is her silence that will dominate. In Chapter Four, I will argue that the healer repeatedly referred to by the chorus is impossible within the matrix of the Agamemnon. In this chapter I focus on Clytemnestra’s silence as a sign of her authority.
There are two sides to silence. We may speak of the silence of censorship, in which someone does not speak out of fear of punishment. Here the subject’s silence reinforces and even creates the authority of the sovereign. But modern law also recognises – and it is crucial – the right to silence, according to which the subject may stay silent in the face of prosecution, and this right not to incriminate oneself is the expression of the sovereignty of the subject in the face of the state. It is true that the Athenian democracy did not recognise a right to silence. But the presupposition implicit in the modern right – that our right not to speak when addressed by the state indicates our sovereignty – can be discerned in the manner in which silence is portrayed in the theory of tyranny in Aristotle, as well as in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* itself. The state cannot coerce its subjects, and this is expressed by the subject’s silence. In the terms of our analysis, silencing discourse has two products. On the one hand, it produces the silence of the subject of silencing discourse, which admits the authority of the sovereign. But, as I have already outlined, the silence of the subject requires the silence of the sovereign. That is, when the utterer of silencing discourse gives some sovereignty as the reason for silence, this entails that the sovereign is silent. If the sovereign silences himself, there must be some authority who is the reason for his silence. This will be his subject, the initial utterer of the “original” silencing discourse. Silence therefore also produces sovereignty. And this sovereignty accrues even to the subject who silences himself out of fear of the sovereign. Silencing discourse therefore does not merely express fear of and submission to authority. It also expresses opposition to it, the establishment of an opposing authority. In fact, since Greek culture (and the *Oresteia*) configures the sovereignty produced by silencing discourse as tyrannical, we might expect the opposite of this to be characterised as resident not in the one but in the many. And this is precisely what
happens in the *Agamemnon* – opposed to the tyranny of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus we find the sovereignty of the people, designated by a form of *krainein*:

\[
βαρεία δ' ἀστών φάτις σὺν κότῳ,
δημοκράτου δ' ἀράς τίνει κρέος·
\]

The speech of the townspeople is heavy when it is wrathful, and he pays the debt of a curse approved by the people. (456-457)

These lines are intricately connected with the dynamics of silencing discourse, as we will see.

The other side of the "democratic curse" – an aggressive speech directly connected with the process of *krainein* – is the silence of the people:

\[
[... ] τάδε στή σεις βαθ-
ζει, ἀθυρεῖν δ' ὑπ' ἀλγες ἑρ-
πει προδίκοις Ἀτρείδαις. 
\]

Such things people mutter in silence, and an angry hurt encroaches upon the avenging Atreidae. (449-451)

This silence could break out into curses at any time. At the end of this chapter I argue that the silence of the chorus of the *Agamemnon* is not merely a silence that comes about because of its fear of authority. It is also a silence that threatens the sovereigns that are there, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. This means that there is not one sovereignty vis-à-vis silencing discourse, but two: there is the sovereign because of whom the subject of silencing discourse attempts to stay silent, but there is also the subject himself, who, by becoming silent, establishes himself as sovereign vis-à-vis the silent sovereign. Both silences, sovereign and subject, are the products of silencing discourse, each in the face of the other.
The judge and his spies

Let us review what we know so far: (1) the secondary receiver is not a party to the communication he overhears. That is, he is neither the sender of the message nor the intended receiver, but someone else who overhears the communication and is in a position to react to it in some undesirable manner. (2) The existence of a secondary receiver is the reason for silencing discourse. We silence ourselves or others because we are afraid of some authority.

The secondary receiver is, in essence, a sovereign or judge. The exact contours of this role will depend on the social configuration in which it occurs, but it will in all cases be identified with some form of sovereignty or decision making power. Its effects are most clearly to be seen in the analysis of tyranny and “oriental” despotism, and so we will look first for it there. But it is not to be associated only with orientalism or tyranny, and has a wider ethical and legal significance. Because of the distribution of ancient evidence on this matter we will need to move beyond the fifth century to the analysis of tyranny in Aristotle’s Politics (although that analysis looks back explicitly to the tyrants of Sicily and therefore to our period).

In Politics V 1313a.34-1315b.10 Aristotle outlines the means by which tyrants are able to keep themselves in power. He identifies two distinct methods. The second (1314a.30-1315b.10) consists in appearing to be a good ruler like the rulers in monarchies, and is not significant for our purposes. The first (1313a.34-1314a.30) is the “traditional” (παραδοσιακός) way, and consists in certain techniques aimed at making real political resistance impossible. Aristotle breaks these
methods into three groups according to their ends. The first is to ensure that subjects are politically unambitious; the second, that they mistrust each other; the third, that there is a widespread lack of power over their affairs (1314a.15-30). We are concerned primarily with the second of these groups, concerning which Aristotle says,

οὐ καταλύεται γὰρ πρὸ ταραν ὕπαννης πείν ἢ πιστεύσωσι τινες ἧματοις· διὸ καὶ τοῖς ἐπιεικοῖς πολέμουσιν ὡς θαδεροῖς πρὸς τὴν ἀρχὴν οὐ μόνον διὰ τὸ μὴ ἀξίον ἀρχεσθαί δεσποτικῶς, ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τὸ πιστοῖς καὶ ἦματοις καὶ τοῖς ἀλλοΐς εἶναι καὶ μὴ καταγραφεῖν μητε ἠμάτων μητε τῶν ἀλλών.

A tyranny is not overthrown until people trust each other. Therefore tyrants fight even against good people as harmful to their authority, not only because they do not want to be ruled by a tyrant, but also because there is trust between themselves and others, and because they do not denounce themselves or others. (1314a.18-23)

Subjects who live in fear of being betrayed by each other will not form associations strong enough to overthrow a tyrant. Aristotle describes two related techniques for achieving this goal: (1) a constant and complete flow of information to the tyrant about the actions and utterances of his subjects; (2) nurturing the effect of this, that the subjects in a tyranny are aware of their being constantly watched, and, out of fear of being heard or seen, do not speak or act.

It is typical of the social outlines of tyranny that the flow of information into the ruler’s chambers comes by subterranean and unofficial channels. Since slaves and women do not plot against tyrants but see them as allies and protectors (1313b.32-37), tyranny thrives in social contexts where there is

γυναικοκρατία ται παρὰ ταῖς οἰκίαις, ἵνα ἐξαγγέλωσι κατὰ τῶν ἀνδρῶν, καὶ δοῦλων ἀνεσις διὰ τὴν αὐτὴν αἰτίαν.

The rule (kratos) of women in the home, so that they might report on the men, and an indulgence of slaves for the same reason. (1313b.34-36)
Here δεξαγγελία is, as in tragedy, a report of what goes on in the privacy of the home to the audience outside, thus making the invisible visible, the secret communications of the household audible. It is remarkable that Aristotle should use a word that compares the conditions under tyranny with tragic conventions – tyranny transforms the state into a theatre, with the ruler as sole audience member.

The women of whom Aristotle speaks are the ποταγωγίδες (potagogides, “spies”) that are mentioned as having been part of the apparatus of power under the Syracusan tyrants, along with the prosthetic ears (ὀτακουσταί, otakoustai, “ear listeners”) used by Hiero (1313b.13-15). Aristotle’s general term for these spies is κατάσκοπος (kataskopos, “spy”). The usefulness of the spies, women, and ears used by the tyrant is not merely (or even most importantly) in the possibility of a quick reaction against threats that good intelligence provides, but in the threat of this, which, even when spies are not conspicuously present, induces a silence on the part of subjects:

παραθησάζονται τε γὰρ ἥττου, φοβούμενοι τοὺς τοιούτους, καὶ παραθησάζονται, λαυθάνουσιν ἥττου.

They speak less freely, fearing such [spies], and if they do speak freely, they escape notice less often. (1313b.15-17)

Xenophon corroborates Aristotle’s analysis. Speaking of Cyrus’ method of repaying his informers (the “eyes of the king”) he writes:

ψοφούνται πανταχοὺ λέγειν τὰ μὴ σύμφωνα βασιλεῖ, ὡσπερ αὐτοῦ ἄχριντος, καὶ ποιεῖν ἀ μὴ σύμφωνα, ὡσπερ αὐτοῦ παράνοος. οὐκούν ὅπως μην ἤρθῃ ἀν τις ἐκάλλυσθη πρὸς τινα περὶ Κύρου φιλάρχου τι, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς πάσι καὶ ωσὶ βασιλείς τοῖς ἁπλοῖς πάροικον υἱὸς ἔκαστος διέκειτο.
They were everywhere afraid to say subversive things about the king, as though he were himself listening, or to do subversive things, as though he were himself there. So they were far from daring to say anything petty about Cyrus to anyone, but they even acted as though those who were nearby were all eyes and ears of the king. (Cyropedia VIII.ii.12)

The existence of spies introduces a form of self-censorship amongst the subjects. They do not speak for fear they may be overheard.

It is important to note that this form of information gathering is not effective simply for its intelligence function, but for the quasi- or potential omnipresence it affords to the sovereign, through the fact that the spy is not easy to identify, or that anyone might be a spy. The spy is not apparent. He cannot be identified, and in this he acquires a presence that extends beyond his physical borders. In self-censorship, silencing is directed against oneself, and the secondary receiver is only an element in the narrative of silencing discourse, and not necessarily present at all. Although he is not physically present, the sovereign thus inserts himself into the imaginative universe of the self-censoring subject.

Aristotle (1313a.37-39 and 1313b.10) attributes these techniques to Persian statecraft. But they were invented by a Corinthian (1313a.37), and the idea of the omnipresent watcher, and the self-censorship and self-policing that is implied in this, is not limited to the oriental sphere. It is present in the role of Dike (Justice) and her relationship with Zeus in the Works and Days of Hesiod. Advising kings to stay straight, Hesiod reminds them that they exist in the context of a network of invisible, supernatural spies:

... ἐγὼς γὰρ ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ἱόντες ἀδάνατοι φαίνονται ὅσοι σκολισθῆ ἀδίκητων ἀλλήλως τρίβοντες ζεῦς ὅπως σῶ ἀλέγοντες, τὰς γὰρ μίκρας τείνει ἐπὶ χοῦν πελευθερίην ἀδάνατοι Ζηνὸς ψυλλακες θυτῶν ἀνθρώπων.
For the immortals are near to men, and they note those who harm each other with crooked judgements, not taking into account the vengeance of the gods. For Zeus has thirty thousand immortal guardians on the fruitful earth, watchers over mortal men, who, clothed in mist, mark their decisions and their foolish deeds, wandering everywhere over the earth. And there is the maiden Justice, born from Zeus, honoured and respected by the gods who hold Olympus, and whenever someone harms her, by falsely blaming someone, she immediately sits beside Kronian Zeus and tells him of the mind of unjust men, so that the people pay for the stupidity of kings who have baneful thoughts, bend justice, and give crooked judgements. (249-262)

At 255 the ἄγανατοι Ζηνὸς φύλακες (“immortal guardians of Zeus”) are ήρα ἱσσαμενοι (“clothed in mist”), that is, invisible;¹⁰⁰ Dike herself is often invisible when she roams the earth (223).¹⁰¹ At the centre of this intricate information retrieval system lies Zeus, and he is ultimately responsible for the punishment of wrongdoers. But the point, for Hesiod, is that the invisible guardians, and Dike in her role as informer, amount to a fearful imperative not to sin (you will be seen, and you will be caught). This transforms his discourse from a theological description into a kind of moral silencing discourse, in which the imperative to be good narrates the presence of an invisible sovereignty capable of punishing wrongdoing.

It is important to note that strictly speaking the position of authority is not occupied by the spy but by the figure to whom these figures report: Zeus, Hiero, Cyrus, Dion, the tyrant in general (that is, the judge or sovereign). The discourse that silences, giving spies as the reason, is doing one of two things: (1) practising synecdoche – spy for sovereign; or (2) outlining the
acoustics of the *silendum*, explaining, through the figure of the spy, that speech obeys physical and social laws that are greater than what can be determined through linguistic analysis, and that others might overhear. The possibility of a spy designates the possibility of super-acoustics, methods of information dissemination that transcend logical and acoustical barriers.

**Sovereign and spy: the unity to the two roles**

The body of the sovereign extends as far as his organs are capable of going. This explains why it is possible for the spy to stand in for the sovereign in silencing discourse; the body of the sovereign is assimilated to his prostheses.

Photius, citing Conon, gives the following etiology of the story of Midas' large ears:

"Μίδας δὲ πολλοὶς ἔχων ἀπαργάλουται αὐτῷ τὰ ὄσα ἐλέγετο τε καὶ ἐπιβάτητο τοῖς ὑπήκοοις, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο εἰς τὴν ἀνεπίδουλοτην τὴν βασιλείαν ἔχων καὶ εἰς γῆς ἔλθων, μακρὰ ἑτα ἔχειν ἔλεχθη."

Midas had many who would report to him what his subjects said or did, and because of this he kept his throne right into his dotage without being conspired against, and was said to have had big ears. (130B.40)

That is, the spies of the sovereign become his ears, extensions of his body. In the passage from Xenophon cited above, people fear to speak against the king as though he were himself present – and here the extension of the body of the sovereign into his spies is reflected in their names: Cyrus' ministers are known as his ears and eyes.¹⁰²

But if the sovereign's spies are described as part of his body, his authority can be assimilated to his sense organs, and these can then be spoken of as powerful in their own right. It is the informer who is despised in Solonian Athens and not the sovereignty to which he reports.
the secret export of figs. This will serve as explanation for the fact that, despite the clear ascendancy of Zeus in the ethical system outlined by Hesiod in the *Works and Days*, his watchers and reporters can assume the powerful position of judge. So, although Dike is only Zeus’ reporter, she is able to take over the role of punisher, on Zeus’ charter, to be sure, but operating autonomously:

\[
\text{τῆς δὲ Δίκης ὁδὸς ἐξομένης ἦ κ’ ἄφθες ἀγιωτάτην,}
\text{ἀμφοτέρους, σκαλισθῆ δὲ ἄκης κρίνομε Θείωστας;}
\text{ἡ δ’ ἐπεται κλαύσθανα πόλιν καὶ ἤστε λαοῦν.}
\text{νέχα ἐπαμένη, κακὸν ἂν Ἀὔρασις αἰροῦσα}
\text{οἴ τε μὲν ἐξαλάτασι καὶ οὐκ Ἰθαῖαν ἐνείμασι.}
\]

And there is a clamour when Justice is being dragged about, where corrupt men drag her, and set policy with crooked judgements; and she follows crying out to the city and the haunts of people, wrapped in mist, bringing evil to men, those who have driven her out and do not deal straight with her. (220-224)

The extension of sovereignty and the prerogative to punish conferred by the sovereign on his prostheses generates the ambiguity of responsibility that runs throughout the *Oresteia*. Clytemnestra is able to claim that she acts as the agent of the daïmōn (daimon) of the house just as Dike acts as the agent of Zeus, and Orestes acts similarly as the agent of Apollo. The visibility of these figures within the *Oresteia* bespeaks a number of important aspects of the trilogy. First, the visibility of the agent and not the true sovereign in the first two plays preserves the sovereignty of Zeus, since he remains unapparent and unbesmirched by the crimes that take place. Second, it indicates that the *Agamemnon* is in fact staging, making visible, the logic of a particular form of speech, that is, silencing discourse: the ability to stage figures that according to the logic of sovereignty should not only be silent, but invisible as well, is an indication that tragedy, and drama in general, plays a very special role in bringing before our eyes things that
are not normally accessible. Third and most importantly, the fact that the drama is able to stage the agents and to underscore their silence by setting it against their visibility, indicates that already, albeit in a very peculiar manner, the *Agamemnon* and the *Choephoroi* are in the process of demystifying the ethics upheld by silencing discourse. This demystification will be complete in the *Eumenides*, and it is a process we will address in Chapters Four and Five.

It does not need extensive historical demonstration that the sovereign and his agent are only visible within silencing discourse, its ethical analogue in Hesiod, or within theoretical texts that emerge as extensions of this, such as Aristotle’s *Politics* or Xenophon’s *Cyropedia*. This is because the secondary receiver is by definition not evident empirically but needs to be imagined or posited. That is, the real but sporadic existence of some spies leads to a discourse that posits their omnipresence and reinforces sovereign power and makes it metaphysical. There is a paranoia inherent in silencing discourse and its avatars.

*Krainein and dikazein*

The fact that silencing discourse posits authority as omnipresent because of its non-appearance makes it clear that the silencing of censorship uncovers another, deeper and more complex silence – that of the sovereign himself. We can say, initially, that the sovereign is silent because, in order to install himself as the secondary receiver within silencing discourse, he cannot speak or announce himself discursively. This is so for two reasons. First, his conspicuous presence in speech would disqualify him as secondary receiver, who is real only insofar as he is posited as such by silencing discourse. We will find that the sovereign does speak, but in a very special manner that does not disqualify him as secondary receiver. Second, his active presence
would make his absences conspicuous and would therefore reduce his repressive capacity. The sovereign fosters a dream of his omnipresence that actual (physical rather than metaphysical) appearance would dispel (a spy identified is no spy).

But sovereignty nevertheless needs to dramatize its existence somehow. It does this through the occasional exercise of its authority. This happens in a characteristic manner, one that allows it to speak, and in speaking, to signify its silence. The sovereign accomplishes this by being a judge (δικαστής, dikastes), and its utterances are characterised by the verb κραίνειν (krainein).

If Herodotus’ testimony is to be believed, the oriental tradition of despotism arises out of the association of the δικαστής with the silence of the sovereign. Deioces, having been made king (βασιλεύς) of the Medes (I.98), proceeds to build an apparatus of state that establishes in a single act both his silence and his authority. He dwells inside a fortress surrounded by seven walls, and establishes the custom that

μὴτε ἵσιναι παρὰ βασιλεία μηδένα, δι' ἀγγέλων δὲ πάντα χρησθαι, ἵσαρθαι τε βασιλεία ὑπὸ μηδενός.

no one may come into the king’s presence, but everything is done through messengers, and the king is seen by no one. (I.99)

His invisibility is to have the effect of elevating him above his subjects in their estimation (I.99). His rule, in Herodotus’ narrative, consists simply in the exercise of justice, at which he is described as rigorous, and which he exercises only through the exchange of letters. In addition, he is able to maintain order through an apparatus of spies (I.100).
In Herodotus’ description of Deioces’ rule we see the conjunction of secrecy, sovereignty, and judgement, in which the presence of an otherwise silent and invisible sovereign is established only through his exercise of justice. This is not of course simply a method of government. Homer and Hesiod had used the same structure to describe the workings of the cosmos as a whole. In *Works and Days* 217ff (quoted in part above), the invisible Justice intervenes in the cities of unjust rulers with wailing (κλαίουσα). Implicit in this description is the assumption that she is silent when there is no violation of her precepts. Solon makes this explicit in fr. 4 (IEG), where Dike is described thus:

\[\text{ἡ σιγώσα σύνοιδε τὰ γιγάντεα πρὸ τὸ ἔοντα,}
\text{τῷ ἐὰν χρόνῳ πάντως ἡς ἁποτελεῖσθαι.}\]

Who silently knows what will be and what was, and she comes in time, repaying everything in full. (15-16)

Her silence, her non-appearance in the discourse of humans, fosters her authority. She comes in time (but she is not here now).\(^{104}\)

In Greek tragedy also, Dike is described as a spy:

\[\text{ἡ τοῖς πάσιν ἔδοξαν ἔεδών δρόμον κεκτημένη}
\text{Δίκη δέδοκεν οὕς}\]

Having received a course near the gods, Justice looks sharply. (*TrGF* t. II fr. adesp. 655.19-20)

She “has an eye that sees everything” (*fr. adesp.* 421, 499), and Dionysius of Syracuse writes:

\[\text{ὁ τῆς Δίκης ὀφθαλμὸς ώς ἐἰ ἡπόκου}
\text{ἀλκυσπὼν προσώπων πᾶν ὡς ἀκόντει \(\varepsilon\})\]

Justice has an eye such that she sees everything always, though looking through an inexpressive visage. (*TrGF* t.I 76 F.5)
Here we have a conjunction of the eye of the tyrant with the inexpressive (ἡπυκοῦ) overseeing of Justice. Critias, the member of the Thirty in Athens, wrote in his Sisyphus that laws were established among men ῥᾳ δίκη τύραννος ἦ (“so that justice might be a tyrant”).

In a fragment of Aeschylus Dike herself speaks, and describes herself as Zeus’ spy on the actions of men:

πέμπει δὲ μ’ αὐτὸς οἴσιν εἴμενι
Ζεὺς, ὡσπερ εἰς τὴν τινὶ ἐπεμψέ μ’ ... [ ... ἡμέρᾳ τάκεν, πλάκωματ’ ἐν δέλτῳ Δίοις.

Zeus himself sends me to where [...] he who sent me to this land [...] I write [men’s] faults on the tablets of Zeus. (TrGF t.III F 281a.11-12, 21)

Aeschylus has στγων ὀλεθρῶς (“silent destruction”) in Eumenides 934, little more than a reference to the punishment meted out by a sovereign (silent) Justice.

But, as our passage from Hesiod has already suggested, the silence of sovereignty is broken when its rules are broken. This is the case at Choephoroi 306-314, where the chorus expounds on the principles of justice, and makes Dike shout:

ἀλλ᾽ ἦ μεγάλαι Μοῖραι, Δίοις
πηδε τελειώσαν.

ἡ τὸ δίκαιον μεταθάνειν
ἀντὶ μὲν ἱκθηθάσας γλώσσῃς ἱκθῆ 
γλῶσσα τελειώσα τούφειλόμενον
πράσσουσα Δίκη μέγ᾽ ἀντεῖ:
ἀντὶ δὲ πληγηθῆς φωνίας φωνίαν
πληγήν τινέτω, δρασάται παθεῖν,
τρεῖσι χόροι μᾶθος τάδε φωνεῖ.

But oh great Fates, fix things, ordered by Zeus, in this way that Justice steps; let hateful words be paid for hateful words – so Justice loudly shouts, demanding what is owed; and let him pay a bloody blow for a bloody blow, let the doer suffer. So speaks the thrice ancient word.
Here the usual conception of justice, that of responding with like for like, is associated with the goddess “greatly shouting.” Justice thunders in the breach.

This cacophonous noise at the moments when the laws of justice have been broken is very little more than the act of judgement, δικαζειν (dikazein). Here I turn for evidence to Greek judicial procedure and to the structures of sovereignty in the Iliad. The act of dikazein amounts to a single, decisive utterance on the part of the judge (dikastes), in a context where the outcome is already decided by procedure. This judgement is contrasted with the procedurally different operation of κρινειν (krinein), which is the imposition under oath by the dikastes of a settlement where the procedure does not make any course of action the obvious option. In this context dikazein amounts to the same thing as krainein, which we discussed in Chapter Two and which is an important part of the Olympian model of sovereignty.

Our earliest constitutional text, the law of Gortyn, sets up a contrast between two roles of the dikastes – one to judge (dikazein), the other to choose (krinein). Dikazein signifies automatic sentencing, in the face of a crime made flagrant by the oaths of the plaintiffs or witnesses or by the lack of any contradiction. It is only the authorisation of a course of action suggested by what has already been made evident. It is opposed to the act of krinein which is the pronouncement under oath of a decision between two equally strong cases. Here the judge takes on the role of authenticating punitive action by sacralising himself, in the failure of the procedure to reveal a clear distinction. The possibility, suggested by Carawan, that dikazein might denote the setting of terms to be settled by oath does not change this. Once the terms have been set
and are met or not met in an unequivocal fashion, the judge pronounces the matter closed, and authorises any further action that is necessary.

In Gortyn, both the role of judging and of choosing under oath were performed by the same figure, depending on the details of the case. Elsewhere, and in Athens in particular, the two roles are divided. In Athenian practice the archon basileus set the terms and administered oaths in the anakrisis before homicide trials and pronounced the verdict after the decision had been reached (dikazein), while the jury had the job of deciding the case. Drakon’s homicide law distinguishes between dikazein and diagnoσαι (diagnonai):


And if someone kills someone without malicious intent, then he shall be exiled. And the Basileis will judge (dikazen) both the [doer] and the counsellor guilty of murder. And the ephetai shall decide (diagnonai) the case.

Gagarin comments:

If the difference between [dikazein and diagnonai] is the same as that between dikazein and krinein in the Gortyn laws, then the former designates the pronouncing of a verdict when the procedure is such that the judge has no choice in the matter, whereas the latter designates the actual making of a decision based on the evidence. In effect the ephetai were the jury who decided the case, and the basileus (or basileis) the judge who pronounced the verdict. (Drakon, 47)

What interests us here is the fact that, while the action of deciding a case (krinein or diagnonai) implies the presence and responsibility of the juryman, the action of dikazein is little more than an acceptance of what has become evident through the various discursive and symbolic acts in the hearing, and an authorisation of some real action that had suggested itself in the course of the
trial. *Dikazein* is little more than the making real of what had previously been symbolic or signified.

Archaic procedure seems to have been only an authorised form of self-help, and the judgement only recognises as valid or invalid the claim made by a plaintiff, thus allowing him to take some punitive action already proposed.\(^\text{111}\) That is, in intervening (speaking), the judge does nothing more than absent himself (silence himself), allowing some intention that does not belong to him to be actualised. This does not change with the advent of law, where it is the symbols inscribed in the law that are allowed to be actualised. Dike's great decisive shout at Cho. 311 is nothing more than a demand that the law of like-for-like be brought into practice.

In other words the action of *dikazein* is very similar to the action of *krainein*. In fact *krainein* can be used in a sense nearly synonymous with *dikazein*, as in *Odyssey* VIII.390-391:

\[\text{δώδεκα γὰρ κατὰ δῆμον ἀριθμεῖς βασιλῆς ἄρχοι κραίνουσι. τρισκαίδεκας δ᾽ ἐγὼ αὐτὸς.}\]

Twelve distinguished noble leaders authorise what should be done (*krainousi*) among the people, and I am the thirteenth.

Likewise *Agamemnon* 366-370:

\[Δίος πλαγάν ἔχουσιν εἴπαιν, πάρεστιν τούτο γ᾽ ἐξεχείσαι ἐπιφαζέν ὡς ἐκρανεν.\]

They can tell of a blow from Zeus – it is possible to trace this out – he acted as he decreed (*ekranen*).
In demanding that some thing be fulfilled, the sovereign asserts his or her authority by denying any content to his or her own position, other than the content of power. Zeus silences himself in the very act of speaking.

Zeus’ sovereignty is figured as a function of his silence in the Iliad as well. The story of the epic is based on the acknowledgement Zeus makes of Achilles’ right to vengeance as it is presented to him by Thetis. Zeus’ recognition of Achilles’ right is related in the magnificent lines

"H καὶ κυναγέσθην ἐπ᾿ ὀφθάλμοι Κρόνων· ἀμφότεροι δ᾿ ἄφα χαίται ἐπεργοσιαντο ἀνακτος κρατός ἀπ᾿ Ἀδαμάντιο· μέγαν δ᾿ ἐλάλησεν Ὁλιμποῦ.

So he spoke, and the son of Kronos nodded his dark brows – and the ambrosial locks fell from the immortal head (kratos) of the king. And he shook Olympus greatly. (I.527-530)

Benveniste, commenting on the etymology of krainein, remarks that “the act of sanctioning is made evident by a movement of the head.” Zeus only ratifies Thetis’ request, and places the cause in her lap (518-519). But this is characteristic. Zeus always makes his decisions and judges in secret, as the sovereign must, and as Hera complains:

αἰεὶ τοῖς φιλον ἑστίν ἡμεῖς ἀπονέσασθον ἑώτα
κρατόν ἄφονόντα δικαζέομεν· οἵδο τι πώ μοι
πρόφορων τέληρας εἰπεῖν ἐπος ὅτι νοήσῃς.

It is always your way to make judgements (dikazemen) on things you have pondered in secret, far away from me, and you never undertake willingly to tell me a word about what you are thinking. (I.541-543; cf. 8.431f)

Hera’s resistance to Zeus’ secret cogitations is met with an imperative that must by now seem familiar to us:

ei δ᾿ οὖτω τοῦτ᾿ ἑστίν, ἐμοὶ μέλλει ϕιλον εἶναι.
ἀλλ᾿ ἀκόουσα κάθησο, ἐμῷ δ᾿ ἐπειθέσθω μύθῳ,
mη νῦ τοι οὐ χραίσμωσιν ὡσι θεοί εἰσί· ἐν Ὁλιμπῷ


If this is how it is, it is because I want it thus. But you sit down and be silent, and obey my word, lest as many as there are gods on Olympus be of no use against me as I approach, when I lay my invincible hand on you. (I.564-567)

It is good for the subject to silence herself in the face of the inscrutability and power of the sovereign. Zeus will remain silent, and his intentions will remain unknown (we know from 527-530 that they are also not his intentions). Therefore let the subject also remain silent, lest she bring upon herself the content of her own fears.

Sovereignty is marked, then, by two complementary characteristics: (1) its silence, which creates a sense of its omnipresence; and (2) a particular form of utterance which nevertheless cannot be equated simpliciter with speech and which, even in being uttered, designates the sovereign’s silence. This second characteristic has appeared in three forms: the writing of letters (Deioces), the silent nod (Zeus), or tumultuous noise (Dike). I have intimated that this kind of utterance has no content other than power, and that it designates the sovereign’s silence. For the sake of clarity, a recapitulation of how this is so may be required.

Utterances of the sort attributed to Zeus and the other sovereigns discussed above have no content other than power. In each case the exercise of justice (the expression of sovereignty) is no more than the granting or withholding of permission for some course of punitive action proposed by a plaintiff. This is clear in the decision of Zeus in Iliad I to honour the request of Thetis, since to let the Trojans come to the ships is her proposal, and not Zeus’. His nod indicates only a promise not to prevent the action from taking place. It requires no initiative on his part, but in giving assent he nevertheless signifies his authority, even if this is to do nothing.
The tumult of Justice when she is wronged is less easy to see in this way. West at *Works and Days* 220 says “ῥόθος (ῥόθος, "tumult") is the murmur of protest that spreads among the people,” citing parallels. This might imply that the tumult is not related to the judgement of Zeus. But *Agamemnon* 456-470 associates the ἀστιῶν φάτις ("speech of the townsmen" 456) with the Διός κεραυνός ("thunder of Zeus" 470). In both Hesiod and this choral song the sinner is royalty or a judge, and it is organic to the structure of silence and sovereignty we are tracing here that the tumult is to be taken as democractic (see *Agamemnon* 457). The cacophonous tumult that arises when Justice is mistreated leads to the sovereign retribution of Zeus (she is only, after all, his agent). And the punishment that Zeus allows is again not some new cruelty but a fulfilment of the sin directed against the sinner:

οι αὐτῷ κακὰ τεῦχει ἀνὴρ ἄλλω κακὰ τεῦχων,
ἡ δὲ κακὴ βουλὴ τῷ βουλεύσαντι κακίστη.

He works ill for himself who works ill for another and ill advice is the worst for the one who gives it. (*Works and Days* 265-266)

In other words, the punishment that comes, and of which the ῥόθος is a first expression, is a realisation of the ill-councils of the sinner, brought against himself. The sovereign judge only works what the sinner has worked himself. Hesiod’s expression here is simply a longer version of δείσαντα πάθην ("the doer will suffer," *Choephori* 313). But in allowing the sin to rebound on the sinner, in allowing for the content of the crime to be fulfilled against the criminal, the procedure of justice in fact accrues no content to itself—"you said it, not I" is always the excuse of the judge. Of course this is also the dominant fear in silencing discourse, whereby the
sovereign or secondary receiver is able to fulfil inauspicious aspects of the silendum. The world of silencing discourse and the ethics of Hesiod appear to be the same.

Where it is a king who sins, it is the people who act as the medium of his punishment and amplify the cacophonous sounds of vengeance. Here we are speaking of the sovereign utterance being directed against a sovereign. It is not an accident that the people are opposed to the king here. As I argue at the end of this chapter, silencing discourse (and with it Hesiod's ethical analogue) opposes the one (king or judge) to the many (subject, people), as an internal part of its logic.

The expression of power is also, simultaneously and paradoxically, the abdication of power. If the sovereign expresses power through the fulfilment of the representations of others— if, in other words, the only content of the sovereign judgement is his prerogative to permit or forbid— then any action that may result must be the action of another, even if it is on the authority of the sovereign. The silent nod and the tumult of the people that expresses the judgement of Dike/Zeus both displace the work of retribution from Zeus onto another agent. The sovereign's spies are a necessary element of his power. This is what connects the nod and the noise with the epistolary expression of Deioces' sovereignty: each displaces the responsibility for the utterance and the performance of the judgement onto agents or suitors. This is true of Deioces in a double sense: (1) we can presume that the judgements at which the king arrives are of the same sort as those of Zeus. Deioces chooses among suits and sends out his written decision, presumably usually only a simple recapitulation of one of the two submissions (Herodotus I.100). His choice contains no content other than his prerogative to
choose, since the course of action comes from one of the written pleas. (2) The act of writing down his judgement and sending it out telegraphs the utterance and the execution of the judgement into the hands and mouths of others. The letter will need to be read, presumably aloud, so the voice of the sovereign is not the sovereign’s voice, and the judgement must be enacted, so the sovereign’s hand is only a remote-controlled prosthesis (see also Iliad IV.166-170 and Plato, Cratylus 258A-276A).

These utterances which have no determinate content and refer back only to the power and silence of their utterer produce in their hearers a belief in the sovereign’s omnipresence. Naturally the sovereign can never tell his own story. To do so would be to break his silence and to lose his imagined omnipresence. But he can, through hints, sudden fearful utterances, and the peculiar absence that realises the representations of others, force others to tell his story. This occurs in silencing discourse, in which the sovereignty of the secondary receiver is always narrated. But if silence produced sovereignty, this must be true not only of the sovereign, but also of his subjects, who silence themselves because they fear him. That is, in as much as some figure silences himself, he both acknowledges the sovereignty of a secondary receiver (as with the subjects of silencing discourse) and creates his own sovereignty by means of his silence (as with the silent sovereign). The sovereign silences himself in order to silence his subjects; but in desiring their silence he recognises their authority, since if they were to speak they would be able to overthrow him. Both silences, that of sovereign and subject, are simultaneously each other: the subject of silencing discourse is sovereign vis-à-vis its own sovereign, and the sovereign or secondary receiver is subject vis-à-vis his subject. But the fact that silence produces authority not
only in the sovereign but also in the subject of silencing discourse suggests that the authority of the secondary receiver is not absolute. Rather, he is sovereign only in so far as those who are silent do not choose to exercise the sovereignty their own silence implies. Sovereignty, whether this is tyrannical or resident in the *demos*, is always a collaborative production, and it requires the consent of both sovereign and subject. This means that it can be changed. That is, sovereignty is not a brute fact independent of influence, but is rather the product of a choice made by those who participate in it. Aeschylus begins the process of escape from this form of silent sovereignty by his ability to bring his sovereigns on stage, and to stage their silence. The first of these is Clytemnestra.

**SILENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY IN THE ORESTEIA**

**Clytemnestra’s silence**

The chorus of old men in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* sings the story of the sacrifice of Iphigenia as Clytemnestra stands, listening in threatening silence, at the door of the *skene*.

She had come on sometime before vv. 83ff:

> σὺ δέ, Τυνδάεισιν
> Ἑγαμείρ, βασίλεια Κλεισταιμόρσα, τί χρόνι: τί νεόν: τί δ᾽ ἐπαινοὶςιμένη, τίνος ἀγγελίας
> πείδοι περιπεμπτε Ἀθηναίες; πάντων δὲ Ἰπήν τῶν ἀπετυχόμων, ὑπάτων, ἔχοντων, τῶν τε Ἰπαινών τῶν τ᾽ ἀγοραῖων
> βωμοί δύο ὑψωτει φλέγονται· ἀλλή δ᾽ ἀλλαθεν ὀρφανομήνης λαμπάς ἀνίσχει
> φαναστομένη χρίματος ἄγνοι μαλάκας ἀδύλοισι παρηγορίαις

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114
And you, daughter of Tyndareus, queen Clytemnestra, what is going on? What news? What have you heard? — persuaded by what message do you supervise sacrifices sent round about? The altars of the gods of the city, and of those on high and under the earth, those before the doors and those of the agora, burn with gifts: everywhere torchlight rises high as heaven, anointed with the soft, guileless comfort of holy oil, a royal offering from the depths of the house. Speak on these matters what you can and what is lawful, consent and be a healer of the care that now sometimes comes forth with ill thoughts. But at other times the hope that comes from the sacrifices that you make evident wards off the not-to-be-accomplished thought, this mind-devouring heart of anguish. (83-103)

Greek tragic texts are silent in the matter of stage directions. This fact sets the stage for a debate on the presence or absence of Clytemnestra during the parodos which has continued for over a century. The opinion which currently holds the most authority was articulated in two important texts in the seventies by Oliver Taplin. He argues that Clytemnestra is not on stage before 258. This is a difficult position even for Taplin, who takes as his methodological cornerstone the fact that “many arrivals are clearly marked as such in the words, which will include appropriate verbs of motion. Even where they are not their occurrence is nearly always clear in the case of a major character: the character ‘arrives’ either when he first speaks or when he is first addressed.” This is clearly a case where a major character is first addressed. Given that Clytemnestra’s absence at 83ff would be one of a very few exceptions to this rule, Taplin’s position may require further consideration.
Clytemnestra’s absence is only possible if, as Taplin claims, the chorus can speak to an absent character. The discussion of Kranz on which Taplin relies limits itself to Euripides and Sophocles and does not address the plays of Aeschylus at all, and other references to the phenomenon cite only Agamemnon 83ff from Aeschylus. Speeches directed at an absent character are the rarer case, and should be detected only where absolutely necessary. Outside of the Oresteia there are no relevant examples in Aeschylus of a chorus addressing an absent available character. Persae 657-680 is an incantatory spell, little more than a summons. Whatever the exact timing of Agamemnon’s entrance in the first play of the Oresteia, 783-809 are addressed to a character who is in sight of the chorus, if not of the audience. The absence of Apollo during the choral song at Eumenides 142-177 should by no means be taken for granted, as I will argue below. In fact the only sure place in the surviving works of Aeschylus where the chorus addresses an absent character is Choephori 827-837, where the chorus addresses Orestes who is inside the house laying a trap for Aegisthus.

But the rhetorical form of Choephori 827-837 mitigates its use in comparison with Agamemnon 83ff. The form of the address to Clytemnestra – a series of direct questions (What news? What have you heard?) and a request that she speak and allay the chorus’ fears – suggests the need for and the possibility of a direct reply, and if the questions at 85-87 reflected “impatience for the presence of the person addressed” then we would expect 97 to request her to appear, not to speak. At Choephori 827, on the other hand, we have a true apostrophe, an address to Orestes barely concealing the chorus’ own desires. Nothing in the rhetorical form or
the content of the passage suggests that either the chorus or the playwright considers it necessary that Orestes hear it, and there are no questions that might require a reply.

The position of *Choephoroi* 827-837 in the structure of the ode also argues against its value as a parallel to *Agamemnon* 83ff. The song is a prayer to all the figures, mortal or immortal, whose agency is at work in the upcoming bloodshed: Zeus (783-799), here protector of justice and the cosmic order; the gods of the house (801-806); Apollo (807-811), whose prophetic agency guides Orestes’ hand; Hermes (812-818), here a god of tricks, who will aid Orestes in his deception; and finally Orestes himself, whose hand will commit the murder and take vengeance for Agamemnon’s death. The address to Orestes should be read with these prayers to the gods, as an expression of the chorus’ desire for a “happy” outcome. At *Agamemnon* 83, on the other hand, there is no textual or structural reason for the address to Clytemnestra; the only explanation of the address to Clytemnestra at this point in the parodos would be an external matter – that is, the presence of the queen on the stage.

The two most cited parallels for *Agamemnon* 83ff as a passage where a chorus speaks to an absent character, Sophocles’ *Ajax* 134-200 and Euripides’ *Hippolytus* 141-160, do not stand comparison with our passage, because of their rhetorical form and because of their content. In both cases we have a series of speculations on the reasons for a madness or illness of which the chorus has heard rumours – and there is no reason to suppose that either chorus or playwright thinks of these as real addresses rather than rhetorical apostrophe. In both cases the chorus, after explaining what they have heard and from whom (*Ajax* 134-171; *Hippolytus* 121-140), offers a series of speculative explanations – some god (and a number of gods are listed as candidates) has
taken away the ill one’s wits. Both choruses offer answers in the form of questions posed to a character who is assumed to be unavailable by virtue of his or her madness.\footnote{At Agamemnon 83ff, by contrast, the chorus does not offer any speculative answers to their own questions. They simply ask, and await a response. The language and the suppositions which underlie it suggest, in contrast to the passages in the Ajax and the Hippolytus, that Clytemnestra is available and capable of answering. If Clytemnestra is not on stage when the chorus addresses her at 83, this would be a passage unique in Aeschylus and tragedy.}

Taplin’s staging would provide another occurrence of a chorus addressing an absent available character in the opening scene of the Eumenides (64-179). But the chorus of Erinyes surely enters on the ekkyklema with Orestes and Apollo at Eumenides 64. In addition to removing the extreme difficulties of a scene in which the ghost of Clytemnestra speaks to (and gets incoherent replies from) an absent chorus,\footnote{The scene with the ekkyklema at 64 fits a recognisable dramatic pattern in Greek tragedy: a report of horrors seen, followed by a revelation of the aftermath.} That this should occur at the beginning of the play and not at the end fits with the structure of the trilogy as a whole: the Eumenides represents a significant revolution, and the timing of the ekkyklema is part of it, as I suggested in the introduction.

There is no reason, either, to make Apollo exit before the appearance of the eidolon of Clytemnestra. Wilamowitz’ stage direction here, that he becomes invisible,\footnote{Wilamowitz’ stage direction here, that he becomes invisible to the chorus and Clytemnestra only. On the other hand, with Apollo on the stage, the chorus’ lines at 149-154 take on dramatic force: Apollo is on stage listening as the chorus issues the first salvo in the long} is not so impossible practically if we take it to mean that he becomes invisible to the chorus and Clytemnestra only. On the other hand, with Apollo on the stage, the chorus’ lines at 149-154 take on dramatic force: Apollo is on stage listening as the chorus issues the first salvo in the long
war of hectoring and criticism in which Apollo and the Erinyes engage throughout the play. It is remarkable that the Erinyes should berate Apollo, whether or not he is on stage (they are in his sanctuary), but his driving them away at 179 is more dramatically coherent as a reaction to the lines of accusation they have just uttered if he had been actually present to hear them.

If Clytemnestra were on stage during the parodos there would be no entry at its end, which would be unusual, but this would not be absolutely exceptional, since there are a number of places in Aeschylus and elsewhere where this happens. In the Suppliants Danaus has come on with the chorus. While there is a delayed entry during this scene by Pelasgus (234), there is nevertheless no entry at the end of the song. The “entry” of Orestes in the Choephoroi (212; SA 248, 337) is no entry at all, since he has remained on stage during the parodos – his being in hiding does not remove him from the action of the scene, only from the awareness of Electra and her retinue. Here, as in Euripides’ Electra and Sophocles’ Oedipus at Colonus, there is no reason to suppose that the characters who go into hiding leave the stage. In fact, it makes more dramatic sense for characters who have resolved to hide in order to gather information (Choephoroi 20-21: Oedipus at Colonus 114-115; Electra 111-112) before making themselves available to the entering chorus and the characters associated with it to stay on the stage, so that the fact that the parodos is being spied on remains evident in the staging. In the Choephoroi Orestes and Pylades may retire to the door of the skene, as Taplin implies (SA 336), but they surely do not go through it – this would remove them from the chorus from whom they intend to learn information by the rather dense (and soundproof) barrier of a wall. Indeed, if the skene at this point represents the house of Atreus, it would be impossible for Orestes and Pylades to go inside, since they would
have to knock on the door, tell a lie about who they are,\textsuperscript{127} and still manage to spy on the parodos as it unfolds. Here then would be a scene following the parodos without an entry.

The scene following the opening choral section of the \textit{Eumenides} would be another place where there was no entrance after the parodos, if we keep Apollo on after the exit of Orestes at 90-93.\textsuperscript{128} There is no reason for him to leave – and his presence during the chorus’ song at 142-177 would eliminate the only other place in Aeschylus where the chorus speaks to an absent available character (that Apollo is available at this point is well established, since he has already spoken).

It would then not only be the \textit{Agamemnon} which contained a scene following the parodos without a major entry, but the \textit{Choephoroi} and the \textit{Eumenides} as well – surely enough evidence that, for the \textit{Oresteia} at least, concerns over the lack of a significant entry after the parodos should not delay us long. Another consequence would be that in all three plays of the trilogy the parodos happens in the presence of a silent character. Each play opens under the sign of silence, and there are real thematic and dramatic reasons to have silent characters overlook the entrance of the chorus.

Two further arguments for bringing Clytemnestra on at the end of the parodos establish nothing conclusively. That it is common for the chorus to enter in ignorance and have the situation explained to them after their song (\textit{SA} 283) is not at issue here, since in a number of plays the character who explains things to the chorus is onstage during the parodos,\textsuperscript{129} so Clytemnestra’s presence during the song would pose no difficulty. That, on the other hand, the end of the parodos is often a place for the entry of a “dominant, often ‘resident’ character” (\textit{SA}
is not a hard and fast rule, and given strong reasons for bringing her on before this, the failure of Clytemnestra to conform to this general convention presents no significant problem.

Taplin offers one further argument: actors who are on stage during the parodos are usually brought on in the prologue and not after the first lines of the chorus (SA 282-283). But Taplin himself adduces five plays in which characters come on either with or shortly after the chorus does.\textsuperscript{130} Here the real point to Taplin’s argument is that in all other situations where an actor enters either with or after the chorus in the parodos there is an organic integration of actor and chorus which does not seem to obtain in the \textit{Agamemnon}. In the \textit{Suppliant} Danaus is closely associated with the chorus, as is Electra with hers in the \textit{Choephoroi}. Oedipus and Antigone in the \textit{Oedipus at Colonus}, Iphigenia in the \textit{Iphigenia at Tauris}, and Hector in the \textit{Rhesus}, all characters who are on during the parodos, are given lines during it. But here the point of Clytemnestra’s appearance on stage during the parodos is precisely her silence and her distance from the chorus. The dominant character of her relationship with the chorus is distance, separation, and silence. The silencing discourse that dominates the parodos, as we have argued, implies some sovereign figure. This is unquestionably Clytemnestra; she is the one that avenges the crime the chorus narrates. Their repeated attempts to take back what they say in the parodos will only have dramatic sense if Clytemnestra is there listening to them, and if the possibility exists for her to become the healer they ask for (she never does).

The argument against Clytemnestra’s presence during the parodos rests on the assumption “that Clytemnestra’s silence after 103 would be unexplained and inexplicable” (SA
283; see also Silences 90). But in fact the silent presence of Clytemnestra during the parodos is an example of what Taplin considers an important or significant silence in Greek tragedy:

When the silence is an important one, the other characters will talk about the silent person and his silence. For example, they can talk about how long the person has been silent, and why he is silent; or, if they do not know why, they can speculate on the motive. They can address the silent person, ask him why he is silent, plead, console, torment — and meet with no reply. They can anticipate when and how he will break his silence; and can beg him to break it. And so the breaking of the silence can become an important moment. The silent person's first lines may reflect, or may somehow belie, the emotions which underlay his silence.\(^{131}\)

In 83-103 the chorus addresses Clytemnestra, asks her to break her silence, and speculates on why she cannot speak. Clytemnestra's silence is the centre of concern for this chorus, here and later on as well, and there is no reason to want to get rid of her here because her silent presence would be superfluous or somehow dramatically messy.

After an initial barrage of questions, the chorus gives the reason for their asking — the city is in ritual uproar, all the altars burn with offerings, and the royal house itself smokes with sacrifices. But these circumstances also incidentally suggest a reason for Clytemnestra to be silent, a reason that the chorus raises at 97-98, before it is certain that she will be silent:

\[\text{τούτων λόγωσέ} \ ο \ τι \ καί \ δυνάτον \ kai \ δήμις\]

Speak on these matters what you can and what is lawful ...

This is the only clue we have to what (if anything definite) Clytemnestra might have been doing before she came on stage, and what state she is currently in.\(^{132}\) Greek ritual practice often involved various forms of speech control. We know already of the silence imposed during sacrifices. In addition, hero shrines often inspired silence on the part of passers-by,\(^{133}\) and the
Semnai Theai (so important in the Oresteia for their identification with the Eumenides, proposed possibly for the first time in this trilogy) had a cult practice which enjoined silence. Clytemnestra has been involved in sacrifices to chthonic deities like the Semnai (89) and to heroes (88-90). She may, in fact, have sacrificed to the Erinyes (the Semnai Theai in the Aeschylean thematic) at this point:

ε̣λλά μέν ὑ τῶν ἐμῶν ἔλειξας,
χρός οὖν οὖν, γυρολία μειλήματα,
καὶ προκήκτεμι δείπνοι ἐπὶ ἄρχαρ πυρὸς
ἐξαινὸ ...  

You have taken much of mine, wineless libations, unmixed appeasements, and I burned nightly feasts on the fires’ hearth ... (Eumenides 106-110)

This may well refer back to one of the sacrifices she performed at the opening of the trilogy. If Clytemnestra is or has recently been sacrificing to the Semnai, the Erinyes, or the Eumenides, and if the chorus suspects this, it is reasonable that 97-98 might be an explicit reference to the possibility that she is ritually prohibited from speaking at this point.

The request for Clytemnestra to speak which begins at 97 modulates into an explanation of why the chorus needs her to speak: they cannot interpret the current craze for sacrificing, and although it gives them hope (101-102), they also feel intermittent attacks of worry (99-100, 103). They need a healer (παθών, 98) who would cure their psychological ills through speech. One of the consistent rules of the first two plays of the trilogy is that there is no healing, through words or otherwise, and the healer (Apollo Παΐαν) and the well-omened utterance (paean) are both banished from the scene (see Chapter Four). So this reference to a healer has not only local significance, but also a broader thematic importance as well.
Having requested a speech from Clytemnestra, and not having received one, they make further reference to it in the opening lines of the strophic section of the ode, which sets up the nature of what follows (and relates it to its character as silencing discourse):

κύριος εἰμὶ δρασθὲν διὸν κράτος αἰτίον ἀνδρῶν
ἐκτελέσων ἢ τι γὰρ οὐδὲν καταπνεῖει
Πείθώ, τμολπάν ἀλκαϊτ σύμφυτος αἰών.

[Well you may not be able to speak but] I have authority to declare the fated command of the journey for men in their prime, since Persuasion still breathes over me from the gods [...] my proper age. (104-106)

Κύριος εἰμὶ δρασθὲν does not mean that they were present at the events they relate, but either that (1) they, unlike Clytemnestra, are subject to no ritual injunction against speech, and therefore have the authority to speak; or (2) they are capable of telling the story that follows – but because (γάρ) Peitho is with them. I do not see why we cannot understand these lines in both senses. What is at stake at this moment in the parodos is both the fact that the elders are excluded from Clytemnestra’s plans (they do not know what is going on, although they can guess), and the possibility of their acting as a council (presumably their role under Agamemnon; see below), advising through persuasion. The elders’ thought process in the space between 103 and 104 may be this:

If Clytemnestra does not answer because she is ritually prohibited from doing so, then there is a good possibility that she has been communicating with dark forces, and (given what we know about the circumstances at the beginning of the expedition against Troy) is contemplating revenge. This is only a conjecture, but we should act in the only way we can – by speaking – in an attempt to avert any such action on her part.

Everything that follows (and we have discussed much of it above) is a very carefully uttered attempt to demonstrate that Agamemnon’s guilt is not unproblematic, and also to unsay, to un-
actualise those aspects of the events at Aulis that might lead to retaliation by Clytemnestra. We can take the strophic section of the parodos as an extremely delicate attempt to advocate, before a judge, against a certain course of action (a “speech for the defence”). Imagining that she might be a vengeful figure, they try to re-configure her as healer, one who might prevent an inauspicious utterance from becoming actual.

We have already discussed how the aposiopesis at 248f is designed to stop the progressive action of actualisation that underlies the chorus’ narrative of horrors, and how this depends on the chorus’ awareness of someone capable of overhearing their narrative. We have also seen that the sovereign has ambiguous silence as a major characteristic. Clytemnestra is there, Clytemnestra is silent and discussed as such by the chorus. Their strange final line before her first utterance, οὐδὲ σιγάσῃ ἄκαμος (“we will not begrudge your silence,” 263), may be a reference to this – we respect your silence (we would prefer it, if your speaking is to be that of a vengeful judge, to condemn Agamemnon), especially if it is a mark of your inability to say anything good.

Clytemnestra’s silent presence during the parodos is neither “unexplained” nor “inexplicable.” Rather it is directly addressed by the chorus, and her status is definitely articulated by it. She is (potentially) a silent judge, the next emanation of Artemis’ (or Zeus’) vengeful anger against the house of Atreus, against whom there is needed a healer and purifier.

That Clytemnestra can be onstage, listening to the chorus as they try to cancel what they say even as they say it, is a mark of Aeschylus’ understanding of tragedy as a performance art, of
his mastery not only of plot and character, but also of stagecraft. A number of concluding notes in this regard may be valuable.

(1) Even as the chorus engages in silencing discourse, Clytemnestra stands above and behind them, silent, already fully in control of the door of the *skene*. The basic structure of silencing discourse, that we silence ourselves out for fear of some powerful sovereign, is enacted dramatically in the stage business.

(2) While Clytemnestra’s silence is opposed to the silencing of the chorus, and the two refer to and mutually construct each other, she is placed geographically (in terms of the stage) beside or near Apollo Agyieus, the apotropaic figure of Apollo that stands by the door and protects the house. This is the first of a number of oppositions between Apollo and others in the *Oresteia*, of which the most important is the conflict between Apollo and the Erinyes in the *Eumenides*. But here the relationship between Clytemnestra and Agyieus is unclear— the chorus certainly sees Apollo as apotropaic, a figure of the healer. But they also request that Clytemnestra become such a figure. That she is not a healer but rather a destroyer is signified explicitly by her silence, since the chorus asks her to speak, and imply that by speaking she would become a healer (97-99). But the Agyieus is also silent, and it is not clear that the silent stone will in fact be a healer, either. If the chorus looks to Agyieus, Πατάκας, Apollo to solve or heal the wounds that afflict Argos, their failure to fit Clytemnestra into this role may make us wonder if they will succeed with the god either. But initially it would seem that the healer is opposed to the sovereign, that against Clytemnestra is set the healing potential of Apollo. This will be a greater concern in Chapter Four, but in what follows it will return as a problem.
(3) The structure and the tensions of the parodos are enacted throughout the *Agamemnon*, and, although there are complications, Clytemnestra’s role as sovereign is constant, as is the chorus’ self-silencing. This is what we have to discuss next: the position Clytemnestra occupies, and her relationship with the chorus.

**Tyrannical and democratic sovereignties**

If silencing discourse activates or empowers the sovereign but formulates him as silent, then a picture emerges, in the process we have been tracing, of a kind of *stasis* or mutual silence between two sides. On the one hand, the sender of the silencing discourse argues for the maintenance of silence, but on the other hand, through this he configures the secondary receiver as silent. This makes it possible that the silence of the sovereign comes about through another silencing discourse, one in which the sovereign’s position is occupied, not by some other sovereign, but by the utterer of the initial silencing discourse. If, in other words, the primary silencing discourse authorises and empowers the sovereign, then the self-silencing of the sovereign implicitly empowers the utterer of the primary silencing discourse. Both positions are at war in their silencing, each simultaneously empowering the other and itself in a contest of silencing discourses.

It is impossible to establish the priority of silencing discourse over the existence of the sovereign, or vice-versa. Each is prior from the point of view of the other. Thus silencing discourse names a *silendum* because of the sovereign, but the sovereign is silent because the absence of silencing discourse would make an end of his authority, and the existence of silencing discourse depends on the silence of the sovereign. Silencing discourse posits the sovereign as
prior, the sovereign posits the utterer of the silencing discourse as prior. This is not to say that these two figures are identical. But they are alike in this, that each requires the other, and each is only fully visible to the degree that his sovereignty is posited by the other.

In political terms we can speak of democratic and tyrannical forms of sovereignty. That is, the one (tyrant, god, etc) is powerful through his position in the self-silencing of the many (people, chorus, mortals, etc), but because his occupation of this position depends on his own silence, by assuming sovereignty he implicitly empowers the many as sovereign in his own silencing discourse. Where there is the one (the single sovereign) we should expect to find the other (the many as sovereign), each both powerful and weak in respect of each other, through the exercise of its own and the narration of the other’s silence. So in Aristotle’s Politics, discussed above, the tyrant’s power comes from his ability to silence his subjects, which he accomplishes through the invisibility of his agents, that are imagined to be everywhere. But in silencing himself to ensure the silence of his subjects he acknowledges and even creates their power, which is implied in his need to have them silenced in the first place.

We will explore this in the relations between the chorus and Clytemnestra in the Agamemnon. Clytemnestra will appear as the single “tyrannical” sovereign, occupying the position of secondary receiver in the silencing discourse of the chorus, but her own frequent silences will configure the chorus as the sovereign many, author of her own self-silencing.
Clytemnestra’s allegiances and antagonisms

To understand her role in the *Agamemnon*, it is vital that we take account of Clytemnestra’s silence and its contribution to her configuration as sovereign. She is not unambiguous, but it is certain that, in the *Agamemnon*, she is the last in a chain of vengeful figures that includes Artemis and possibly also Zeus. In evaluating her character, and discussing the role of silence in it, I analyse the clearest exposition of her allegiances and associations that the *Agamemnon* provides – her “trial” at lines 1372-1576.

I begin with an analysis of how Clytemnestra’s sovereignty is established in this scene. This will lead to an evaluation of the nature of her sovereignty and to an appraisal of the sovereignty that opposes her. While there is no doubt that she occupies a position of sovereignty, an ambiguity remains concerning whether she is herself the sovereign, or whether some other cosmic force is sovereign and she is only a prosthetic, standing in for that force. Clytemnestra claims both that she is the agent of Agamemnon’s death (1380-1398; 1404-1406; 1552-1553), and that it is not she who is responsible, but some other spirit (1432-1433; 1475-1480; 1499-1504). This ambiguity contributes to the chorus’ confusion, and ultimately assists in their unwilling capitulation to the claims Clytemnestra and Aegisthus make to command over Argos.

At 1432-1433 Clytemnestra raises the possibility for the first time that she did not act alone, but had accomplices:

> μ' τὴν τέλειον τῆς ἐμῆς παιδὸς Δικην,
> "Αθην 'Ερινῶν ὦ; αἰσι τῶν ἔσφαξεν ἐγώ ...

By Justice, accomplished for my child, and Destruction and the Erinys, with whom I slaughtered him...
Clytemnestra is harmonizing her action with the description of her that Calchas had provided in the chorus' parodos:

[...] 

... A kindred worker of strife, without respect for man; for a fearful treacherous house-steward, stirred up again, stays behind, a remembering child-avenging wrath. (151-155)

The language of this passage had already been recalled in 1405-1406, where Clytemnestra calls the murder of Agamemnon τήρει δεξιάς χειρός ἔργον, δικαιας τέκτονος (“the deed of this right hand, a just worker”). With these words she explicitly associates herself with the prediction the chorus had related before her in the opening of the play. This deliberate echo of what she had overheard in the parodos uses the chorus’ own words against them. Clytemnestra is implicitly claiming to have fulfilled their symbols.

More important than her use of the chorus’ language to justify herself (which she does again at 1475) is her relationship to the powers she has named. At 1432-1433 she claims to have slaughtered Agamemnon with Justice, Destruction, and the Erinys; at 1475-1477 she encourages the chorus in appealing to the τριπάχυντος δαίμων γένους τήρει (“the thrice-gorged spirit of this race”); and at 1497-1504 she claims to be the embodiment of the curse on the house:

αιχεῖς εἶναι τόδε τούφρον ἰμόν,  
τήρος ἐπιλειχθείς,  
'Αγαμεμνονίας εἰναὶ μ' ἀλοχόν·  
φανταξόμενος δὲ γυναικὶ νεκρῷ  
τούτῳ ὁ παλαιὸς ἄγαμος ἀλάστωρ  
'Αρεῶς χαλεποῦ θεονατόρος  
τόδε ἀπέτεισεν  
τέλεων νεαροῖς ἐπιδύσας.
You say this deed is mine, reasoning in this way: that I am the wife of Agamemnon—but the old bloody avenger of Atreus the harsh feaster, taking the appearance of this dead man’s woman, has repaid him thus, sacrificing a grown man in exchange for children.

She had explained how the δαιμον worked at 1478-1480: ἐκ τοῦ γὰρ ἔρως αἰματολοχός νείφα τρέφεται ("from it a bloodthirsty lust is nurtured in the belly") — the agent acts herself, but as an extension of the δαιμον or as a receptacle of its wrath. So even after Clytemnestra’s explicit claim that she is the incarnation of the ancient avenger there is no inconsistency in 1552-3 “he died at our hand.”

The chorus’ lines after 1504 indicate the resolution, in Clytemnestra’s favour, of the immediate moral and political question that is raised by the chorus at the beginning of the scene, whether or not they have the authority to judge Clytemnestra for her action. The chorus is effectively defeated before Aegisthus enters with the threat of force. This is because the distinction between private curse and public responsibility is elided when the chorus interprets Clytemnestra’s δαιμον as a manifestation of Olympian authority. Their vague worry about Justice and her return to the house at 1535-1536 turns into a recognition that Clytemnestra’s deed is part of the justice of Zeus:

φέρει φόβοντ’, ἑκτίνει δ’ ὁ καιρόν·
μήμεν δὲ μήμνοιτος ἐν Ἑρώω Διὸς
πατέρ’ τὸν ἔμελλεν: Ἡσίμον γὰρ.

Who plunders is plundered, and the killer is revenged: and to suffer remains for the doer, so long as Zeus remains on his throne. For it is decreed. (1562-1564)

This sentence may turn against Clytemnestra as well, but it integrates her into the chorus’ theology and absolves her from immediate and easy condemnation. Henceforth she is to be seen
as part of the ruin that comes from Zeus upon the house, and simple judgement is impossible 
(δύσμαχα δ’ ἔστι κρῖναι, “it is hard to decide” 1561). It is no surprise that Clytemnestra approves 
their interpretation of events (1567-8). 

It emerges from this hostile collaboration between the old men of Argos and 
Clytemnestra that the destruction of Agamemnon is demanded on divine authority (Zeus and 
Justice) and that Clytemnestra is, at this moment, their agent. That is, as the agent of the 
(invisible and ambiguously silent) sovereign who gives the chorus the reason for its silences, she 
is able herself to occupy the sovereign’s position. Her own speech patterns corroborate this. 
Everything she said before 1372, she tells us, had been designed to deceive, to conceal her role 
as avenger (1371-2). The cunning ambiguity of her speech had fostered a sense of foreboding in 
the chorus. Now they marvel repeatedly at the boldness of her utterances:

We are amazed at your tongue, how bold of speech you are, who boast so over your 
husband. (1399-1400) 

She is not merely manly in her utterances, but bestial as well. Μεγαλάμπητις εἰ. περιφέρεια δ’ Ἴλαιας 
(“you are bold of enterprise, and you bark out arrogant words”), they tell her (1426-7). λάχω 
designates the clanging of metal (Iliad XIV.25) and the shrieking of animals (Iliad XXII.14 of 
birds). A word similar in sound and sense (υλαγμάτα, “barkings”) will return to describe the 
speech of the chorus (1672 – cf. Odyssey XII.85). The discussion of Clytemnestra’s beastly 
oises returns at 1472-1474:

εἶπὶ δὲ σῶματος δίκαιον 
κῦρακος ἐξῆρυ ρώ σταθείσει ἔκνομος

We are amazed at your tongue, how bold of speech you are, who boast so over your 
husband. (1399-1400) 

She is not merely manly in her utterances, but bestial as well. Μεγαλάμπητις εἰ. περιφέρεια δ’ Ἴλαιας 
(“you are bold of enterprise, and you bark out arrogant words”), they tell her (1426-7). λάχω 
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birds). A word similar in sound and sense (υλαγμάτα, “barkings”) will return to describe the 
speech of the chorus (1672 – cf. Odyssey XII.85). The discussion of Clytemnestra’s beastly
Standing over the body like a hateful crow, she ventures to sing an unmelodious hymn. (1472-1474)

But these sounds are not merely the sounds of dogs, metal, or crows. They are the sounds of vengeance, of Justice in actu. In sound and sense λάσκω closely resembles κλάζω, used in the Iliad to describe the coming of Apollo in vengeance on the Achaeans (1.46, 490). 'Εκνώμως ἵμαν ἵμαν ("sing an unmelodious hymn," 1473-1474) recalls the sounds of the Erinyes, as they are described by the chorus in the Agamemnon ("without lyre," 990) and by themselves in Eumenides 328-333:

ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ τεθυμένῳ
τὸδε μέλος, παρακατά,
παραφορὰ φυσικαλῆς,
ἵμαν ἐς Ἐρινύων
δέσμιος φενών, ἀρφό-
μυκτὸς, αἰὼν Ἰθαγοῖς.

Over the one sacrificed to us we sing this song, maddening, hounding, destroying the wits, a hymn of the Erinyes that binds the mind, a song without lyre that desiccates mortals.

This is nothing other than the tumult that arises when justice is dragged about (Hesiod, Works and Days 220)—the speech-designating-silence of the sovereign, as we have discussed it above.

So it is clear that, in her allegiances (as an agent of Zeus, Artemis, Dike) and in her speech patterns (silence broken only by dangerous and decisive utterances) Clytemnestra functions as the sovereign designated by silencing discourse should.

Clytemnestra's argument in the second half of the scene will return in the Eumenides. Orestes' defence, like Clytemnestra's, is that he was only the agent or emanation of a greater
force of vengeance (Eumenides 465-467). There the argument stumps Athena and requires a form of adjudication which is fundamentally different from anything that had come before it (470-471 et seq. – see Chapter Five). One of the issues that lead to the invention of the sworn and silent Areopagus is the question whether agent or source should be held responsible in culpable action, and it leads to a crisis of jurisdiction. There is no mechanism or authority capable of adjudicating this problem in our scene of the Agamemnon, and Clytemnestra’s “he made me do it” effectively saves her from the spontaneous public outcry that had been threatened. Her argument comes as the last resort in a legal dispute over jurisdiction. She is threatened with the judgement of the people, one that might force her into exile:

[...] δημοσφόος τ' ἄρας
ἀπεδίνας ἀπέταμες; ἀποτόλεις δ' ἔση,
μύσος ἄθεμον ἄστοις.

Do you judge as worthless the curse that is spoken by the people and cut it away? You will be sent away, mightily hated by the town. (1409-1411)

This will be the result, the chorus warns, of her continued boldness of speech, if she continues to claim bluntly and with pride her agency in the murder of Agamemnon. The chorus is presenting itself as a medium or agent of the demos as a whole, which has a particular form of sovereignty of its own. It is associated with Agamemnon, who, in the exchange with Clytemnestra, resists the invitation to step on the crimson carpet with a reference to the power of democratic rumour - φήμη γε μέντοι δημόσθρους μέγα οθένει (“the rumour that rumbles through the city is very strong,” 938). And earlier, in his first speech of refusal, an Olympian ethics had been coupled with a concern over rumour (926-928):

χωρίς ποδαψήστρων τε καὶ τῶν ποικίλων
Fame shouts by itself, without foot-wipings and embroideries, and to have a modest disposition is a great gift of the gods.

Agamemnon’s concern for the volatile instrument of judgement that is the demos contrasts starkly with Clytemnestra’s apparent disregard of it. Κληριδῶν and ωήμη have an inauspicious force capable of destroying a man. We have already seen this concern in the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and now we see it again in a more sympathetic form, as the returning king attempts to integrate himself into the delicate political arrangement of the archaic city-state. Not insignificantly, Agamemnon’s worry about democratic rumours is in the context of an ethical argument against hubris, against crossing the barrier between mortal and immortal. He is concerned not to make hubristic claims, thus bringing himself to the attention of vengeful forces.

He shares this sentiment with the chorus, who is his ally in ideological matters. They explicitly associate the rumours of the demos with the justice of Zeus at 456-471:

The speech of the townspeople is heavy when it is wrathful, and and he pays the debt of a curse approved by the people. (456-457)

[...] To be too famous is really serious. For the thunder of Zeus strikes their houses – I choose an unenvied happiness. (468-471)
Agamemnon’s strategy regarding the conjunction of the rumour of the townspeople and the thunder of Zeus is to integrate the *demos* into the responsibility of government, through the establishment of a Homeric-style council, which he promises to undertake at 844-850. Sensitive to the power of the people as a whole, he proposes common deliberations, legitimising and controlling the voice of the people through a council. The conversion of the town’s rumours into a more stable and trustworthy instrument is shown here to be a device for the institution of good government (*καὶ τὸ μὲν καλὸς ἔχων ὅπως χρονίζων καὶ μενεὶ θυσιατέον, “and we must consider how what is going well may continue,” 846-7). It is also a medicinal procedure to cure the ills of the state:

> ὅτω δὲ καὶ δεῖ φαρμάκων παιωνίων.
> ἦτοι κέαντες ἡ τεμάντες εὐφράνως
> πειρασώμεσθα πῷμ᾽ ἀποστρέψαι νόσου.
>
> And where there is a need for healing medicines, we will with good sense try to alleviate the agony of disease, either by cauterization or by surgery. (848-850)

In contrast to the conciliatory and constitutionalising position of Agamemnon, Clytemnestra disregards (*ἀπέδικες*) and cuts out (*ἀπέταμες*) the voice of the people. Where Agamemnon had proposed a surgical procedure that included the *demos* and was marked by counsel and sanity (*εὐφράνως*), Clytemnestra excises the people, and does it in a manner that seems to display madness or the influence of dangerous potions (1407-1409). The chorus had asked Clytemnestra *παιών τε γενοῦ τησδε μερίμνης* (“become a healer to these cares,” 98-99); now it emerges that Agamemnon was the healer, and she the disease, a mad shedder of blood in danger of taking on herself the public curse.
Here we should recall the structure of silencing discourse as it has emerged in our analysis. In the process of unsaying or suppressing some inauspicious utterance the utterer of silencing discourse makes an appeal to some figure to intervene with the sovereign in order to prevent the actualisation of the inauspicious utterance. In all cases where this shadowy advocate is specified, it is Apollo (146; 255-7) – elsewhere there is a connection with him that is likely (as at 1074-1079) or a connection with παῖων (“healing”) in the wording (246-7). This figure stood opposed to the sovereign and presented the possibility of safety from the ill-omened utterance; he is often Apollo as healer or purifier (Παῖας, Αγιεύς).

In fact what emerges, then, is a discovery of the real roles of each of the parties to the action in the Agamemnon: the king is παῖων, a healer, prepared to perform surgery on the city; his wife, although there were hopes that she might have been a healer, turns out instead to be the vengeful authority, there to carry out the realisation of inauspicious symbols. Rather than the cure, she is the cause of the illness. Thus the opposition between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra is that between the healer and the disease, the democrat and the tyrant, the speaker and the silent. It reflects the opposition which appeared visually during the parodos, when Clytemnestra stood opposed to the Apollo Agyieus, purifier of the house, last bulwark of defence against pollution. The terrible irony in this and in the chorus’ previous mistaking Clytemnestra for a healer and Agamemnon as a disease (in the second stasimon, where his crimes are dwelt upon) is reflected in a brilliant pun during Clytemnestra’s “confession:”

παῖω δὲ νῦν δίς, κὰν δυοὶ οἰμώγματι

I strike him (παῖο) twice, and with two groans ... (1385)
No healer but silent and anonymous curse, *her* παιόν is a death-blow, eliciting from the now
dying hope of Argos the inauspicious sounds of a poorly silenced sacrificial victim (οἰμώγμασιν).

The sonic equation (α ληψία?) of παιόν with παιό helps to contextualise the παιόν
'Ερινών ("paean of the Erinyes") – a disharmonious, vengeful sound, an utterance that kills, using the same procedures as medicine, but for destructive ends. At the same time the groans of
Agamemnon (1343, 1345) mark the beginning of Clytemnestra’s end; her act is marred by an inauspicious utterance that gives the game away and, picked up by the sensitive medium of the *demos*, is amplified into a public curse.

The problematic status that Clytemnestra occupies, as both sovereign and agent of the sovereign, is what endangers her at this point in the play. As judge *simplex* she is capable of claiming justice for herself and criticising the chorus for its double standard (1412-1421). But the fact that she is only an agent, motivated by the δαίμων of the house but still responsible for her actions, subjects her to the possibility of a judgement. Not insignificantly, the chorus is an ἐπίκοος (επέκοος, "overseer") and a δικαστής (δικαστής, "judge") during this scene (1420, 1421), and Clytemnestra accepts the possibility that they may have the ability to judge her (1422-1423), although she threatens that she may have more authority than they (1424-5). But the chorus will fail to constitute an *ad hoc* jury before the gates of the house of Atreus, partly because Clytemnestra will muddy the question by introducing a legal distinction between doer and planner, and partly because she is able in 1412-1425 ("Now you judge me worthy of exile, though you said nothing against this man [Agamemnon]") to demonstrate their own lack of neutral ground – their allegiances to the old king force them to recognise that they are already
implicitly part of the conflict that had led to his murder. These two considerations lead them to an aporia that forces them to retreat from their position as a jury:

\[ \text{δύσμαχα δ' ἐστὶ κρῖναι.} \]

This blame answers blame, and it is hard to reach a decision. (1560-1561)

Their use of \textit{krino} is new, since before Clytemnestra had described them with \textit{dikazein} (1412). \textit{Krino} is a verb used of decisions reached in court cases where the issue is not easily decided through procedure,\(^{137}\) and will only become possible in the third play of the trilogy (see Chapter Five).

\textbf{The other silence}

The sovereign silences himself in order to silence the others. This establishes his authority, but also establishes theirs. If Clytemnestra’s silence during the parodos of the \textit{Agamemnon} is the silence of the sovereign, then we should expect to find another silence opposed to but created by it. This is in effect what the self-silencing of the chorus in the parodos represents. They silence themselves out of the fear that something they may say will be realised by the sovereign. But at the same time they are aware that their silence reinforces the status quo, here understood as Clytemnestra’s \textit{κράτος}, and that the possibility of their breaking silence represents the possibility of a revolutionary change in the balance of power.

That is, there are, in the self-silencing of the chorus, two separate but mutually related moments: (1) silence out of fear of retaliation by the sovereign; and (2) silence as a threat of retaliation against the sovereign.
Silence out of fear of retaliation

This is most clearly indicated in the conversation with the herald (502-680), a passage in which the propriety of certain forms of speech is subterraneously debated. The scene is a confrontation of two subject-positions: the chorus, still subject to the authority of the queen; and the herald from Agamemnon’s army, as such subject to his sovereignty. Far from being “the only character in this tragedy who displays an unqualified optimism,” he is not merely a comic figure whose “vision goes no deeper than the surface of the situation.” Rather, he is inserted into an extremely delicate situation that requires all of his ability as an interpreter and as a tactful speaker. He had expected unmitigated joy at his return (502-541), but finds instead nervousness, unease, and silent, brooding gloom. His ability to manoeuvre through these is sorely tested – and rather than coming off as an uneducated commoner, he shows himself entirely up to the delicate nature of the situation.

For our purposes, the relevant action begins at 542, when the chorus’ speech turns enigmatic, as it tends to do: τετυπης ἄρι ητα τήδε’ ἐπήβαλοι νόσου (“this was a pleasant disease that came over you”). The chorus’ references to a “pleasant disease,” implying cryptically that some diseases are worse than others, leads the herald to ask for expansion, so as to “master the expression” (543). The chorus replies that they longed for the army as much as the army longed for them – so much so that πάλαν ἄμωμος ἐκ φοβε resentment (μ’ ἀναστένειν (“I groaned greatly from my dark wits,” 546). Again the herald asks for a more explicit explanation (547), to which the chorus replies:

πάλαι τὸ σιγάν φάρμακον βλάβης ἐχω

I have long held silence as a remedy against harm (548).
Having implied that they suffer from an unpleasant disease that contrasts with his pleasant one, the chorus now cryptically alludes to what it is by describing the remedy (φάμακον) – silence. We should recall here that the chorus has suffered from the beginning from cares that afflict their heart (100-103), and of which they have already asked Clytemnestra to be a healer (98-99). The herald understands immediately and diagnoses the chorus’ disease as fear:

καὶ πῶς ἀπόντων κοράκων ἔτρεις τινάς?

How so? While the master was away did you fear somebody? (549)

Unto death, the chorus replies (550).

Silence could be a remedy for what ails the chorus only in so far as what ails them is a fear of the consequences of speaking. The precise pathology of their disease is discussed in the third stasimon, which we will address below. But the warning that silence is a remedy against harm is more explicitly relevant here because it indicates that speech has consequences – that is, that unguarded speech could result in punitive activity by the sovereign. They, like Clytemnestra, must be careful to speak to the occasion (κατιός), lest they be recognised as enemies and combated as such (this eventually happens when Aegisthus enters).

The herald, who like the chorus is aware of the dangers of misspeaking (636-652), replies not with an empty-minded response to a foreboding statement, but with the most explicit justification of self-silencing that we have met in the play. Ἐπὶ γὰρ πέμπται ("for things have turned out well," 551) is not a symptom of the herald’s "fail[ure] to mark the sinister tone underlying the last words of the old men"¹⁴⁰ but is rather a delicate steering of the conversation away from dangerous utterances with celebratory speech. This is evident from what follows:
In the length of time one might say of the same things that some have ended well, and others have come out worse. Who save the gods is always without pain his whole life? (551-554)

Do not dwell on τά ἐπίμομφα (the blameworthy) but on what is good. What follows is paraleipsis – “oh yes we suffered. But I say nothing of this, for the toil is past, for the dead as well as the living” (555-573), καὶ πολλὰ καίγειν συμφοραῖς καταξιῶ ... (“and I think it right, given what’s happened, to rejoice greatly,” 574). It is advice against uttering the bad things, and for keeping our language auspicious:

τοιαύτα χρή κλίνοντας εὐλογεῖν πόλιν
καὶ τοὺς στραγγηνοὺς:

When you hear these things you must speak well of the city and of the generals... . (580-581)

That is, εὐφημεῖτε.

The chorus accepts for the moment his advice on the quality of good speech, and introduces Clytemnestra, who herself focuses clearly on the qualities of euphemia and on the proprieties of feminine speech (594-597). There is a constant concern on the part of all participants in this scene (although we may doubt the ingenuousness of Clytemnestra’s lines) to sanitise their speech in such a way that they will not be the subject of retaliation from some sovereign over-hearer.
Silence as the threat of retaliation

The conversation between the chorus and the herald reveals a deep unease on the part of both parties about the consequences of speech – and Clytemnestra’s references to euphemia at 587f indicate that a major concern to everyone during this scene has been the preservation of auspicious speech. The chorus in particular is concerned to keep silence, it would appear, out of worry over what retaliatory action Clytemnestra might take against them. But the reasons for the retaliation they fear are not simply that some utterance on their part might get in the way of Clytemnestra’s plans. The chorus is not censoring itself out of fear that passing information to the herald (and thus to Agamemnon) would count as a betrayal – there is no betrayal of a queen they do not trust, and there can be no betrayal when they are not in possession of any certain intelligence. Rather, what becomes clear when this chorus does face retaliation for its utterances is that their uncensored speech poses, in and of itself, a threat to the power possessed by Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. The chorus’ capacity to speak freely represents, in fact, the threat of a judgement directed against Clytemnestra and capable of destroying her grasp on power in Argos. Just as Clytemnestra is an agent of the vengeful forces that oppress the house of Atreus, and is at once both sole agent and emanation of an (absent) cause, so is the chorus potentially an instrument of a sovereignty that sits over and against the sovereignty of Clytemnestra.

We have already described how the self-silencing of the sovereign implicitly empowers the utterer of silencing discourse to occupy another position of authority vis-à-vis the sovereign he posits. The chorus silences itself out of fear of Clytemnestra and the complex of deities that have authority. But the self-silencing of Clytemnestra (which manifests itself sometimes as
silence and sometimes as ambiguous, misleading speech), because it is itself, albeit implicitly, the product of a silencing discourse, recognises the power of the chorus to "overhear" a direct utterance on her part and to take action. If the chorus is configured as the sovereign from the point of view of Clytemnestra, we should expect them to take on the characteristics of the sovereign as we outlined them above – an ambiguous silence that threatens utterances that pass judgement and that can potentially destroy the utterer of the silencing discourse.

At this point we should introduce a third possible censorship configuration. We have seen (1) censorship directed at some sender (the "I" of the *silendum*, "you" of the silencing discourse); and (2) self-censorship, which the chorus practices at the end of the parodos and Clytemnestra practices until 1372. But both of these forms of censorship are in fact only kinds of a more general and far more momentous form of censorship: this is (3) the attempt to silence, not our friend or ourselves, but the sovereign himself, to prevent his uttering the terrifying and destructive voice of *krainein* and *dikazein* that is often imagined not as clearly articulated speech but as a bestial or inhuman shrieking. Usually keeping the sovereign silent is only a matter of maintaining auspicious speech or action (being just, saying only what is auspicious). That is the content of the ethical counterpart of silencing discourse: it warns us not to give the sovereign the opportunity to condemn us. The problem is that once it has been broken, or once self-censorship has failed, the machinery of the sovereign's judgement does not provide a single, simple end.

The logic is as inexorable as it is circular: the noises made by the sovereign are themselves inauspicious (they are shrieks, etc) and as inauspicious they bring upon their utterer the threat of retaliation from another (or another manifestation of the same) authority. This is possible because the sovereign is not absolutely separate. A machinery of agents is at work (Clytemnestra
and Aegisthus are only agents of Artemis, Justice, and perhaps Zeus), in which the agent both is and is not responsible for his actions and utterances. In as much as the agent is not the sovereign per se, he or she is subject to reprisals from other figures who can present themselves as agents of some other sovereign. These agents are then subject to reprisals if their retaliation is accompanied by some (seeming) hubris, and so on.

The reprisals will take the form of silencing discourse directed (after the fact) at the sovereign who has spoken. At this point, however, both the utterer of the silencing discourse and the utterer of the silendum will present themselves explicitly as representatives of sovereignty, and stasis will ensue. This is what happens in the confrontation between Aegisthus and the chorus (1576-1672). Both parties now claim sovereignty, both accuse the other of inauspicious speech, and each attempts to silence the other.

The chorus has already allied itself with the sovereignty of the many in the exchange with Clytemnestra (1407-1414; 1426-1430), and they first criticised her not for the murder itself but for her hybristic and inhuman speech (1399-1400, 1427, 1472-1474, see above) that disregarded the sovereignty of the people (1409-1410, see above). Defeated by Clytemnestra’s distinction between doer and planner, the chorus greets Aegisthus’ entrance as a revelation of the actual culpable cause, and after a vaunting speech in which Aegisthus claims the authority of Justice the chorus addresses him in nearly the same terms which they had used to address Clytemnestra:

Αἰγίσθος', ὑβαίνοντ' ἐν κακοῖσιν οὖ σέκου.
σὺ δ' ἄνδρα τούτῳ φῆς ἔκις κατακτανεῖν,
μόνος δ' ἐποικταν τῶνε βουλεύοντα φόνου·
οὐ φημ' ἀλώξειν ἐν δίκῃ τὸ σῶν κάρα
δημοκρισεῖν, σάλφ' ἵιθι, λευσίμονς ἀμάς.
Aegisthus, I do not honour he who is overweening (hubrizont') among calamity. And you say you willingly killed this man, and alone engineered this pitiful slaughter – I say that in the judgement your head will not escape the curses that will end in stoning at the hand of the people. (1611-1616)

That is, they criticise him for a speech that is hybristic. It is hybristic for at least two reasons: in identifying himself as the sole counsellor of the murder he makes himself culpable (see above); and, since he is culpable, by speaking at all he threatens everyone with pollution. Thus he will be cursed and stoned. Aegisthus has not even allowed himself the argument Clytemnestra used, that her actions were not intentional (1613). His only response to the threat of the democratic stoning is to answer sovereignty with sovereignty, force with force, and therefore he criticises the chorus for its inauspicious speech:

σὺ ταῦτα φωνεῖς, μεγάλη προσήμενος
κῶπη, κρατοῦσαν τῶν ἐπὶ ζυγὸν δοφός:

Do you speak thus, sitting below at the oar, when the masters are on the ship’s cockpit? (1617-1618)

While the chorus presses on the legal charge of counselling, Aegisthus repeatedly returns to the quality of their speech:

καὶ ταῦτα τάπη κλαμάτων ἀρχηγενή:
‘Ὀρφεῖ δὲ γλῶσσαν τὴν ἐναντίαν ἔχεις:
ο μὲν γὰρ ἄγε πάντα ἀπὸ φθορῆς χαρῆ,
οὐ δ’ ἀξιόθυμος νηπίος ἔλαγμασίν

These words as well are the original font of lamentations. You have the reverse of Orpheus’ tongue: he led all with the beauty of his voice, but you enrage with your idiotic barking. (1628-1632)

Here the chorus’ accusations are characterised as Aegisthus needs them to be seen – as “idiotic barking” – precisely the kind of utterances for which the chorus had criticised Clytemnestra. But
now it is they who are thus accused, and it is this idiotic sound that serves as the basis for Aegisthus’ attempt to silence them:

But these men pick the flowers of a vain tongue with me, and throw out such words, testing their fate (daimon), and fall short of good sense, being overweening (hubrisai) before the ruler. (1662-1664)

Blomfield’s supplement at 1664 (§ ‘идріоі) exactly captures the significance of these lines: if the chorus had accused Clytemnestra of boldness of tongue and Aegisthus of being overweening in calamity, Aegisthus now, in the final lines of the play, throws the full impact of silencing discourse against the chorus – now it is their tongue that tests the daіμων (luck, but also, no doubt, the spirit of vengeance), and their speech is an inappropriate crossing of boundaries, ἰδρίοι.

Extremely close to armed conflict (1649-1653), both Aegisthus and the chorus retreat from their extremely strong initial positions. The chorus, faced as early as 1639-1642 with the threat of force, abandons its democratic stance at 1646-1648, threatening Aegisthus instead with the exile Orestes (see also 1667). Aegisthus, dissuaded from using physical force by Clytemnestra, moves his claim to authority from his ownership of the royal treasury (1638-1639) to the daіμων (1664). The very uneasy stalemate that Clytemnestra engineers at the close of the play by advising Aegisthus

μὴ προτιμήσῃς ματαίων τῶν θ' ιδριμάτων ’έγώ,
καὶ σὺ Ὕρεσιν κρατοῦστε τῶνθε διωμάτων ’καλώς.

Do not worry too much about these specious barkings. I and you will set laws, ruling this house well. (1672-1673)
sees both parties dissociated from their initial sovereignty-allegiances (Aegisthus is now relying on the spirits, the chorus on an exile). It is thanks to the diplomacy of Clytemnestra and the insufficiencies of both Aegisthus and the chorus that armed conflict is avoided. But the stasis remains, and the danger of the chorus’ ugly noises is not dissipated.

While both Aegisthus and the chorus attempt to master one another through silencing discourse, it is important to note that the nature of the silendum in each case is different. When Aegisthus silences the chorus, the silendum is described as ἰάρια ("barking," referred to by its form) and it is censored because it comes from the non-governing class (1617-1618). This is censorship of speech-genre and subject, and is an attempt to reduce the capability of subject people to communicate in the open air, either by the threat of force or of the gods. It is not what the chorus says that is to be silenced, but that the chorus says anything at all. The silendum should, as we noted above, appear both as sign and cause, although we noted that in censorship of the subject and censorship of the code the cause was overlaid on the act of signifying. This is the case here – what makes the chorus dangerous is that they object vocally to the actions of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. This might suggest to us that Aegisthus wants the chorus silent and out of the public spaces precisely because they are, through their implicit associations with the people, in a position to destroy his power: he is concerned about the φάτις ἄρτων ("rumour of the townsman") and is trying to silence the sovereignty that opposes him. The measures attempted by Aegisthus and Clytemnestra to silence the chorus are exactly those taken by tyrants to maintain power – to silence the people by the threat of their intervention, and to reduce the possibility of revolution by reducing the viability of public gatherings and communication.
Clytemnestra’s instructions to the chorus at 1656-1657 are very little more than an attempt to disperse the collective agency that represents the power of the *demos*.

But if the attempt to silence the chorus is undertaken in terms of subject and speech genre, the attempt made by the chorus to control the tongues of both Clytemnestra and Aegisthus is unmistakably directed against the message. In boasting that they killed Agamemnon, they will bring retribution upon themselves (Clytemnestra’s legal distinction between doer and planner, although it is taken up by the chorus, is avant-garde and as yet not digestible by the machinery of justice. A confession of fact, regardless of the intent, is enough to condemn at this stage in the trilogy).

The chorus’ criticisms of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are much more like those types of censorship we have seen before in the play. So while the attempts to silence the chorus in this final scene are clearly attempts to overpower a dangerous democratic sovereignty, the chorus is not silencing the sovereignty of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. It is attempting, again, to maintain the status quo by enforcing the rules of auspicious speech. If the chorus represents, and is capable of mobilising, the democratic sovereignty that stands over against the tyrannical sovereignty of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, they still somehow hold off from a full exercise of this power. How this is so, and why, will be addressed in the next chapter.
Chapter Four:

Apollo and the Impossibility of Healing
In the parodos of the Agamemnon the utterer of silencing discourse, in addition to naming the silendum and indicating that some secondary receiver was the reason for his desire for silence, made an appeal to another figure who might be able to avert the disaster he feared. In Chapter Two I argued that this figure was Apollo, and Apollo in his capacity as healer (Agamemnon 146; 256-257). The configuration which places the sovereign and the healer around the utterance of silencing discourse is reflected in the staging at the door of the skene during the parodos: on the one side stands Clytemnestra, and on the other there is the cult figure of Apollo Agyieus.

It is not clear during the parodos which of these two figures is the healer and which is the sovereign. The chorus asks Clytemnestra to be the needed healer (ἀναλαμβάνειν τὸ γενός τῷ θόρος μεθίμως “consent, and become a healer to this care,” 98-99), and Apollo, through his kinship with Artemis – who is the sovereign in the story of misspeech and retribution that the chorus tries to unsay – might be capable of the kind of punishment characteristic of this kind of authority. He is certainly capable of governing laws of proper speech, as the chorus reminds Cassandra (1075), and he had played a role very like that of the sovereign in other canonical stories:

πολλὰ δ’ ἐπειτ’ ἀπάνευδε κιών ἐφαγ’ ὁ γεραιός
Ἀπόλλωνι ἀνακτὶ, τὸν ἑνόμος τέκε Αργόδος
κλεψιμενί, ἀργυρότεος, ὃς Χρύσων ἀμφιδένηκας
 [...] τόδε μοι κρητήνοι ἐσέληνεν.
τείσειαν Δαναοὶ ἔμα δάκρυα στόις βέλεστιν.
"ὢς ἀρατ’ εὐρύμενος, τού δ’ ἐκλυς Φοίνικος Ἀπόλλων,
βῇ δὲ κατ’ Οὐλώμποιο καρφίων χορμένος κυρ.,
τός ὀμοίωσιν ἐχθρὸν ἀκριβερέα τε φανέρην,
ἐκλαρείων δ’ ἢ δ’ οὔσοι ἐπ’ ἀμών χορμένων,
ἀυτοῦ κινηθέντος· ὃ δ’ ἦν νυκτὶ ἑοίκως.
And, having gone far away, [Chryses] besought lord Apollo, whom golden-haired Leto bore: “hear me, lord of the silver bow, you who inhabit Chryse [...] fulfil this hope for me: let the Danaans repay my tears with your arrows.” So he prayed, and Phoebus Apollo heard him, and went down from Olympus, angry at heart, with his bow on his shoulders and his covered quiver, and the arrows rang out on the shoulders of the angry one, as he moved. And he came like the night. (Iliad 1.35-47)

Many of the characteristics of the kind of sovereignty I analysed in Chapter Three are present in this passage: the emphasis on *krainein* (41); the terrible noise of vengeance when it comes (46); and, if we wish to be so literal, the darkness and invisibility of his advent (47).

We know, with hindsight, that the chorus’ appeal to Clytemnestra to be a healer fails: she is, unambiguously, the authority who serves as the reason for their desires for silence. With Apollo it is less clear, at least in the *Agamemnon*. If he is to be understood as a healer, we must accept that his role is unfulfilled or unsuccessful, since Agamemnon dies despite the wishes of the chorus. Despite his apotropaic figure at the door, the curse continues to reside within the house. Further, the escalation of crime that occurs in the *Choephoroi* and that takes place at the instigation of his oracle unambiguously marks him there as another figure of avenging justice.

This last detail may lead one to suspect that Apollo’s promise as a healer is never realised in the *Oresteia*. In fact, he turns out to be another vengeful sovereign. In the *Oresteia* there is no possibility of healing until the institution of the Areopagus. The alternative between vengeful avenger and healer that appears to be offered at the beginning of the *Agamemnon* is no true alternative: the universe is in a double bind. Crime will call for punishment, which will be a crime, which in turn will call for punishment. *Et cetera ad infinitum*. In this chapter I investigate why this is so, and explore its ramifications.
Studying Apollo in this context is illuminating because his failure to conform to the role attributed him by silencing discourse marks precisely the point at which the Oresteia begins its critique of silencing discourse. Unlike the Erinyes, who are sovereigns in the logic of silencing discourse and in the trilogy's narrative development, Apollo is characterised as one thing by silencing discourse but reveals himself to be otherwise. This opens a disjunction between the discourse that is used to interpret the events of the trilogy and the events themselves. Apollo's failure to adhere to the role assigned him by silencing discourse, that in other respects appears to serve as a matrix for the action (silence, sovereignty, and vengeance), indicates that there is something wrong with the interpretation of the world offered in silencing discourse. Our investigation of Apollo will therefore also be an investigation of the error that is included in silencing discourse.

At the end of this chapter, I will have explored all of the relevant points of the constellation that I defined as silencing discourse. But the investigation of Apollo will also show that the logic of silencing discourse engineers its own ineffectiveness, and that by the systematic limitation of our ability to speak and to listen, silence and its armature effectively lock the subject in a world of discourse that is divorced from reality and history by an infinitely receding horizon. By their own volition, the chorus contributes to what they would prevent, that is, the continuous cycle of crime and retribution that constitutes the fabric of the curse on the house of Atreus. Their commitment to the logic of silence is like an engine that captures even themselves in its working. Despite themselves, they contribute, through an activist inactivity, to a history they would rather avoid.
The cosmos is aligned in such a way that even attempts to avoid the inexorable action of the vengeful sovereign result nevertheless in his hostile actualisations. This includes the appeal to Apollo as a healer or a helper. An epithet given to Apollo in the Homeric poems appears to prefigure the futility of hoping for his help that is evident in the world of the Oresteia. 

'Ασσα'η της' means "helper, aide," and seems to come from ἀσσος "aid or succour." But the Ancients sensed ὀσσα, "rumour, voice" in it; and at least one commentator has identified the possibility of taking the α- as privative. Although we cannot establish this with philological certainty, we may, for the sake of illumination, articulate the possibility that the epithet combines the roles of helper or healer and silent avenger, those two positions clustered around the articulation of silencing discourse. Within the Oresteia, what can only be suspected in the Homeric language becomes intentional, as the use of Apollo’s appellation Παιάω in fact reveals the same ominous ambiguity. Far from designating health and well being, παι- words in the Oresteia reinforce the ironic fact that the healer is also a destroyer. The paean, apparently a healthful maintenance of ritually auspicious speech, reveals itself to be a silence that conceals another violent revenge.

The healing maintenance of appropriate speech is connected verbally in the Agamemnon with Apollo in his manifestation as Παιάω, the healing god. At Agamemnon 512-513 he is invoked by the herald:

νῦν δ' αὖτε σωτήρ ἵστι καὶ παιάνιος,
ἀναζ Ἶπαλλον.

Now, lord Apollo, be a healer and a saviour.
He is also invoked by Calchas in the first full example of what we have called silencing discourse (146). This may actually be Aeschylus’ variation on the ἤ ἔν Παίάν traditional to the paean’s hymnic form. Rutherford outlines three basic uses of the paean: one in explicitly apotropaic contexts; one in celebratory contexts, and one in what he calls “intermediate” contexts. “The use of the paean” he writes, “in cult – principally as a hymn to Apollo, but also as a form of ritually correct utterance (euphemia) accompanying sacrifice – perhaps belongs to the intermediate category.” In the Agamemnon, however, the paean is principally apotropaic, and it is in its apotropaic function that it is associated with euphemia. Since silencing discourse explicitly involves Apollo as a healer or a purifier against the fulfilment of some inauspicious utterance, he appears to be the figure opposed to the sovereign, and is presumed to be capable of intervening against hostile actualisation. That is, Apollo, as a god of healing associated with the paean and euphemia, represents in the Agamemnon the possibility of keeping inauspicious utterances from occurring, thus preventing their destructive actualisation.

Other uses of words with παι- in their root seem to suggest a similar association of health, silence, and the apotropaic defence against the dangers implied by silencing discourse. On his return to Argos Agamemnon, sensitive to the rumours of the townspeople and the dangers of the people’s curse, had proposed to convene a council (we may presume that the chorus was to fill that role in the reconstituted Argive monarchy). Let us recall how Agamemnon had conceived the project of that council:

καὶ τὸ μὲν καλῶς ἔχων
ὅπως χρονίζων εὐ μεγεί πολεμεύσων,
ὅτως δὲ καὶ δεῖ φαμάκων παλαιῶν,
ὥσιν κέαντες ἡ τεμόντες εὐφρόνως
περισσῶμεν ὅπειρα ἀποστρέψαι νόσου.
And we must consider how whatever is going well may continue forever, and where there is a need for healing medicines we will with a good will try to alleviate the agony of disease, either by cauterization or by surgery. (846-850)

The imagery is overwhelmingly medical. Agamemnon proposes, through council, to keep what is good, and to cauterise and surgically remove what is not. Παλιός at 848 is one of the numerous uses of this word or its derivatives which appear throughout the Agamemnon.146 “Healing medicines” (848) recalls the chorus’ similar mention of medicine in their cryptic advice to the herald at 548, πάλαι τὸ σιγάν φάρμακον θλάσθε ἔχω (“I have long held silence as a remedy against harm”). In fact, it seems that παλιός and παλιών, words with primarily medical connotations, have a more than etymological connection with παλάν, which designates auspicious song.147 Silence in the Oresteia designates the practice of keeping categories separate, and of keeping one’s speech auspicious (see Chapter One). This silence is allied with healing (παλιός) through the chorus’ notion that silence is a remedy, and also with παλάν as auspicious speech, the importance of which is evident in the scene at Aulis, which we have already discussed. But also at Choephoroi 340-345:

aille 'et' an ek tôn de zês khrêswn
Steis kaleados ephesagoptous,
ánti de zêres epifymidian
pailon meladois en zemileion
vokera tpa filon kaiosian.

But even out of this a god, if he likes, might set more auspicious cries for us, and instead of laments at a tomb, the paean might bring a dear bowl of fresh wine in the royal halls.

Agamemnon 1248 also illustrates the association of auspicious speech and healing. There is no healer to set over my words, says Cassandra; there is no cure for what is inevitable. At
Agamemnon 1197, Cassandra asks the chorus to take an oath that her tales are accurate. They reply,

καὶ πῶς ἀν ἄρκου πῆγμα γενναῖως παγέω
παύσων γένοιτο:

How might a bond bound in honour – an oath, I mean – be healing? (1198-1199)

The answer to this question will be found in the Eumenides, when the Athenian jury takes an oath and becomes silent. The presence of the sworn and silent jury allows for the soothing words promised to Orestes by Apollo (Eumenides 81-82). Again, healing as παύσω is associated with silence, and with the maintenance of euphemia of which the paean is a part.

But against these good paeans we must set the inauspicious and violent paeans of vengeance; the παύσω Ἐρυνιῶν ("paean of the Erinyes") at Agamemnon 645, and the παύσω τοῦ Ἑανώτος ("paean for the dead") at Choephoroi 151. These are to be associated with the "other" παύσω ("blow, strike") of Agamemnon 1007, 1379, 1384, 1624, and Choephoroi 184. They represent the paean of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, ill-omened and unhappy, the tyrannical expression of the authority in the chorus’ self-censorship. But their sonic equivalence with the "good" and auspicious paeans suggests that what is hidden behind the hope of Apollo as a healer is in fact the grim fact that he is another sovereign figure. Ultimately, in the schema of silencing discourse, all silence conceals a sovereign. Παι- words in the Oresteia repeat the ambiguity of ἄρρητη in the Homeric lexicon.

What is suggested in Aeschylus’ use of diction turns out to be true in the narrative as well. In the Agamemnon, the frequent appeals to Apollo Agyieus or Παιάν go unanswered. If silencing discourse contains in the reference to the healer a note of hope, this hope appears,
ultimately, to be unfounded. Not only does Apollo not intervene in the events of the first play of the trilogy, but when he does begin to intervene in the *Choephoroi* it is to effect another act of vengeance, by directing Orestes to take revenge upon Clytemnestra. This suggests that despite the hopes of the chorus of the *Agamemnon* Apollo turns out to be another vengeful sovereign, not the intercessor they had hoped for. In this light it may seem that the silence of auspicious speech that is associated with the paean is only another silence of sovereignty.

Aeschylus' characterisation of Apollo's speech is in harmony with the suggestion that Apollo in fact fulfils the role of sovereign rather than the role of the healer. The vengeful character of Apollo, and the fact that he has a function similar to that of Clytemnestra and the Erinyes, is first suggested in the *Choephoroi*, when Orestes explains to Electra and the chorus that he comes under orders from Apollo:

{oùtοι προδώσει Λοξίου μεγαστεφής
χρησμός κελεύων τόνδε κίνδυνον περάν, 
καίξαριάξων πολλά, και δισκεμέρους
ἀτας ὦ ἡπαξ θεμον ἐξαιτίουμανος,
εἰ μὴ μέτειμ τοῦ πατρός τοὺς αἴτιους
tρόπον τὸν αὐτὸν, ἀνυποκτεῖναι λέγων.}

The oracle of powerful Loxias will not betray me, since he called me to run this risk, crying out many things, and promising stormy destruction up under my warm liver if I did not attack those guilty of slaying my father, telling me to kill them in return, in the same way. (*Choephoroi* 269-274)

'Εξαριάξω ("crying out") is unique to Aeschylus (as is ὑραξω and ἐπαριάξω).\(^{148}\) It is a denominative construction of ὑρος, which does not refer to straightness so much as to height of vocal pitch.\(^{149}\) It is, it appears, characteristic of Apollo's oracle:

\[Δίκα\]
\[τάντερ ὁ Λοξίας ὁ Παρυασσίας\]
Here Apollo is not only characterised as crying out at Delphi in a high pitch, but is intimately connected with the inexorable and vengeful machinations of justice who comes after a delay (956)\textsuperscript{135} and whom Loxias names (τάντα, with Page’s text) as harmed.

But ὥριος and ὥριαζεν are not used only of Apollo’s voice. They also describe the voice of Clytemnestra and her women (29) – where the high-pitched cries are that of the ololiuge, not per se inauspicious, but certainly so when associated with the avenging Clytemnestra. The verb is also associated with the Erinyes themselves:

\begin{quote}
Ka. [...] στάσις δ’ ἀκόφετος γένει
κατολογεῖται δώματις λαυσίμου.
Χο. ποίαν Ἐρίνων τί μὲ δύσμασιν κέλη
ἐπορθιάζειν; ο’ μὲ θαλάθυμε λόγος.
\end{quote}

Cassandra. Let the band insatiable of the race raise a shout over a sacrifice that will end in stoning.

Chorus. What Erinyes do you bid cry out over this house? This speech does not cheer me. (Agamemnon 1117-1120)

While it sometimes simply designates the voice of lament,\textsuperscript{151} ὥριαζεν is certainly inauspicious, the voice of destruction, in the Oresteia:

\begin{quote}
πόθεν ἐπισούτους Ἑθοφόρους τ’ ἔχεις
ματαίους θύες,
τὰ δ’ ἐπάφοδα δυσφάτων κλαγή
μελοτυπείς ομοί τ’ ὥριοις ἐν νόμασι;
πόθεν ὥρους ἔχεις θεσπεσίας ὁδοῦ
κακοφήμονας;
\end{quote}
Whence do you get these rushing god-brought vain pangs, and whence do you form this fearful song with ill-sounding clamour in shrill tones (orthiois en nomois)? Whence do you have the ill-speaking borders of your divinely-uttered road? (Agamemnon 1150-1155)

At Choephori 751 Orestes’ nurse speaks of his ὑστιπλάγκτων ὑβίων κελευμάτων (“shrill night-wandering cries”), simply the high-pitched cries of a child. But “ὑστιπλάγκτων is more than ornamental; it is a deliberate echo of 524.”

ἐκ τ’ ὀνειράτων
καὶ ὑστιπλάγκτων δειμάτων πεπαλμένη
χοάς ἐπεμψε τάσαδε δύσθεος γυνή.

From dreams and night-wandering fears she leapt, and the godless woman sent these libations. (Choephori 523-525)

So the chorus, describing to Orestes the dreams and terrors that afflict Clytemnestra at night. The effects of these are listed just below: ἡ δ’ ἐξ ὑπού κέκλαγξεν ἐπτομένη (“and she cried out terrified from her sleep,” 535). Clytemnestra’s cries were also described at Choephori 35 with the verb λάσκειν, a verb which does double work in the Oresteia as designating both the ugly cries of coming vengeance and the utterance of an oracle.

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In other words, Apollo brings vengeance on Clytemnestra and Aegisthus not in the auspicious speech of the healer, but in the characteristic dangerous utterances of sovereignty. We will see that this is sensed by the two figures in a position to actualise Apollo’s role as healer in the Agamemnon. Both the chorus, who has prophetic premonitions, and Cassandra, who had the opportunity to be the (believed) oracle of the god, reject his influence, and suffer the consequences, because they do not believe that his influence is unambiguously healthful. In this sense, the notion of auspiciousness and health implied in παιάν and παῖον is turned even against
the god himself. As I will argue below, this demonstrates the degree to which the logic of silencing discourse permeates the Oresteia: even the failure of silencing discourse, in the form of Apollo’s inability to serve as a figure of hope or healing, is the result of its application.

Silencing discourse serves as the matrix for both the narrative unfolding of the first two plays of the trilogy and for certain visual aspects of the staging, such as the spatial opposition of Clytemnestra and the Agyieus during the parodos of the Agamemnon and its repetition in the opposition of Clytemnestra and Apollo at the beginning of the Eumenides. The mutual silence of the utterer of silencing discourse and the secondary receiver is based, as we have seen, on archaic Greek notions of tyrannical statecraft and sovereignty, and the silence of both Clytemnestra and the chorus can be explained using this model (see Chapter Three). This is true as well in the Choephori, where Orestes and the chorus undertake to suppress their plans to avenge the death of Agamemnon in order to accomplish their plot, and Clytemnestra, on the other side, takes measures to silence the inauspicious import of her dreams. The tactical silence of the chorus of the Choephori is described in terms which echo Clytemnestra’s description of her own tactical silence in the Agamemnon (Agamemnon 1372-1370):

\[\text{ιμηυ δ’ επανω γλώσσαν εὔφημον φέρειν}
\text{ογγαί θ’ ὤτον δεὶ καὶ λέγειν τὰ καίφια.}\]

I bid you keep an auspicious tongue, and be silent when it is necessary, and speak what is opportune. (Choephori 581-582)

The chorus of slave women in the Choephori keeps silent about their murderous intent in the hope that it will be fulfilled and they will be able to sing a song of victory that, like the boasting of Clytemnestra in the Agamemnon, is in fact the inauspicious utterance of the sovereign:

\[\text{ἐφιμησαὶ γένοιτο μοι πεν-}\]
κάεντ' ὀλολυγμὸν ἀνθρώπος
τι ἄλλημένας: τί γὰρ κεῦ-
Σώ φερενός σιον ἐμπας
ποτάσει πάσοιδε; ἐκ δὲ πούρας
ὅμως ἄνταν πριάδης
Σὺμως, ἕγκοσι στύγος.

May it come to me to sing a sharp ololugmos, when the man is wounded and the woman destroyed – for why do I hide what flutters before me? – from the prow of my heart a sharp wrath blows, an enraged hatred. (Choephori 386-392)

Clytemnestra’s actions in the Choephori, on the other hand, can also be understood as a form of silencing discourse. Faced with an inauspicious dream, she sends the libation bearers to the tomb of Agamemnon in the hope of averting the disaster foretold in her sleep.

But despite the fact that silencing discourse appears to structure both plays, its intent, which is to avert inauspicious or violent action, is never realised. In the first two plays of the Oresteia, silencing discourse has the remarkable effect of structuring what it wants to avert, that is, a narrative of crimes and retributions which appears to have no end.

I believe that we can extract an explanation of this paradoxical situation from the disjunction between Apollo as he is hoped to be in silencing discourse and Apollo as he actually turns out to be in the action of the trilogy. The difference between Apollo’s role as this is imagined in silencing discourse and his function in the real action of the drama might be read as a sign that there is a difference between the imaginative world of silencing discourse and the natural, “real” world which exists beyond it. Initially it appears that the hopes for Apollo in silencing discourse, delusional as they are, are necessary – we cannot take back what has already been said unless there is somebody who can protect us from its implications. There can be no silencing discourse without hope, that is, there can be no attempt to unsay a dangerous utterance.
without the perceived possibility that the dangerous consequences of an utterance may be averted. If we follow this line of thought, which is certainly valid, then we may draw the conclusion that the hope in Apollo as a healer is a necessary, if fictional, component in the logic of silencing discourse. We may say that the chorus is in error to believe in the salvific potential of Apollo, but, on this line of thought, we must acknowledge that this error is necessary. Apollo's healing role may then be investigated as a fictional construct which emerges from the internal necessity of silencing discourse, and it may be contrasted with "reality," in which Apollo may not fulfil this role, but in fact obeys laws of natural necessity rather than laws of linguistic or logical necessity. The healer's adherence to a natural reality, rather than to the hopeful and fictional reality of silencing discourse, is what makes the hope of silencing discourse a delusion.

This line of reflection can be substantiated through a distinction between two interpretations of time and temporality that are evident in different passages of the Oresteia. On the one hand, we may distinguish a version of time that reflects the "natural," "real" experience of temporality from a version of time that reflects an imaginary or fictional vision of temporality. The criterion of reality here is temporal asymmetry, or, in other words, the fact that time moves forward and not backward, and that it is not possible to affect the past. In "real" time, each moment is replaced by another, and each moment in sequence is a new moment. For example, it is not possible for an event that occurred yesterday to be caused to occur again tomorrow, which would imply a reversal in the direction of time. In fact, if an event identical to what occurred yesterday were to occur tomorrow, we would not be licensed to say that these two events were the same single event, but rather that they were similar but different individual events. In "imaginary" or "fictional" time, on the other hand, it is possible for moments to occur out of
sequence, and for the same moment to occur more than once in a given sequence. The structures of the “deep-sea tales” of the *Odyssey* or of *Remembrance of Things Past* are excellent examples of fictional or imaginary time. In these texts, it is possible for an earlier event to be narrated, or to occur in the imagination, out of the order in which it actually happened, and for the same event to be narrated, or to occur in the imagination, more than once. In the *Oresteia*, the utterer of silencing discourse believes in such a version of time, without realising that it is imaginary rather than real. That is, the utterer of silencing discourse believes that it is possible to affect the future by changing the past. In other words, silencing discourse, which in this sense resembles a discourse of regret, includes in its assumptions the hope that a moment in the past can be brought out of sequence, revisited, and changed through the practice of unsaying something.

But Apollo is constrained to function in real, forward-moving time.

The full force of Apollo’s vengeful ἀνοσμία comes at 644ff of the *Eumenides*, where he launches on a stream of invective and reveals the reason for his failure to act as Παιάν throughout the trilogy. Provoked by the argument that the practices of Zeus himself, who “himself bound in irons his aged father Kronos” (642) give the lie to his claim that it was more important to avenge the murder of Agamemnon, a man and a king, than to avenge the murder of a woman (625-639), Apollo replies:

ἀν παντομιστὴ κυώδαλα, στύγη θεῖων,
pίδας μὲν ἃν ὄντειν, ἔστι τοῦδ’ ἄκος
καὶ κάρτα πολλή μηχανή λυτήριος;
ἀνοδὸς δ’ ἐπειδὰν αἱμα ἀναστάσῃ κόνις
ἀπαθὲς ἰανότος, οὐτὶς ἔστ’ ἀνάστασις,
τούτων ἐπωδάς οὐκ ἐποίησαν πατήρ
οὐμός, τὰ δ’ ἄλλα πάντ’ ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω
στρέφων τήρησον οὐδὲν ἀσθμαίνων μένει.
Oh beasts hated by all, loathed by the gods, Zeus could loosen bonds, and there is a remedy for this, and especially many techniques of release – but once the dust has received the blood of a dead man, there is no recalling him. My father made no incantation for this, though he turns all other things upside down, and sets them by his will and without effort. (Eumenides 644-651)

"The vulgarity of Apollo’s reaction is without parallel in tragedy, and shows that the argument just raised has stung and embarrassed him. Nowhere else in tragedy are human (let alone divine) characters addressed as ‘beasts’ (κνώδαλα): that is the language of satyr play and comedy." The sentiment of 647 has already appeared in the trilogy: it was one of the reasons for the chorus of the Agamemnon’s refusal to utter what was in their hearts, a veiled reference to Asclepius:

τὸ δ’ ἐπὶ γὰν πεσὼν ἀπαξ θανάτιμον
πρὸπαρ ἁνθρόπος μέλαν αῖμα τις ἄν
πάλιν ἀγκαλίσατ’ ἐπαείδων:
οἰδὲ τὸν ὀρθοδαχ’
τῶν φθυμένων ἀνάγειν
Ζεὺς ἀπέταυσεν ἐ’ ἄβλαβεια.

Once the black mortal blood of a man has fallen on the earth, who will call it back with incantations? Zeus didn’t even stop the one who knew well how to resurrect the dead without harming him. (Agamemnon 1019-1024)

Apollo knows all too well the inevitability of death: the healer god is forcibly constrained by Zeus. There is no possibility of the paean, of some auspicious speech that might stem the tide of retribution, because the earth is final in her acceptance of blood, and Zeus inexorable in his upholding of the finality of death.

Apollo’s distinction between bonds which can be untied and death, which cannot be reversed, emphasises the reality of forward moving time. In my definition of real time, I said that each moment is followed by another moment, and that each moment in sequence is a new moment. A similar thing can be said about human beings. When a human being dies, he can be
replaced, but he cannot be repeated. The son springs up in the place of the father, but the son is not actually the father. When this principle is applied to the exercise of justice, it becomes clear that the vengeance of a murder follows the same laws. Since a man who has been murdered cannot actually be returned to his family, his murder must be compensated by another murder. This is different from theft, for example, where the stolen object has been displaced in space but has not been destroyed, and so can be returned. Each murder can only be followed by another murder, and the permanent absence of the deceased makes any other method of retribution inadequate. This results in what we may call a necessary and forward progression of violent acts.

Cassandra knows this. That is the significance of Agamemnon 1250 ("you try to pray it away, but they intend to kill"). She contrasts the chorus' recourse to silencing discourse with the inevitability of the murderers' intent. Méλει at 1250 does not merely designate the existence of plans in the minds of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. It also designates the inevitability of their action, regardless of the representations of the chorus. Méλω, "to be a concern to" becomes μέλλω, "to be destined," through the mediation of *μέλος, of which the former expresses the same root and the later is a denominative form.157

Méλω is used to express the finality of death at Agamemnon 568-569:

τοῖς μὲν τεθνηκόσιν
τὸ μὴποτ' αὖθις μηδ' ἀναστήσαι μέλειν ...

The dead do not even care to rise up, ever again ...

Here, instead of the future inevitability of vengeance, we have the future impossibility of return. The same knowledge of the inevitability of her death, which springs from the implacability of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, informs Cassandra's final exchange with the chorus at Agamemnon
1296-1301. In contrast to the chorus, who still believes in the reversibility of the events now clearly prophesied, Cassandra knows that she has filled in her allotted time, and that escape, a misguided attempt to avoid what is already established, is profitless.

Apollo is also constrained to be part of this natural temporal order. Zeus, he reminds the Erinyes, has provided no way to bring the dead back to life. As a result, there is for Apollo no possibility of taking back what has already occurred, and only the forward moving time of blood-vengeance is possible.

This may appear to mean that reality, to which realm Apollo belongs, is heartless and forward moving, without the possibility of recourse or forgiveness, while the world imagined or posited by silencing discourse is more hopeful, and, in this hopefulness, tragically disconnected with reality. The chorus of the *Agamemnon* would, in this analysis, appear pathetically subject to the delusions of regret, and incapable of saving itself from the onslaught of history. We would also be justified in claiming, on the basis of these reflections, that silencing discourse does not provide the matrix for the narrative or the staging of the *Oresteia* so much as provide a rose-coloured and ultimately erroneous vision of it. There is truth to this. Mistaking the logic inherent in silencing discourse for reality may in fact have the effect of subjecting us to an inexorable and cruel universe which is beyond our ability to comprehend. "Man is all chance," as Solon is reported to have said. Writers in archaic Greece, Hesiod and Herodotus in particular, appear to have built ethical systems based on the application of the logic of silencing discourse to all of reality, and the condition of the chorus of the *Agamemnon* appears at first glance to be the condition of a figure subjected to precisely the incomprehensible and cruel justice which we associated with sovereignty. But this picture is not complete. Aeschylus has taken care to remind
us that the logic of silencing discourse is not simply the expression of a lamentable human condition. Instead, he suggests that the logic of silencing discourse produces its own failure. Rather than being disconnected from the facts of reality which make it ineffectual, silencing discourse in fact produces the conditions of its own failure.

Rather than being inherently subject to the real forward moving time of vengeance, Apollo is constrained to belong to this order by an act of silencing, which is initiated by Zeus but, paradoxically, is perpetuated by both the chorus of the Agamemnon and by Cassandra.

The moment at which it becomes clear that for Apollo there is no possibility of reversion or regret, Eumenides 644-651, contains a double focus. Apollo refutes the Erinyes’ charge that Zeus’ violence towards his father supports their position with the distinction between a bond, which can be untied, and death, from which there is no return (645-648). But the final lines of this passage, which seem only to indicate that Zeus’ power does not extend to the finality of death, in fact conceal the fact that the finality of death is the product of censorship. According to Apollo, Zeus has created no song or incantation which would restore the dead to life. Apollo glosses over the fact that the absence of such songs is the product, not of a unique moment of cosmic impotence on the part of Zeus, but of a positive act of censorship — at least this is how the chorus of the Agamemnon tells it at 1019-1024 (quoted above), where Zeus is described as actively and forcibly preventing the revivification of the dead. Apollo’s submission to the law of “natural” time is the product of a primal act of censorship. Silencing makes the “natural” bloody time of vengeance necessary.

In the Oresteia, the delusional hopes of the utterer of silencing discourse which are embodied in the ghostly and fictional figure of the healer or averter are not the product of a
simple disjunction between what is real and what is imagined. Rather the disjunction between what is real and what is imagined is a result of the application of the principles of silencing discourse to the cosmos as a whole. Far from being the victims of a universe they cannot comprehend, utterers of silencing discourse like the chorus of the *Agamemnon* and Clytemnestra in the *Choephori* in fact produce or conjure this world that acts despite their better wishes. The inevitable and terrible mechanical progression of the action of the *Agamemnon* and (to a lesser extent) of the *Choephori*, in which bloody plans are accomplished with the impetus of cosmic forces and there is no possibility of stopping them, is, in a certain sense, only the projection of a particular ethical attitude towards speech and time onto the plot as a whole.

It is possible to demonstrate that silencing discourse as an ethical attitude has a direct impact on the action and the direction of its unfolding. In particular, the inactivity of the chorus of the *Agamemnon*, and Cassandra’s inability to convince them of what is about to happen, are both products of the application of silencing discourse specifically to the voice of Apollo, which in this case would have provided them with the insight that they need to take decisive action. It is by silencing the insight of Apollo that the chorus and Cassandra ensure that Apollo’s ability to act as healer is prevented.

The chorus is the most common invoker of Apollo, *Παιάν* and *euphemia* against inauspicious speech. But this does not mean that the chorus is simply or unequivocally dedicated to him. In fact, the chorus is unwilling or incapable of listening to the prophetic speech that they are offered, and this contributes significantly to their failure to prevent the death of *Agamemnon*. I illustrate this point by focussing on the first and third stasima of the play, in which the chorus expresses its unwillingness to act as a medium, either as an agent of *Παιάν* the healer or of
Apollo the prophet, who is at least theoretically capable of halting the constant stream of disasters. The result of this is paralysis when it is time for them to act, and silence at the critical moment.

**The first stasimon (355-487)**

The first stasimon can be divided into three sections: (1) 355-402, which describes the “justice of Zeus;” (2) 403-435, which describes the reaction of the Trojan prophets at the arrival of Helen; (3) 436-488, which describes the relations between the *demos* and divine justice. The first and final thirds of the ode describe aspects of silent sovereignty. In the first third the chorus attempts to articulate the surety of vengeance despite the invisibility of the gods, while in the final third they describe the connection between the rumours which circulate secretly among the *demos* and the vengeance of Olympus. In both cases, the chorus explicitly connects silence, concealment, and punishment, and the pattern reflects the structure of silencing discourse. The central portion of the ode, on the other hand, is concerned not with silence and secrecy but with revelatory speech. If the first third expresses a religious certainty in the gods’ presence and concern and the final third describes the circulation of rumour and unauthorised speech, the central passage mediates between these in its reflection on prophecy, which is an unusual form of speech like a *κληρίδων* or φάμα in its ominousness, but has a direct Olympian genealogy through the role of Apollo. Prophecy would therefore seem to be a middle way between the fear of an inscrutable divinity and empty but dangerous rumour. Nevertheless, the chorus is unwilling to espouse it.
Concerned with the certainty of Troy’s fall, the first strophic pair outlines the chorus’ certainty in the invisible and ambiguously silent sovereignty of Zeus and Justice. Although it is Zeus who is explicitly named as the avenger of wrongs, Justice’s presence is felt throughout. The victim of divine vengeance “tramples the altar of justice into invisibility” (384), and is “unjust” (398); the blackness on his soul appears when he is “adjudged” (δικαιόωντις, 393) by friction and wearing. Zeus’ sovereignty, and the nature of his judgement, is expressed by the laconic ἐπαξεὶν ὡς ἔκαστε (“he did as he decreed,” 369) – krainein is, as we have seen, the act of judgement that designates the sovereign’s silence. This part of the ode outlines the paranoia underpinning the ethical imperative brought about by the supposed omniscience of Zeus, and as the use of krainein suggests, it displays the silence of that sovereign that threatens his intervention.

Sovereignty achieves omnipresence by means of inappearance (see Chapter Three). But to articulate the omnipresence of an invisible sovereign is to controvert the apparently more commonsensical claim that what is not apparent is in fact either absent or non-existent, and the chorus is at pains to dismiss this alternate interpretation of invisibility.

... οὐκ ἔσα τες
Σεοῦς ἄριστοιν ἀξιοῦσθαι μέλειν
ὤσοις ἄνεστον χάρις
πατοίς... 

Some one said that the gods do not deign to care about mortals who trample on the grace of the untouchable ... (369-372)

That is, someone has observed the absence of the divine, and has taken this to mean that there is no relevant divine. But he is not pious (372). The non-appearance of the divine is only temporary, and Zeus’ intervention inevitably occurs. This intervention reveals itself in the descendants of the sinner (and so the delay appears like an absence):
The punishment for transgression is revealed in the descendants of those who breathe more than is just ... (374-376)

The apparent insouciance of the gods is in fact the cause of the imperative that constitutes their sovereignty. In other words, rather than proof that they do not care, their absence is the condition of the human acceptance of their authority.

Coupled with the belief that the gods do not care is the belief that a flaw or a sin can be concealed. This is not so: "the stain is not hidden, but shines forth, a horridly gleaming light" (387-388). The unjust man, contrary to the opinion of the ἄτις ("some one") in 369, will be proven untrue, and punished, as bad bronze is proven by rubbing it against a testing stone (390-393).

The silence or absence of the sovereign which is implied here may have been more clearly spelled out in the speech of the Trojan seers where a damaged text appears to refer to the

σιγᾶς ἀτιμὸς ἀλοίδιεσ
ἀδιστὸς ἀφημένων

The dishonoured silence of one sitting apart, not reviling, not beseeching. (412-413)

The person referred to, sitting in silence, is either Zeus or (more likely) his agent Menelaus – either way we would have here the silence of the vengeful sovereign clearly named by the chorus.

The final third of the ode focuses on the dead Achaean warriors returning as ashes to Argos, and the murmuring of the people against the Atreidae that this excites. If Paris’ violation of the rules of hospitality brought the wrath of Zeus upon him, the carnage at Troy, which
happened “for the sake of someone else’s woman” (448-449), causes secret envy and silent hatred to circulate at home (449-451). The curse of the people is dangerous, and in this case appears to work against the agents of Zeus. But the autonomy even of those who work in the service of the sovereign opens them to condemnation for their actions, and

The speech of the townspeople is heavy when it is wrathful, and he pays the debt of a curse approved by the people (456-457)

This popular hatred turns the Olympians against even their own agents:

For the gods are not unaware of those who kill many men, and in time the black Erinyes darken the man fortunate without justice, with a luck-turning wearing away of his life ... (461-466)

It may be that the curse ratified by the people summons the Furies, but if there is any organic flow to this stanza, the Erinyes mentioned in 463 are (this time) working in concert with the Olympians. The description is completed with the observation that the thunder of Zeus is not far behind (469-470). Faced with the sovereignty of Zeus on the one hand, and the sovereignty of the city on the other, the chorus decides to become the agent of no one (471-474), since evidently doing the work of justice leads inevitably to downfall.

Both Zeus and the people work in silence, both making the typically ambiguous single utterances of sovereignty. But while the sovereignty of Zeus is deduced from the dialectic of his absence/presence and is expressed in terms of visibility and invisibility, the sovereignty of the
people reveals itself in rumour and secret murmurings. If the chorus will have none of this, they must have none of the non-authorised modes of information dissemination used by Clytemnestra, and therefore they express their disapproval of the queen's rumour-mongering (475-487).

Opposed to the images of the two sovereignties, neither of which the chorus chooses to "represent," is the central passage of the ode, transitional between Troy and Argos, Paris and Agamemnon, God and people. In the centre of the second strophic pair the chorus quotes the seers of Troy, speaking out at the sight of Helen with her paramour. This is only prophecy of what will come, but as inspired utterance, prophecy represents for the chorus a possible third way, in which the divine utterances of a god might be used to ward off the destruction of other sovereigns.

But neither the prophets at Troy, nor Calchas, nor Cassandra are capable of warding off the disasters they predict. This may be because none of them is capable of acting against the end they foresee, by sending Helen home, refusing to give the Iphigenia solution, or refusing to enter the house. The chorus' own failure at prophecy may similarly contribute to the disaster, and it represents a commitment to apathy (despite the fact that they call on Apollo) that renders them ineffectual. This is evident in the third stasimon.

**The third stasimon (975-1034)**

In the first stasimon, I have argued, the chorus establishes an opposition between Olympian and democratic sovereignty. This is mediated by the practice of prophecy, which, unlike the two forms of sovereignty, is marked by speech rather than silence. It would be
reasonable to read in this ode an evaluation that privileges prophetic (Apolline) speech over the silence and power of either Zeus or the demos, and a belief that accurate utterance and prophecy might heal the ills that affect Argos. But this is not the case; the chorus, ultimately, prefers silence over prophetic speech, and even denies its value altogether.

This is evident already in the final stanza of the parodos, where the gruesome results of the arts of Calchas are alluded to (see Chapter Two). The chorus’ refusal to put stock in anything but the evidence of their own eyes, and with it their denial of the cognitive value of prophecy, becomes a crucial part of the action from 976 on, when they receive warning after warning, and are given repeated opportunities to act – but do nothing, say nothing.

In the scene with Cassandra they are frank:

η μὴν κλέος σου μαντικόν πεπυσμένοι
ήμεν, προφήτας ὃ οὕτως ματεύσαν.

We know of your fame for prophecy, but we have no need for prophets. (1098-1099)

And, even though they claim that she seems to prophesy believable things (1213), Cassandra’s clear prophecy at 1246 is met with denial and disbelief. Their general failure to act on intimations other than what is before their eyes culminates in their own utter incapacity to intervene when they hear the sounds of Agamemnon’s slaughter:

- ἢ γὰρ τεκμηρίωσιν ἐξ οἰμωγμάτων
  μαντευσίμενθα τάνδρος ὡς ὀλωλότος;
- σάφ' εἰδότας χρῆ τῶν ἐμβδομάτων πέχι
  τὸ γὰρ τοπάζειν τοῦ σάφ' εἰδώναι δίκα.

- Shall we divine from the evidence of groans that the man is dead?
- We must discuss this when we know clearly. For guessing is different from knowing clearly. (1366-1369)
Here the chorus hears literally what Cassandra had presented to them figuratively at 1186-1187, and the house speaks clearly, as the ψιλαξ had foreshadowed at 37-38 (οἶκος δ' αὐτὸς, εἰ φθορὴν λάθοι, σαφέστατ' ἂν λέξιν, “the house itself, if it had a voice, would speak most clearly”). But they are incapable of appreciating the signal that they have received, or of acting on what they have heard. Silence is privileged over speech.

Why this should be so, despite the fact that they have prayed to Apollo and are aware of his presence before the house, is made clear in their final ode in the play (975-1034). The chorus emphasises repeatedly throughout this ode the fundamental principle of silencing discourse – the attempt to keep categories separate and to enforce a decorum of speech that relates to speech genre, subject, and message through the practice of euphemia. This practice is the source of their rigid autonomy and prevents them from becoming the agent of any sovereign, forcing them into ineffectuality. It is also an euphemia that prevents enthusiasm, possession, or the possibility that their autonomous utterances might allow them to become the agent of Apollo, as healer or as prophet.

The third stasimon is interwoven with subtle references to Apollo, whose presence is felt in three of its four stanzas. In antistrophe a there is no easily detectable reference to Apollo, and in fact ἀνευ λύρας (“without lyre,” 990) suggests his notable absence. But I believe that the chorus has conflated the fearful song of the Erinyes and the influence of Apolline prophecy, seeing in each an aspect of the other, and choosing to suppress both.

In strophe a, the fear which “flutter’s” about their heart is reminiscent of Apollo in his manifestation as Agyieus:

τίπτε μοι τὸν ἐμπέδως
Why does this fear — standing ground out front — flutter right in front of my prophetic soul? (975-977)

This passage suggests that it is Apollo the healer that is responsible for the foreboding they feel; προστατήριον is, as we have seen, one of the names for the Apollo Agyieus who stands before the door, to whom they have prayed already to avert the consequences of inauspicious words (see Chapter Two). It is not clear at this stage in the trilogy, but fear will be the greatest bulwark of justice (ἰσμα; Eumenides 690-703. cf. Agamemnon 257 μονόφθορον ἔρκος. The Erinyes themselves refer to fear as an ἐπίσκοπος καθήμενος; Eumenides 519-520). The fear that the chorus feels is προστατήριον - that is, it is a guard set before the heart, part of the role of Apollo in this play. Τερασκόπος is used of Loxias at Eumenides 62, of his mouthpiece Cassandra at Agamemnon 1440, and of his (unwilling?) agent Orestes at Choephoroi 551. The chorus’ heart is picking up signals from the oracular god here, as μαντιπολεῖ itself (978) suggests.

Apollo’s prophets are inspired. They speak as though possessed or out of their wits:

καὶ τίς σε κακοφθονίων τίθη-
σι δαίμων ὑπεβαρῆς ἐμπίτων
μελίζειν πάθη γοεὰ δανατοφόρα . . .

What ill-wishing spirit, falling on you — truly a great weight — makes you sing these groanful death-bringing pains? (1174-1176)

When prophets do speak, their utterances are inauspicious and frightening. No mortal ever heard good things from a prophet (1130-1135), as their own experiences with Calchas and the fear on their heart tells them. Faced in their final ode with a prophecy that they believe can only be a dirge of the Erinyes, they try to pray it away, as we would now expect (998-1000).
The influx of inspiration appears to them to be a violation of the μοῖραι (moirai, "allotments") of heart and ἄφρυ (phren, "wit," 1025-1034). In the second strophe Apollo’s role as a healer is faintly felt, but strangely, considering the logic of silencing discourse, health is here configured as dangerous, just as the πεσοτάτας, normally the apotropaic protector of the house, had become a fearful, unrequested Song in strophe a. They speak about the dangers of too much health (1001-1004) and invoke Zeus against this (1015-1017). The middle of the stanza, which shifts to a nautical metaphor started at 984-987, figures through a schema etymologicum the payment for too much prosperity in terms of its equal and opposite – those too blessed by the παϊῶν ("healer") will be struck - ἔπαισεν (1007; see 1384 and above) – like for like, as Anne Lebeck puts it.¹⁶⁶

It may be, as the chorus notes, that a wrecked ship can save itself by jettisoning cargo (1008-1014), but in antistrophe 3 it seems that even the healer god (and his sons) can go too far:

τὸ δ’ ἐπὶ γὰν πεσὼν ἀπαξ Σανάσιμου
πρὸπαρ ἀνδρὸς μέλαν ἀλα τίς ἄν
πάλιν ἀγκαλέσατ’ ἐπαινοῦν;
οὐδὲ τὸν ὀρθοδαχ’
τῶν φθιμένων ἀνάγειν
Ζεὺς ἀπέπαισεν ἐπ’. ἁζλαδεία.

Once the black mortal blood of a man has fallen on the earth, who will call it back with incantations? Zeus didn’t even stop the one who knew well how to resurrect the dead without harming him. (1019-1024, a possible reference to Pindar P.III 54-60)

This is a veiled reference to Apollo’s son Asclepius. Even Apollo, as healer and prophet, can cross boundaries, and if the chorus were to utter prophecies at this point it would be a violation of moira. 1025-1034 describes the reason for their refusal to speak, and the result of the suppression. Thalmann¹⁶⁷ understands the two moirai of 1025-1026 to refer to the moira of the
heart (designated here by the accusative form) and of the tongue (here in the nominative form) respectively. According to this reading, *moira* means the same thing in each case, and does not refer to the cosmos (*μοίρα τεταγμένα*) as opposed to some special dispensation (*μοίραν ἐκ θεῶν*). This reading has a number of advantages. It reveals a nice chiasmus between the protasis and the apodosis of the phrase (*τεταγμένα μοίρα = γλῶσσαν / προσάρασα καρδία = μοίραν*). It also continues the theme of the double fates, which includes Agamemnon's situation at 206-217 (his fate is heavy if he kills Iphigenia, and heavy if he does not) and Clytemnestra's double fates at Troy (victors and vanquished, meditated on at 324-333). Finally, it reconnects the protasis with the apodosis in a coherent way. If the allotment of my tongue did not stop that of my heart from taking more than was right, then my heart would pour these things out, says the chorus. *τάδε* (1029) should refer to the contents of the fear that flutters about their heart. If they obeyed Apollo, they would violate the law prohibiting inauspicious speech.

The chorus is not alone in their fear of Apollo's prophetic inspiration. Cassandra also harbours deep reservations about the goodness of the god's gift.

**Cassandra**

She enters with Agamemnon at verse 810, and remains silent and in her chariot until 1072, when she speaks. From 1035-1072 her silence is addressed, as Clytemnestra tries to persuade her to enter the house. From 1072-1330 Cassandra engages in lyric and then iambic dialogue with the chorus, during which time the nature of her speech, her status as a prophet, and her insights into the future are discussed. The role of Cassandra, the role of her scene, and the role and nature of her silence have been extensively discussed. Knox, in an influential analysis,
says that “in Cassandra’s possessed song the past, present, and future of Clytemnestra’s action and Agamemnon’s suffering are fused in a timeless unity which is shattered only when Agamemnon ... screams aloud in mortal agony” and explains her silence thus: “she has no advice to give, no call to action or repentance, no moral judgement, nothing except the vision of reality, of what has been and will be. She has no wish to speak at all.” Anne Lebeck, in a similar vein, connects Clytemnestra’s prophetic utterances with the chorus’ increasing exposure to their own intuitions (52-58).

Lebeck’s insight that the Cassandra scene continues the narrative of the chorus’ coming to awareness that began in the preceding stasimon is crucial, and requires development. In what follows I argue that the chorus is to Cassandra (and to Apollo) as Cassandra was to Apollo, that their dialogue with her therefore exposes their own relationship with the foreboding in their heart, and that the fate of Cassandra foreshadows in exaggerated form the fate of the chorus at the end of the play. Far more than being merely a pause in the action which contributes to suspense (it is certainly this as well), the scene with Cassandra evidences in its full complexity the nature and ramifications of the will to silence that both Cassandra and the chorus share.

As had been the case in their conversation with Clytemnestra and the ode that followed it, the chorus suffers from an inability either to believe or disbelieve Cassandra. The first stasimon began with what appeared to be an expression of belief in Clytemnestra’s “proof” of the fall of Troy (ἐγὼ δ’ ἀκούσας πιστὰ σον τεχνήρα θεοὺς προσεπεῖν εἶ παρασκευάζωμαι, “having heard your trustworthy proofs, I am well prepared to address the gods,” 352-353), but by the end of the stasimon the chorus was expressing scepticism (εἰ δ’ ἐτήσιμος, τίς οἶδεν, ἢ τι θεῶν ἐστιν πῆ ψωδ; “who knows if it is true, or some divine deception somehow?” 477-478). Above I interpreted the
chorus' change of mind as related to the realisation that certain forms of speech are better avoided, and that this will include the forms of proof Clytemnestra has provided to them. Faced with Cassandra, they have a similar problem: the apparent trustworthiness of the source of news is pitted against the obvious inauspiciousness and ritual inappropriateness of what she utters. 1199-1201,

\[
\textit{Σαμαίς\; δὲ\; σου,}
\]
\[
\textit{πόντου\; πέρα\; τραφεῖσθαι\; ἀλλόθρου\; πόλιν}
\]
\[
\textit{κυρεῖν\; λέγουσαι\; ὤσπερ\; εἰ\; παρεστάτεις}
\]

I am amazed at you, raised across the sea, but able to speak of a foreign city as though you were present
testifies to their readiness to believe her, as does 1213 (ἡμῖν\; γε\; μὲν\; ἢ\; πιστὰ\; ἱεροτείνων\; δοκεῖς, "you seem to us to prophesy trustworthy things"). But, when it comes to her inspired speech concerning the end of Agamemnon, they withdraw their faith, on the basis of a fear of \textit{dusphemia} (1246-1256).

The chorus is not the only figure to move from ready credence to distrust on the grounds of inappropriate speech. Clytemnestra and Aegisthus move in a similar direction vis-à-vis the authority of the chorus itself in the final two scenes of the play.\textsuperscript{172} So what happens to Cassandra at 1246-1256 happens also to the chorus at the end of the play. The reasons are the same. We saw above how in the third stasimon the chorus had refused the Apolline premonitions they felt upon their heart, turning to self-censorship. This leads them to ineffectiveness, and to a belated speech that is reduced by Aegisthus to \textit{dusphemia}. Cassandra's ineffectiveness comes from a similar refusal of Apollo's gifts:

\textit{Κα. ἀλλ' ἣν παλαιστῇς κάρτ' ἐμοὶ πολύν χάριν.}
\textit{Χο. ἦ καὶ τέκνων εἰς ἔργον ἡλιότητι ὅμως;}
Cassandra. He came as a wrestler to me, breathing grace.

Chorus. And did you come together to the production of children?

Ca. I consented, and deceived Loxias.

Cho. Then were you deprived of the inspired arts?

Ca. Already I had prophesied all the sufferings to my people.

Cho. How then did you go unpunished by Loxias’ wrath?

Ca. No one believed anything I said after I committed that sin.

(1206-1212)

While the precise details of the narrative are not easy to make out, I believe that the reasons for her rejection of the god are both easily discernible and germane to our theme. Cassandra saw the gifts of Apollo as excessive and rejected them; she was punished with the inability to be convincing. Just as she had rejected Apollo’s gifts, the chorus rejects her intimations. The law of like-for-like holds.

We have already seen that the chorus fears the utterance of divine inspiration as a form of hubris. There are profound reasons for this fear. Let us return to the final stanza of the parodos.

The chorus had refused to tell their story because Δίκα ... τοῖς μὲν παθούσιν μαθεῖν ἐπιστημένοι ("Justice’s scales incline so that learning comes to those who suffer," 250-251). That gnome had been connected with their (perpetual) prejudice for the evidence of the eyes (254). That is, the chorus expresses a preference for experience of fact over the telling of stories, because the telling of stories repeatedly leads to disaster. For them, story-telling is a question of inspiration:
I have authority to proclaim the fated command of the journey for those men in their prime. For persuasion (peitho) still breathes over me from the gods. (104-106; see also the third stasimon, discussed above)

There is nothing optimistic about 104-106. Peitho is the daughter of Ate ("ruin") and is forceful (βλαστείν, 385-386). And πνέω ("breathe") is nowhere used in the Oresteia except to describe destruction and just retribution for sins, so long as Justice is seen as a vengeful goddess without mercy. At Choephoroi 952 she is described as ἁλάζον πνέων ἐν ἐκθροις κότον ("breathing destructive wrath over her enemies"). Likewise the Erinyes breathe in vengeful anger: πνέω τοι μένος (Θ) ἀπαντά τε κότον ("I breathe might and utmost rage," Eumenides 840-873). Agamemnon, undertaking the sacrifice of his daughter, puts on the yoke-strap of necessity

φυενός πνέων δυσσεδή τροπαίων
ἀναγχον ἄνεργον, τόδε
το παντότολμου φησειν μετέγνω

Breathing an impious wind that changes the mind, unholy, impure, whence he altered his intent to think all things to be dared. (Agamemnon 219-221)

His mind is figured as a wind that changes direction. The breathing imagery here echoes his decision at 184-191 to take Calchas’ terrible advice, ἐμπαίος τίχαιοι συμπνέων ("breathing together with the fortunes that struck against him" 187). But the changing wind at 219 is not just his changing resolve. It is also what that change of resolve effects: a change of wind, lifting the

πνοαὶ δ’ ἀπὸ Στρυμόνος μαλαῦσαι
κακόσχολοι, νήστιδες, δύσσεμοι

Winds coming from Strymon, of ill delay, hungry and with hard harbouring. (192-193)

Agamemnon breathes an unholy change of wind—which lifts the immediate storm but also (because of what he has resolved to do) guarantees that it will return – and return it does:

όδε τοι μελάδεροι τοῖς βασιλείοις
This has turned out to be a third squall, breathing upon the royal house. (*Choephor* 1065-1067).

The Erinyes, consenting to Athena’s offer of sanctuary on Athenian soil and becoming the *Semnai Theai*, offer the absence of wind or breath as a favour (*Eumenides* 938-939). This is the fulfilment of a request made by Athena (905-906). Only after the spirits of vengeance have been made friendly can wind and breath become good.

So the chorus’ inspiration is already described in terms that are less than auspicious at 104-106. Cassandra’s description of Apollo’s amorous advances, *παλαισθές κάρτι ἐμοὶ πνέων χάριν* (“he came as a wrestler to me, breathing grace,” 1206), should already seem suspicious. Virtually nothing is breathed in the *Oresteia* that is not destructive. Cassandra herself uses *πνέω* repeatedly and in a less than optimistic way. Describing Clytemnestra (in terms that the chorus does not understand) she says:

> τί νῦν καλοῦσα δυσφιλές δάκος
ti nyn kalousa dysphiles dakos

> τύχοιρ ’ἄνι; ἀμφίσθαιναν ἦ Σκύλλαν πινά
tychoi h'aniu; amphisthananaN e Skyllan pina

> οἰκούσαν ἐν πέτραις, ναυτιλῶν ἔλαβην,
oikousan en petrai, nautilon elavhen,

> Σίοσαν ὡς ‘Αἴδου μητέρα ἀσπονδόν τ᾽ Ἄρη
siowan h'as Aidoou mhtera aspondon t' Arhe

> φιλοίς πνέουσαν:
philois pneousan:

> What shall I call this hard-to-love serpent? A double-headed snake, or a Scylla living amidst the rocks, a harm for sailors, a sacrificing mother of Hades, breathing unappeasable war upon her own people? (1232-1236)

At 1309 the house breathes slaughter, *φόνον δόμοι πνέουσιν αἴματοσταγῇ*. Here Cassandra turns to interpret the house. She had done so earlier, at 1186-1187, to describe the chorus of Erinyes singing above the house, saying there that “it does not speak well.” This is a house one would rather were silent (at 36-37 the herald willingly silences what the house would say). If the
house, when it signifies, *breathes* ill, we might expect some correlation between breathing and ill-omened speech, the kind that is destructive or a mark of destruction. Cassandra describes her own oracular utterances in very similar terms:

\[
καὶ μὴν ὁ χρησιμός οὐκέτ' ἐκ καλυμμάτων

ἐσται δεδορκὼς νεογάμου νύμφης δίκην,

λαμπρὸς δὲ οὐκεν ἡλίου πρὸς ἀυτολάς

πνεύμων ἔφηβειν. ἦστε κύματος δίκην

κλίζειν πρὸς αὐτὰς τούτες πήματος πολὺ

μείζον.
\]

No longer will the prophecy be like a newly wed virgin looking from behind her veil, but instead will rush towards the rising of the sun, like a bright wind, so that like a wave it may crash against the beams of a pain far greater than this. (1178-1183)

The χρησιμός ("prophecy") breathes against the rising of the sun and crashes over it like a wave; the comparison implicit in the imagery is (1) with the original nautical scene of the *Oresteia*, the Achaeans ship bound at Aulis – not an auspicious comparison; and (2) with the chorus’ own aversion to prophecies, promises, and narration (254 and 1168-1169; see above) – light, day, is the time of visible confirmation and needs no verbal support. The prophecy that follows crashes against the clarity of its fulfilment, which will shortly follow. And the prophecy is itself clear (λαμπρὸς), like the cry of Clytemnestra which is τορὸς ("distinct," *Choephoroi* 32) or the voice of the house, should it speak (*Agamemnon* 37). It is not going to far to suppose that Cassandra, although she knows that her utterances are signs pure and simple, is also aware that they will be taken as inauspicious.

We find a similar correlation between clarity, breathing, and prophecy at *Choephoroi* 32-41:

\[
τορὸς γὰρ ᾧδαιξδίς δόμων

ἀνειρώματις ἐξ ὑπνοῦ κότων πνέων
\]
For the clear hair-straightening dream-seer of the house, breathing rage in sleep, barked out a midnight shriek of fear from the inner recesses of the house, falling heavily on the women’s quarters — and the interpreters of those dreams, who have their responsibility from the gods, barked out that those below the earth blamed and were spiritedly angry at the murderers.

This is said of Clytemnestra’s dream that Orestes later interprets as prefiguring himself. Φοίνος, which appears in the oldest manuscript, was removed from 32 by Weil (see Garvie ad loc.). But the connection with prophecy is evident enough. The διψάμας ειλακ ‘barked;’ a verb characteristic of oracles;176 the interpreters (κρίται) speak in the same way (ειλακ). This prophetic dream-utterance is clear (τοής) and it breathes rage, just as Justice does at Choephori 952.

In the Cassandra scene, this inauspicious coming clear of poetic speech is compared to a recently wed virgin looking from her veil. Cassandra’s relationship to her prophecy, and to the gift, is like that of a young bride, and the wedding imagery, combined with the breath imagery, returns in 1206, when she describes how the god came to her as a lover. He comes like a wrestler, breathing grace (χάρις). Πνέων χάριν (“breathing grace”), when it is set beside its Homeric analogues (μένειν πνέων - “breathing might”177) and the usual Aeschylean turn on them (κτόν πνέων - “breathing rage”178) seems a dangerous oxymoron. In fact it is a regular part of the Aeschylean thematic.
Apollo’s grace “was directed towards, and at the same time worked upon, Cassandra; the god conferred his favour on her while she underwent the influence of that irresistible radiance, that χάρις, which is particularly strong in Phoebus Apollo.”\(^\text{179}\) Cassandra consents to it (1208), then revokes her consent. This part of the story would not surprise the chorus, who says of women that it is their way πρὸ τοῦ φανέρους χάριν ξυνοίλεσοι (“to consent to give thanks (charis) before things become clear,” 484). But Cassandra does not deceive Apollo because of some flighty femininity. Rather it is because she, like the chorus, fosters a dream of autonomy, of being the agent of none. She describes Apollo as a wrestler, and he breathes grace the way warriors breathe might or the Erinyes and Justice breathe rage – that is, Apollo’s χάρις is very much like that of the other gods, and like the standard pedagogicai method of Zeus:

\[
\text{τὸν φρεναῖν θρονοῦ ὀδώ-
\quad σαντα, τὸν πάντει μᾶθος}
\]
\[
\text{Σέντα κυφώς ἀπεῖν:}
\]
\[
\text{στᾶξει ὦ ἐν γ' ὑπνῷ πρὸ καρδίας}
\]
\[
\text{μεγαπήμων πόνος· καὶ παρ' ἀ-
\quad κοντας ἡδὺ σωφρονέν·}
\]
\[
\text{δαμόνεν δὲ ποι χάρις ζηλοσ}
\]
\[
\text{σέλμα σεμνον ἴμελοιν.}
\]

[Zeus,] who puts mortals on the road to understanding, making “learning through suffering” authoritative – pain mindful of suffering drips before their heart in sleep – and wisdom comes even to the unwilling. For there is a violent grace (charis biaios) that comes from the gods who sit at the august helm. (176-183)

Learning, it seems, always comes through suffering (this is true of the chorus as well as of Agamemnon, Clytemnestra and Orestes\(^\text{180}\)). Even the unwilling learn to be prudent – the grace of the gods is violent. Χάρις ζηλος, however oxymoronic, lies at the heart of the narrative in the first two plays, and is an outgrowth of the impossibility of healing. Apollo cannot heal - and as a result, his χάρις (“grace”), like that of the other gods, is ζηλος (“violent”). Aeschylus’ turn on the
Homeric formula at 1206, \( \pi\varepsilon\omega\upsilon \chi\acute{a}q\upsilon \) ("breathing grace"). is not a rehabilitation of \( \pi\varepsilon\omega\upsilon \) ("breathing"). It is a degradation of \( \chi\acute{a}q\upsilon \) ("grace"): for grace read \( \kappa\omicron\tau\omicron\gamma\mu\acute{e}n\omicron\varsigma \), rage and destruction. The chorus will have none of it.

Neither will Cassandra, for whom Apollo is a violent wrestler, a warrior more than a lover. The result for both, in rejecting the offered agency, is that they are neither believed nor heeded at the critical moment. Cassandra is mistrusted as an oracle because she utters inauspicious things; the chorus' utterances in the final part of the play are not prophetic but bestial (see Chapter Three).

Silencing discourse contains a tragic element of error. Apollo, who serves as the principle of hope for the chorus, turns out to be incapable of fulfilling this role. But in the Agamemnon, the failure of Apollo to function in this manner is apparently due to the chorus' and Cassandra's over-application of the principle of silence. For this particular play, we might identify this adherence to the principle of silence as a tragic flaw: because they cannot distinguish between good silence and destructive silence, the chorus allows Agamemnon to be murdered. In the Eumenides, however (and there are already intimations of this in the Agamemnon), it appears that Apollo is constrained not to act as a healer not because of some error on the part of a character but because the principle of silence has been applied as a cosmological principle. The tragic death of Agamemnon, and the acquittal of Orestes, which contravenes the supposedly natural or ordained motion of vengeance, both suggest that Aeschylus wishes us to see beyond this principle, and to imagine something new.

What Aeschylus wants us to imagine, I argue in the next chapter, is the radically democratic device of criticism, which is for Aeschylus and for others in the Greek world who
were concerned with legal matters a notion which designates a radical point of indeterminacy in the legal decision making process. This became evident in Chapter Three through the distinction between *dikazein* and *krinein*. At Gortyn, a judge (*dikastes*) became a critic (*krites*) at the moment when the procedures at law could no longer decide the outcome of a case, and a necessarily unpredictable decision had to be made (see Chapter Five on the necessity of unpredictability). Similarly at Athens, trials were referred to juries (*kritai*) once it had been established that legal procedures could not resolve whatever issues were at stake. Aeschylus sees the unresolvability of certain issues as a product of silencing discourse, and he sees the ability to move past these tragic antinomies in the practice of criticism, which is represented in the *Eumenides* by the silent Areopagites.

The notion of *krisis* repeats at at least three separate moments in the historical and literary context of tragedy: once in the democratic institutions of law, which Aeschylus is commenting on in the *Eumenides*; once in the context of the dramatic competitions themselves, since the plays were in fact judged by bodies of jurors (*kritai*) selected from the tribes in a manner very similar to that of the jury-at-law (see Chapter Five); and again at the literary level, as the device that allows the tragedian to take a tragic situation and transform it, through the addition of an inscrutable moment of choice, into tragedy. Aeschylus’ argument about criticism, which I analyse in the next chapter, should be taken as referring in some sense to all three of these levels. I focus on the literary level for the sake of simplicity. But I may be taken as implying that, if tragedy is understood as the tragic condition plus criticism, and since this equation occurs not only in the creation of plays but in the dramatic festival and in the constitutional structure at Athens, Athens is the city of tragedy in more ways than one.
Chapter Five:

Tragedy and Criticism
In this chapter I turn to the second theme of this essay, that of the relationship between “tragedy” and “the tragic.” The tragic I define as a condition in which an entity is subject to two conflicting laws or causal regimes. Tragedy I define simply as the staging of the tragic. But if it can be defined simply, the relationship between tragedy and the tragic is not itself simple. It is my position that the tragic condition does not naturally lead to action but to inactivity or repetition. If I am “of two minds,” or if I find myself torn between two conflicting duties or necessities, it is more likely that I will freeze, shut down, or become catatonic, just as a computer will freeze when given two conflicting commands. But tragedy requires that its characters, who find themselves in a tragic condition, act. That is, they must choose between their alternatives; the narrative of tragedy often consists in detailing the results of this choice. Tragedy then may be redefined as the representation of the tragic plus choice. It turns out that the Oresteia furnishes fine illustrations both for the inactivity or repetition of the tragic, and for its supplementation with choice for the creation of tragedy.

In the preceding four chapters I have argued that silencing discourse and the conditions which are attendant on it are crucial to the narrative of the Oresteia. Not only does the trilogy portray silencing discourse as a structure inherent to the unfolding of the events at Argos, but these events are in fact dependent on silencing discourse. Without the application of silencing discourse as a universal principle, the events which occur in the Agamemnon and the Choephoroi would not have been possible. I believe that silencing discourse creates a tragic condition, and that it is only with the supplementation of silence with choice, or what we will call krisis (after the Greek word for choice), crisis (in English), or criticism (for the sake of literary/methodological overtones), that tragedy becomes possible.
Two problems with our analysis of silence require reflection. The first is the fact that it is paradoxical for Aeschylus to show us silencing discourse at all. If silence is produced in this manner, then it should not be possible for Aeschylus to know about it, since silencing discourse should produce silence — that is, it should efface its own structures. If I silence myself effectively, it should not be possible for anyone to know that or how I did so, since I am silent. In order to show that silence is an important theme in the *Oresteia*, I must also explain how it is possible for silence to be shown at all in a dramatic performance.

The second problem is slightly more complex. Silencing discourse produces a condition in which only inactivity or bloody, vengeful repetition are possible. Neither inactivity nor repetition makes for good tragedy. Of the first, we may merely remark that it provides us with no action to represent; of the second, we may repeat the remark of Karl Jaspers that “tragic knowledge ... contains an element of history. Cyclical patterns are merely its background. The crucial events are unique and are always moving on. They are shaped by irrevocable decisions, and they never recur.” Where Jaspers says “tragic knowledge,” that is, an awareness of the tragic condition, we may understand “tragedy,” that is, the ability to make the tragic condition visible and available for contemplation on the stage. The cycle of repetition that the deaths of Iphigenia, Agamemnon, and Clytemnestra enact can serve only as a background for tragedy. Something unique must occur within it, if there is to be tragedy, properly understood.

Aeschylus may be able to identify, and to use, silencing discourse because, although silencing discourse itself is by definition not in evidence (since otherwise it would not be effective), the products of silencing discourse — that is the division of sovereignties and the retributive justice of vengeance and reprisal — are in evidence, both in the inherited narratives
that furnish his material, and in the form of archaic ethical and political structures. That silencing discourse is reflected in Hesiodic ethics and in Greek political theory I demonstrated in Chapter Three. We may say that Aeschylus is able to work silencing discourse into the structure of the trilogy because, although he cannot actually see it, he can see its products. But this does not alleviate the second problem, since the products of silencing discourse do not in themselves make for good tragedy. For both problems that I have articulated here, the question may be rephrased as follows. How does Aeschylus take something that on its own cannot create tragedy and create out of it a compelling theatrical drama?

My answer to this question is simply that Aeschylus stages these things, and that in the process of staging a change is introduced into silencing discourse and its products that makes the difference between tedium and apathy on the one hand and liberating human drama on the other. Staging as I understand it here represents the addition of what Jaspers calls the “element of history,” the “unique” and “moving” element to the background of cycle and repetition that on its own can make for no tragedy, no “tragic knowledge.” We can follow Jaspers even farther, however, in identifying this element of history as an “irrevocable decision” – that is, a fundamental choice that underlies the unique action of tragedy and against which the cycle of repetitions is only a background. Aeschylus’ ability to stage silence and silencing discourse is the result of his addition of a moment of choice – or krisis – to the repetitive products of silencing discourse. It allows him to take a tragic situation and turn it into a tragedy.

In this chapter, I begin by demonstrating how silence gives rise to repetitive acts of vengeance and counter-vengeance, and I relate this to the notion of stasis or civil strife and to the tragic. I argue that the tragic, stasis, and silencing discourse are near-synonyms and none of them
are adequate for tragedy. In a discussion of the notion of *stasis* in Thucydides and the *Oresteia* I argue that *stasis* and silencing discourse are intimately related, and that *stasis* is tragic. Then, in an analysis of the Cassandra scene in the *Agamemnon*, I attempt to illustrate that the connection between the tragic and silence can be demonstrated not only through the notion of *stasis*, but also through Aristotle’s notion that pity and fear are the tragic emotions. I then turn to the notion of staging and to the question of the relations between the tragic, tragedy, and criticism. For tragedy, there must be the addition of Jaspers’ “element of history,” the irrevocable decision or choice, which I designate by the Greek term *krisis* or by its English derivative “criticism.” I argue that the *Eumenides* offers us a key to understanding staging, criticism, and tragedy. The jury of Athenian *kritai* or jurymen represents a full-fledged moment of criticism and allows for the staging of the tragic that in a sense serves as the key to the *Oresteia* as a tragedy.

The inactivity of the chorus of the *Agamemnon* at a number of critical moments is the result of their commitment to silence, and of their overwhelming fear that misspeech or ill-action would result in disaster. As a result, they do nothing, and Clytemnestra is allowed to realise her plans without resistance. This is the inactivity produced by silencing discourse. But silence and silencing discourse also produce a universe in which two sovereignties are rigidly opposed to each other, each silent in the face of the other, but each ready to act violently to avenge any action by the other. The result here is an endless back-and-forth of crimes and retributions, and this is the cycle of repetition produced by silencing discourse. How this functions can be illustrated clearly by the career of Clytemnestra in the trilogy. In the *Agamemnon* Clytemnestra is characterised by an ambiguous silence on the matter of her plans for Agamemnon, so that
while she does speak, she never speaks clearly of what she intends to do. This silence about her plans is given objective form by her silent presence at the doorway of the house during the parodos, and in both cases her silence is the silence of a vengeful sovereign, who has heard of the crimes of Agamemnon and intends to punish them. At 1372 her display of his body wrapped in the bloody robe repeats the description of Iphigenia’s death that was provided by the chorus in the parodos, as Iphigenia’s robe flows from her at the moment of her death (233). In this way, Clytemnestra fulfils the role of the vengeful sovereign as this is outlined by silencing discourse: she avenges a sinful act while at the same time merely repeating it, making real what had only been a story for the chorus. In the Choephori, on the other hand, Clytemnestra becomes the subject of silencing discourse, who sends the chorus of libation bearers to the tomb of Agamemnon in order to avert the dangerous implications of a prophetic dream (31-42). Opposed to her, and ultimately responsible for her downfall, stand Orestes, Pylades, Electra, and the chorus itself, who serve in this play as the sovereign ready to avenge Clytemnestra’s crime. They, like Clytemnestra in the Agamemnon, practice a silence which is intended to conceal their intent but which distinctly marks them as the silent and avenging sovereign. Orestes’ lies about his identity (674-690) amount to a silence concerning his intentions, just as Clytemnestra’s ambiguous speech in the Agamemnon had concealed her plans. And the libation bearers’ silence, to which reference is frequently made, is neither the silence of those subject to a tyranny nor the good sense of women, but the silence of the sovereign planning its vengeance.
But I command you to keep an auspicious tongue, and to be silent when it is necessary, and to speak in an opportune manner.

*(Choephoroi 581-582)*

These lines enjoin the chorus to be silent and speak when it is opportune, just as Clytemnestra herself had done in the *Agamemnon* (see *Agamemnon* 1372). Other silences in the *Choephoroi* fit into this pattern. Electra’s

\[ \eta \sigma \gamma \: \alpha \tau \iota \mu \omega \varsigma, \: \omega \sigma \pi \epsilon \theta \: \omicron \: \omicron \nu \: \alpha \pi \omega \lambda \varepsilon \tau \sigma \eta \]  
\[ \mu \alpha \tau \dot{\iota} \rho \varsigma, \: \tau \alpha \delta \: \iota \kappa \chi \alpha \alpha \varsigma\alpha, \: \gamma \alpha \pi \mu \pi \theta \nu \chi \iota \omicron \upsilon, \: \sigma \tau \epsilon \iota \iota \chi \omega. \]

Or, silent and dishonoured, even as my father died, having poured out this offering as a drink for the earth, shall I go ... *(Choephoroi 94-97)*

characterises her silence as very similar to that of the angry, vengeful Menelaus of *Agamemnon* 412-413. *Choephoroi* 264-267.

\[ \omicron \: \pi \alpha \iota \delta \omicron \varsigma, \: \omicron \: \sigma \omega \tau \omicron \gamma \omicron \epsilon \zeta \varsigma \iota \iota \varsigma \varsigma \iota \alpha \varsigma \rho, \]  
\[ \sigma \gamma \alpha \beta \varsigma, \: \omicron \pi \omega \mu \nu \pi \nu \sigma \tau \epsilon \sigma \tau \iota \varsigma, \: \omicron \: \tau \epsilon \kappa \nu \alpha, \]  
\[ \gamma \lambda \omicron \omega \omicron \omicron \sigma \varsigma \chi \alpha \iota \omicron \: \delta \: \pi \alpha \tau \nu \: \alpha \pi \alpha \gamma \gamma \epsilon \lambda \iota \tau \alpha \delta \]  
\[ \pi \omicron \: \tau \omicron \kappa \rho \sigma \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \alpha \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma - \ldots \]

Oh children, savours of your father’s hearth, be silent, lest someone hear this, dear ones, and for the sake of talk announce it all to those in power ...

designates the necessary secrecy of conspirators.

When Orestes appears over the bodies of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus at 972, he holds up the robe which Clytemnestra had used to ensnare Agamemnon – again repeating the tableau which has now occurred three times in the trilogy. Each succeeding tableau represents a vengeance and a repetition of the last. This narrative of crime and vengeance, act and repetition, is facilitated by the establishment of those structures implicit in silencing discourse as the actual
structures of the universe. Where silencing discourse does not produce apathy and inactivity as it does in the chorus of the Agamemnon, it produces nauseous repetition.

This repetition is the product of a violent back-and-forth between the various sovereignty-positions instituted in silencing discourse. Each silent figure configures himself as sovereign, takes revenge for some crime, and then becomes himself the victim of another silent sovereign’s revenge. The Greek term for this process is stasis ("civil strife"). At Eumenides 976-985 the Erinyes, who have at this point consented to take up residence in Athens, sing blessings on the town in terms which characterise the entire narrative as it has unfolded so far:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{τὰν} \, δ' \, \text{ἀπλοφτον} \, \text{κακῶν} \\
\text{μὴ} \, \text{ποιησαι} \, \text{ἐν} \, \text{πόλει} \, \text{Στάσιν} \\
\text{τὰδ'} \, \text{ἐπειδεύσω} \, \text{ἀδέων}, \\
\text{μὴ} \, \text{ποίουσα} \, \κῶς \, \μέλαν \, \αἷμα \, \πολιτῶν} \\
\text{δ'} \, \text{όγναυ} \, \ποιάς \\
\text{ἀντιφόνος} \, \text{"Ατας} \\
\text{ἀρπαλίσαι} \, \πόλεως}. \\
\text{κάθωτα} \, \text{δ'} \, \text{ἀντιδίδοε} \\
\text{κοινωνίας} \, \text{διανοια.} \\
\text{καὶ} \, \text{στυγεῖσι} \, \text{μὴ} \, \text{φεινεί.} \\
\text{πολλῶν} \, \text{γὰρ} \, \text{τόδ' \, ἐν} \, \text{διοικής} \, \text{ἄνως.}
\end{align*}
\]

I pray that stasis insatiable of evils never thunder in this city, nor may the dust that drinks the black blood of citizens out of anger exact from the city punishments of destruction in exchange for murder. Let them reciprocate kindness, with thoughts full of common friendship, and let them hate with one breast. This is a cure for many things among mortals.

Strictly speaking this is a song blessing democratic Athens. But while it has clear implications for Aeschylus’ political argument in the Oresteia, it also serves to mark the end of the conditions that had prevailed up to this point in the trilogy. Alan Sommerstein remarks on lines 980-983 that “the chain of events here deprecated, in which political strife leads to violence and counter-violence ending in the ruin of the polis, is not unlike what happened in Argos from
the initial political dispute between Atreus and Thyestes ... to the overthrow of the legitimate
government by the diple tyrannis (Choephoroi 973) of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus,” and it is not
unreasonable to add the subsequent assassination of Clytemnestra by Orestes, which continues
the strife within the family and the conflicts within the Argive polity. But Argos is not the only
entity caught in stasis or political strife: from a certain perspective, it is clear that the entire
cosmos is caught in stasis, between an Olympian or “new” faction, represented by Apollo, and a
Chthonic or “old” faction, represented by the Erinyes themselves.

The Erinyes’ characterisation of stasis at 976-985 bears profitable comparison with the
analysis of the stasis at Corcyra that Thucydides provides in the History (III.70-85). For
Thucydides, stasis consists in two equally important things: (1) the existence of opposing
factions within a single polity; and (2) a dissolution, violation, or repealing of whatever
discourse had allowed peace to exist, whether this was legal, philosophical, or rhetorical.

In language, Thucydides reports a systematic revision of the meaning of words:

καὶ τὴν εἰσοδυναμίαν ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνόματων ἐς τὰ ἔργα ἀντήλλαξαν τῇ δικαιώσει. τὸλμα μὲν γὰρ
ἀλόγιστος ἀνθρεῖα. ψιλότοιος ἐνομιόθη, μέλλοντες δὲ προμηθῆς δειλία εὐχρητοῦ, τὸ δὲ σώφρον
τοῦ ἀνάϊδρου πρόσχημα, καὶ τὸ πρὸς ἄπαν ἔμετρόν ἐπὶ πᾶν ἄφραν.

And they changed the usual relations of words and things according to their judgement
(dikaiosei). Unconsidered daring was considered brave loyalty to the party, and
thoughtful delay was considered cowardice with a pretty face put on it; good sense was a
cover for weakness, and to be smart in anything was total inactivity. (III.82.4)

The sentences on the changed meanings of words segue almost unnoticeably into a description of
the moral and civic features that ensue: the weakness of family as opposed to party ties; the
apparent value of denouncing innocents; the old reason for male parties (religion) replaced by
the honour of thieves (III.82.5-7). As the language’s words are detached from their proper
meanings, the language itself loses its internal consistency and its ability to work as a transmitter of ethical value.

A similar disregard or deformation occurs to law:

οὐ γὰρ μετὰ τῶν κειμένων νόμων ὁμολογεῖ οἱ τοιαῦται ξύνοδοι, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τοῖς καθεστῶταις πλεονεξίᾳ.

Nor were allegiances made with the help of established laws, but out of a desire for gain, and in violation of them. (III.82.6)

Party leaders take no account of civic interests or justice and are willing to have resolutions passed by illegal votes or by violent coercion (III.82.8). As had been the case with language, the ability to make the state “say” whatever is to one’s advantage indicates a dissolution of the legal apparatus, and of the edifice that law supports.186

The parallel disregard of language and law that Thucydides documents is to be expected; both are forms of convention, νόμος (nomos). The antithesis between νόμος and φύσις (physis; “nature”) had been an obsession for Greek thought since the fifth century, and had been applied both to linguistic and political analysis.187 Thucydides is clearly of the opinion that language is a matter of νόμος or convention, as his phrasing at III.82.4 implies, and if III.84 were not generally considered spurious,188 we would be able to understand from it that the condition of stasis entailed the insurrection of human nature, φύσις, with horrific results. But III.82.6 suggests clearly enough that stasis involved not only the overturning of conventions of language, but also those of law. It appears that νόμος in both these cases refers to a general agreement or consent on the part of all parties.189 Stasis, then, implies the destruction of any common ground, linguistic or legal, within the city.
We can see this lack of agreement or common ground at work literally in the fact that *stasis* also makes the formation of long term treaties impossible:

καὶ ὅρκαι εἷς που ἄρα γένοιτο εὐναλλαγῆς, ἐν τῷ αὐτίκα πρὸς τὸ ἀπορον ἐκατέρω διδόμενο ἰόχουν ...

And if there ever was an oath of alliance, it had only temporary strength, since it was made in moments of difficulty for each side ... (III.82.7)

οὐ γὰρ ἢν ὁ διαλύσαν οὔτε λόγος ἐχοφὸς οὔτε ὁρκὸς φοβερός ...

For there was no word trustworthy enough to end [the conflict], nor an oath fearful enough ... (III.83.2).

In short, *stasis* means the failure of conventional discourse, whether this appears as law, treaty or oath, and even as language itself. Without a speech that is itself contractual, communication of any meaningful sort becomes impossible. It is worth remarking that the failure of conventional discourse under *stasis* also means the impossibility of an end to *stasis*. Since no oath is secure and no pledge is to be trusted, no end is possible. The two sides are exclusive, their opposition is absolute, and the results are unending crimes and recriminations.

The same conditions as Thucydides sees in the *stasis* at Corcyra prevail between Apollo and the Erinyes in the *Eumenides*. Neither Apollo nor the Erinyes appear to be obeying a common law. Both are accused of illegality:

τοιαῦτα δησίων οἱ νεώτεροι Ζεοί,
κροτούσι τὸ πᾶν δίκας πλέον.
φωναλιθὴ Ἰάονον
πεὶ πόδα, πεὶ κάρα,
πάρεστι γας ἄσες ἀμφαλών προσδέχεσθαι αἰμάτων
βλασφήμων ἀφάμενον ἄγος ἔχειν.

ἐφεστίῳ δὲ μάντις ὑμώματι
μυχὸν ἔχονας αἰτοσύνος, αἰτώκλητος,
παρὰ νόμον Ζεών δέστε μὲν τίνων,
παλαίγανεις δὲ μοῖρας φώτας.
Such things the younger gods do, ruling altogether beyond what is just. You can see – the throne is dripping in blood from head to toe, and the navel of the earth has a horrible pollution of blood.

And the seer with a stain at the hearth has stained his sanctuary, setting it up himself, calling it upon himself, honouring mortals against the law of the gods, and destroying the ancient dispensations. (*Eumenides* 162-172)

*Kρατεύωτες τὸ πᾶν δίκαιον πλέον* ("ruling altogether beyond what is just") and *παρὰ νόμον Σείων βρότα μὲν τίων* ("honouring mortals against the law of the gods") both explicitly accuse Apollo and the Olympians of illegality, of operating by fiat and without reference to the contract (in this case, *moira*) that the Erinyes believe to have been established. That there is a contract is evident in the Erinyes’ repeated insistence on their role. It is not only their commitment to Clytemnestra (155-161) that drives them after Orestes, but also a duty that has been assigned to them and that does more than simply protect their natural honour. It is part (they say) of the cosmos of Zeus:

*Χο. άλλ' ἐστιν ἡμῖν τοῦτο προστεταγμένον. Απ. τίς ἦδε τιμή; κόμπασον γάρας καλόν.*
*Χο. τοῦς μητραλοίας ἐκ ὁμοίων ἔλαιομεν.*

Cho. But this is apportioned us.
Ap. What is this honour? Boast of your fine gift.
Cho. We drive matricides from their homes.
(*Eumenides* 208-210)

The *τιμή* (honour) that the Erinyes claim and that has been taken away from them (323-325) is not simply a natural inclination. Rather it is assigned them (*προστεταγμένον*):

*τοῦτο γὰρ λάχος διανταία 
Μοῦρ ἐπέκλωσεν ἐμπέδως ἐχεῖν, 
γιατί τοίς αὐτοὺς ἐνυπηργεῖα 
ἐμπέδωσεν μάταιοι 
tοῖς ἁμαρτεῖν ...*
This apportionment has relentless Fate spun for us to have secure, to hound the footsteps of those mortals on whom personally committed wickednesses have fallen ... (334-337)

γιγνομέναις λάχης τάδ’ εἰς ἀμίν ἐκράγης
ἀδανάτων δ’ ἀπέχειν χήρας, οὐδὲ τις ἔστι
συνδατίωρ μετάκοινν.

When we came to be, this lot was decreed for us, to keep our hands far from the immortals, nor is there anyone who eats with both of us in common. (349-351)

It is clear from these passages that as a lot (λάχος) that has been decreed to them, the region of activity that is occupied by the Erinyes is a duly appointed part of the cosmos. and, as 350 indicates, serves to protect the Olympians from pollution (and perhaps also vengeance – “here the contrast with the description of how the Erinyes punish mortal sinners (334-46) suggests at first hearing that the meaning is ‘not to punish the gods’” – Sommerstein _ad loc._).

†σπευδόμεναι δ’ ἀφελέων τίνα τάσει μερίμνας
Θεών δ’ ἀτέλειαν ἑμαίνοι λυταίς ἐπικραίνειν†
μηδ’ εἰς ἄγχοσιν ἔλθειν.
Ζεὺς δ’ αἰμοσταγάς ἀξιόμισον ἔδωκε τὸδε λέσχας
ας ἀπηξίσωσατο.

†I am eager to relieve everyone of this care, and I bring it about by my efforts that the gods are delivered of the obligation† even of a preliminary hearing; and Zeus stays away from this blood-drenched company, as worthy of hatred. (360-365)

360-365 are uncertain but the sense seems to be that the Erinyes, in fulfilling their function, relieve the Olympians of the work of vengeance, an office which Zeus is pleased to delegate (so Sommerstein _ad loc._). This, together with 334-337, puts Apollo in breach of contract. His involvement in the avenging of Agamemnon’s death usurps the Erinyes’ broader role (they do not hound only matricides, see 354-355). Further, his claim, parallel with Clytemnestra’s in the _Agamemnon_ (1475-1504), that Orestes is free of guilt because he acted on divine sanction denies
a principle that he himself had exercised against Clytemnestra and that the Erinyes claim as well
(336), that those who commit crimes with their own hands are liable to punishment.

If the Erinyes see Apollo as the first breaker of the cosmic contract, and polluted by his acceptance of Orestes at Delphi (149-154; 169-174), Apollo sees the Erinyes as no less in breach of contract by their presence at the omphalos, and he believes the pollution there to come not from Orestes but from them. Their apportionment had been ἀδαμάτων δ᾽ ἀπέχειν χέφας (“to keep our hands far from the gods,” 350), and Apollo sees the Erinyes’ presence at his shrine to be a violation of this: οὗτοι δόμοιοι τοῦτον χρήμπτεσθαι πρέπει (“it is not right for you to grasp this house,” 185).

Not only is the contract broken, but Apollo explicitly denies the possibility of a new one, for reasons familiar to students of stasis. Claiming his right before the jury, Apollo remarks:

οὐπώπωτ' ἐποιεὶ μαντικοῖσιν ἐν Ἰσάνοις,
οὐκ ἀνδρός, οὐ γυναικός, οὐ πόλεως πέρι.
ὁ μὴ κελεύσαι Ζεὺς Ὄλυμπων πατὴρ.
τὸ μὲν δίκαιον τοῦτ' ὅσον σέθει μάξε.
Ζωλή πισαῖσσων δ᾽ ἱματ' ἐπιπεσθαι πατρός.
ὅρκος γὰρ οὕτι Ζηνὸς ἵσχυει πλέον.

I never said anything on my mantic seat about man, woman, or city, that Zeus, the father of the Olympians, did not command. Learn how strong this justice is. But also I tell you to follow the council of the father. For no oath is stronger that Zeus. (616-621)

In stasis, “there is no speech that can end it, nor oath sufficiently fearful” (Thucydides III.83.2).

The denial of the power of oaths here is nothing but a refusal to be contractually bound, and through that, an acknowledgement of the permanence of stasis.

In stasis, a city (or a cosmos) finds itself at the mercy of two opposing factions, each of which arrogates to itself absolute right. In this conflict of mutually opposed parties, the
opposition of sovereigns created by silencing discourse is evident. If in stasis, each of two parties takes the other to be in a state of illegality and moves to destroy it, in silencing discourse, each silent figure assumes a form of sovereignty, ready to punish the other for any misspeech or ill action. And in fact, it is possible to see stasis as one of the productions of silencing discourse, both in Thucydides and in the Oresteia.

Thucydides does not mention silence in his analysis of factional strife. But the absence of a common discourse like law or language can only mean the mutual silence of the two parties. Under these conditions there may be exchange of words, but in the absence of any firm substrate of meaning, there can be no genuine understanding or communication. There may be litigation, but in the absence of strong laws and a common sense of justice, there can be no legality. But to say that there is no conventionally agreed upon language is to imply that all utterances are dangerous, since every utterance expresses the aggressive self-interest of its utterer; and to say that there is no legality is only to say that sovereignty has been arrogated by each factional party to itself, instead of being diffused throughout the whole city. And put this way, it seems that the silence that sits like a barrier between the opposing parties in factional strife is in fact a projection of the silence produced by silencing discourse. Each party in stasis both arrogates sovereignty to itself and understands that its sovereignty is seriously threatened by the other party – thus the atrocities and depredations that occur in stasis (see Thucydides III.69-81), directed by each party against the other in defence of its own sovereignty within the state.

It may be more accurate to say that stasis reproduces the positions produced by silencing discourse, but not its silence. There is no evidence in Thucydides that there is any significant silence in stasis. But here we need to remember that stasis is a phenomenon which appears to us
from a different perspective from that provided by silencing discourse; it seems unlikely that the concept of *stasis* is likely to have any weight to an orator or a politician engaged in what Thucydides would call *stasis*; to such a political actor, the situation might be better described as a condition of insecurity or even of war. From *within stasis*, in other words, it would not be *stasis* that was apparent. And from within *stasis*, I suspect, the decisions that are taken by either party, whether these are of a military, social, or legal nature, are likely to be governed by the thought processes characteristic of silencing discourse – the need to prevent the other side from seizing on information, legal authority, or geographical areas that it could use to its advantage – in other words the need to silence ourselves because of the threatening authority of the other. The lack of common ground, whether this is language, law, or legal treaty, may be seen as an expression of the need for secrets in *stasis*, of the tactical necessity of the blockage of information. *Stasis*, we might say, is the objective face of silencing discourse which we have so far accessed only by reading the forms of expression of subjects engaged in precisely this kind of strife.

Similarly, in the *stasis* between Apollo and the Erinyes that appears in the *Eumenides*, Orestes, who is Apollo’s agent, maintains a silence with respect to the Erinyes:

Χο. οὐδ’ ἀντιφωνεῖς, ἀλλ’ ἀποπτύεις λόγους, ἐμοὶ τραφεῖς τε καὶ καθιερωμένος;  

Cho. Do you not reply, but despise words, you who were raised for me and are dedicated to me? (303-304)

Orestes, who understands when it is appropriate to speak and when not (276-279), maintains silence vis-à-vis the Erinyes. The barrier between them will not be broken until the beginning of the trial, when the *stasis* is already in the process of dissolution.
The Erinyes themselves forewarn that the result of total illegality will be silence:

\[
\text{μηδὲ τις κικλησκέτω}
\text{ξυμφορᾷ τετυμμένος}
\text{τούτ' ἐπὸς Ἑρωϊμένος,}
\text{"ὁ Δίκαιο,}
\text{ὁ Ἐρίνω Τ' Ἐρυθῶν".}
\text{ταῦτα τις τάχ' ἄν παθήσῃ}
\text{ἡ τεκνὸνα νεοπαθής}
\text{οἴκτων οἰκτίσαιτ', ἐπιή-
\text{δὴ πίνει ὁμος Δίκας.}
\]

When the house of Justice falls let no one, wounded by fortune, call out this word, shrieking forth: "Oh Justice, oh thrones of the Erinyes" – a father or a newly wounded mother may lament a lament so. (508-516)

The absence of the contract will lead to the impossibility of restitution, the outbreak of absolute human self-destruction (490-507).

In addition to silence, we can associate \textit{stasis} with the characteristic speech of the vengeful sovereign, a cacophonous sound. \textit{Stasis} is marked by noise (\textit{ἐνώμειν, Eumenides} 979). A strain of musical imagery also associates the vengeful sovereign of silencing discourse with the notion of \textit{stasis}. If, with Thucydides, we understand \textit{stasis} to be a state of \textit{anomia}, or the absence of convention or law, then the punning designation of certain voices in the \textit{Agamemnon} as \textit{ἄνωμος} or \textit{ἐκνόμος} ("unmelodious") will also fit in this context. In a passage we have already discussed, the chorus of the \textit{Agamemnon} describes Clytemnestra as a noisy crow:

\[
\text{ἐπὶ δὲ σώματος δίκαν}
\text{κόρακος ἔχωροι σταθεῖν ἐκνόμος}
\text{ὑμον ὑμεῖν ἑπείχεται < >}
\]

And she boasts, singing a song without melody (\textit{eknomos}), standing over the body like a hateful crow ... (\textit{Agamemnon} 1472-1474)
They mean by ἐκνομος “unmelodiously.” But the etymology of the word suggests that the unmelodious song is very much one outside the conventions of music (nomos), and “illegal.” so to speak. This is the voice of Clytemnestra, the voice of vengeance, the voice of stasis.

Cassandra’s voice is described in similar terms at Agamemnon 1140-1145:

φενομανης τις ει θεοφόρητος, ἄμ-
-υι δ’ αὐτάς φρεισ
νόμον ἄνομον οἷα τις ξοῦδα
ἀχώρετος βοάς, φει, ταλαιναίς φρεισ
‘Ιτυς ‘Ιτυν στένουσι’ ἄμαθαλή κακοὶς
ἀγνών μόρον.

You are like some kind of mad possessed prophet, and you cry out about yourself an unmelodious melody – like some blond nightingale, insatiable of shouts – alas – groaning “Itys Itys” with wretched wits, set about with evils.

As we know, the chorus’ desire at this point is to characterise Cassandra as an utterer of inauspicious things. At this point in the scene, her voice is very much like a number of other voices in the Agamemnon, voices associated with stasis. The νόμος ἄνομος (“unmelodious melody”) that she utters recalls Clytemnestra’s voice. In addition, both are compared with birds, and both (more or less metaphorically) lament lost children. If ἄνομος “unmelodious” suggests the voice of stasis, ἀχώρετος βοάς “insatiable of shouts” does also: stasis is by its nature unending, ἀπλωτος καιῶν, “never tiring of evils” (Eumenides 976).

We can connect these “inharmonious” or “illegal” melodies with the vengeful voice of the Erinyes as well. Their song, strictly speaking, is not ἄνομος, and is never referred to as such.

But it is ἀφοίμικτος and ἁνεν λύρας, “without lyre:”

τὸν δ’ ἁνεν λύρας ἀμοις ἵμνηδει
‘Ερύνοι ’Ερυνός αὐτοδίδακτος ἔσωδεν
Ἑμός …
But still my heart, self-taught, sings within my breast the lyreless lament of the Erinyes...

(Agamemnon 990-992)

And over the sacrificed this song, which causes insanity, destruction, and madness, a song from the Erinyes that binds the wits, desiccating mortals, without accompaniment.

(Eumenides 328-333)

The musical form here is unmistakably dangerous, and unquestionably a violation of what is considered acceptable. The chorus of the Agamemnon wants to suppress the voice they hear, and their understanding of its inauspiciousness has already been dealt with in detail. Eumenides 328-333 is uttered before the cult-image of Athena and even if this did not make it inappropriate its maddening effect on humans would. Theirs is a μούσα στυγέρα (“hateful muse,” 307). Their utterances are violations of convention, in essence. Their voice is the voice of stasis.

There are, then, strong connections between stasis and silencing discourse, both of which posit a cycle of crime and retribution between parties who maintain silence with respect to each other, assume their own sovereignty, and act and speak in inauspicious, unmelodious or “illegal” ways. I would suggest that there are also close resemblances between stasis, silencing discourse, and the tragic as I define it, that is, as the submission of an entity to two conflicting laws or regimes.¹⁹¹ A city in stasis can be characterised as a city in a tragic situation, since the city is in a condition where two compelling but opposing forces prevail. Similarly, silencing discourse posits a double sovereignty: the sovereignty of the silent secondary receiver, who is the reason for being silent, but also the sovereignty of the subject of silencing discourse, who by reason of
his silence acquires a sovereignty identical to that of the original secondary receiver. In each of these cases double and conflicting forces, powers, or laws prevail on the same city or subject. The central events of the Oresteia are the events of a universe in stasis. But this is only to say that they are produced by silencing discourse, and this is only to designate their tragic nature.

Stasis illuminates how silencing discourse produces repetition. The connection between the tragic, silencing discourse, and inactivity, on the other hand, can be elaborated by reading the Cassandra scene (Agamemnon 1035-1342) alongside Aristotle’s analysis of tragedy. Aristotle’s definition of tragedy as “an imitation of an action that is serious and complete and has some magnitude ... with men who act and not with reported narrative, which by means of pity and fear causes a purification (katharsis) of similar emotional experiences” (Poetics VI.2) appears to have little to do with our definition of the tragic as the submission of an entity to two conflicting laws. But the identification of pity and fear as the emotional instruments of catharsis in the audience in fact amounts to the same thing, since pity and fear are opposite emotions which normally cannot cohabit the same mind (Rhetoric 1386a.23). Terror “drives out pity” (τὸ δεινὸν [...] ἐκκρεουστικὸν τῶν ἱλιῶν, 1386a.23). Usually, that is, terror and pity are exclusive emotions. If Aristotle does not specify the material of tragedy beyond identifying its size and tenor, the emotional response of his audience in effect locates its effective power in a tragic condition of precisely the nature specified in my definition. But if we take pity and fear as the key to understanding the tragic, an analysis of these emotions in the Cassandra scene of the Agamemnon reveals that these conflicting emotions in fact derive from a particular attitude to silence and speech that is recognisable as the logic of silence.
The trajectory of the scene between the chorus and Cassandra can be analysed in two ways, according to (1) the subject of Cassandra's utterances, and (2) the reaction of the chorus. As it turns out, both ways of tracking what goes on in this scene yield the same architecture, with the same divisions between parts. This is because the subjects of Cassandra's utterances condition the chorus' reaction to her, and vice versa. Cassandra's speech is concerned either with her own misfortunes, or with those of the house of Atreus. When she speaks of herself, the chorus pities her, and is willing to hear her speak, but when she speaks of the house of Atreus, the chorus feels fear and expresses the desire that she be silent.

The correlation between Cassandra's speaking of Argos and the chorus' feeling fear is in fact precisely what we would expect, if Aristotle's understanding of pity and fear has any value as a diagnostic tool. According to Aristotle, "fearful things are things that would be pitiable, if they happened or were about to happen to other people" (*Rhetoric* 1382b.24-26). While fear is "a certain pain or disorder coming from the mental image of some coming destructive or painful evil" (1382a.21-22), that is, arising from the impressions or signs of an imminent evil to ourselves, pity is aroused by the impressions of such evils when they affect another. When Cassandra speaks of their city, the chorus feels fear. When she speaks of her own calamities, they feel pity.

Charted according to the criteria outlined above, the scene with Cassandra can be divided into five parts.
Agamemnon 810-1086

In the first part, which begins with Cassandra’s entrance at 810 and ends at 1086, she is either silently contemplating her sorrows, or speaking of them (“she seems to be singing out about her own evils,” says the chorus at 1083). Besides some initial bewilderment over the strangeness and inappropriateness of her speech, the chorus’ primary reaction to her during this movement is one of pity (1069).

Someone who is experiencing great calamity or grief—that is, who, if they were to speak, would utter pitiable things—is in fact inclined to be silent. The famous silence of Achilles in Aeschylus’ Myrmidons, ridiculed by Euripides in the Frogs of Aristophanes (911 – TrGF III pp. 239ff), may serve as an example here. Achilles laments his loss, and thus sits veiled and in silence. We might compare this also with the silence of Phaedra in Euripides’ Hippolytus, who sits veiled and in silence within the house, trying to hide her shameful love.\(^1\) Cassandra herself is an example of the inclination of the greatly distressed to stay silent. From her entrance with Agamemnon until 1071 she is silent, not because she knows the inefficacy of her prophetic gift as Knox suggests,\(^2\) but because she is engrossed in the tragedy of her own enslavement.

In this she is like her counterpart Iole in the Trachiniae of Sophocles, who, captured by Heracles and brought home with him to his wife Deianeira, shares Cassandra’s predicament. She also shares her silence: when Deianeira questions her as to her name and origin, she does not reply (just as Cassandra does not reply to Clytemnestra), and her escort Lichas explains:

\(\text{οὐ} \ τὰρα \ τῷ \ γε \ πρὸς ὅδεν \ αὐτὴν \ ἀξιαύτην, \ \chiρῶν \ δι’ \ ὧν \ γλύσσαν, \ ητὸς \ αἰδόμα \ προωφήσας \ οὔτε \ μελεῖ \ οὔτε \ ἐλάσσων.\)
She will not loosen her tongue more than she has done before. She’s said nothing, big or small, but always, bearing the pain of her heavy fortune, wretchedly poured out tears, since she left her windy homeland. (Trachiniae 322-327)

A similar explanation is provided in the short discussion of Cassandra’s silence at 1035-1071.

Clytemnestra begins by encouraging her to submit to her new status and to the will of Zeus:

έπει σ’ Ἑθηκε Ζεὺς ἀμημώτως δόμως
κοινωνίαν εἶναι χερινίαν, πολλάν μετὰ
δούλων στατείας κτησίων χαμόν πέλας,
ἐκβαίνω ἀπὸ τῆς τήρης, μηδὲ ὑπερφέρειν.

Since Zeus has without anger made you a participant in the lustrations of the house, to stand with many slaves next to the altar of Zeus Ktesios, come down from that chariot there, and do not be over-proud. (1036-1039)

Cassandra is encouraged not to think that she is above the new position in which she finds herself – any resistance to this is configured by Clytemnestra to seem a resistance to the will of Zeus. Even Heracles had to undergo such a fate (1040-1041).

The chorus repeats the sentiment – she is taken by the nets of fate (μορφήμων ἀγγειώματων, 1048) and should obey. Clytemnestra observes that as long as Cassandra speaks Greek, ἔσω ψευδῶν λέγομαι πείζω νῦν λόγῳ - “I should convince her with words, speaking inside her wits” (1052). Speaking “inside her ψευδέσ” is necessary because Cassandra is absorbed in her own sorrow, and is not responsive to external stimuli. Clytemnestra, to convince her, must get “within” her mind and bring her around. The hypothesis that she does not speak Greek (1060) is rejected by Clytemnestra at 1064-1067:
She rages, and listens to her ill wits, since, having left a newly captured city, she has come here and does not know how to bear the bridle, until she has frothed off her bloody anger.

This is a direct answer to 1062-1063,

\[ \text{εξουρισκόμενος δὲ ξένης \ τόπον ἔδωκε \ τρόπος \ δὲ \ ζηρός \ ως \ νεαρέτου.} \]

The stranger seems to need a clear interpreter – she’s like a newly captured beast.

No, she is not a bewildered foreigner, a beast who must be taught domestication, replies Clytemnestra. She must not be taught but broken – she is not ignorant of the bit, she is too proud for it (1067). This is because she comes not from the wilderness (τρόπος δὲ ζηρός ως νεαρέτου) but from a city newly fallen (λιποῦσα μὲν πόλιν νεαρέτου) – the idea that she might need a translator is dead. Clytemnestra needs to convince Cassandra within her wits because she is listening to them exclusively, obsessed with her own misfortune. The chorus, unlike Clytemnestra, does not grow angry with her, but pities her (ἐποικίσα, γὰρ, 1069). Nevertheless they enjoin her to obey necessity and bear the yoke of slavery (1071).

The idea that Cassandra is silent because she is absorbed in her own sorrows finds corroboration in a number of places in Herodotus. Herodotus III.14.9-10 explicitly connects private grief with keeping silent. The king of Egypt Psammenitus, once Memphis has surrendered to Cambyses, is shown his son and daughter led off to die in slave’s attire. Psammenitus does not lament. But when he sees an old comrade, now a beggar, pass in the same condemned company, ἀνακλαίσας μέγα καὶ καλέσας ὀνομαστὶ τὸν ζητὸν ἐπιλήξατο τῷ κεφαλῇ
Psammenitus explains his actions thus:

"Ω παῖ Κύρου, τὰ μὲν σίκηνα ἢ μέξι τακά ἢ ὠστε ἀνακλαίειν, τὸ δὲ τοῦ ἑπάβου πένθος ἢξιον ἢν δαρείων.

Oh son of Cyrus, the ills directly related to me are too great for crying out loud - but the pain of my friend is worthy of tears. (III.14.10)

Cambyses recognises this to be the utterance of a wise man. Aristotle tells the same story of Psammenitus’ father Amasis (Rhetoric 1436a.12).

If one’s own evils are worthy primarily of silence, when one speaks of another’s evils, that other, if he or she is present, will similarly want you to be silent. The chorus’ fear at Cassandra’s prophetic utterances is coupled with a repeated desire for her silence. When Cassandra stands in silence in the chariot, “listening to her ill wits,” the chorus pities her (1069). But when she begins to speak, telling of the pollution on the house of Atreus, the chorus reacts with distaste, implying that they would rather she not speak:

"Η μή κλέος σου μαντικῶν πεπυργέων
Ημεν. προφήτας δ’ ὀυτίνας ματεύομεν.

We know your fame for prophecy, and we seek no prophets. (1098-1099)

Likewise her bald expression of what will come at 1246 “I say today you will see Agamemnon’s doom” is met with outright censorship – “Silence! keep an auspicious tongue, wretched girl” (1247).

These two considerations would seem to imply that there can be no speaking of misfortune at all. In so far as we contemplate our own ills, or pity ourselves, we are disinclined
to speak. On the other hand, when the utterance of another makes us fear for ourselves, we are also overcome by a desire for silence. This explains the chorus’ constant attempts to stop Cassandra from prophesying the ills of their city. In so far as ill-speech seems to affect us, we desire its silence. In as much as it affects others, we are willing to hear it, but they are unwilling to say it. When the self is afflicted, there seems to be a general injunction against autobiography, against speech that genuinely designates the self. Cassandra cannot speak of her own past, because the contemplation of personal ills is too great for words. On the other hand, she cannot speak of her death, because, in as much as that implies some disaster at Argos, the chorus will desire her silence.

Nevertheless there is speech in this scene. Since Cassandra is not inclined to speak and the chorus is not inclined to listen, we might ask how it is possible that any speech at all should occur here. Why does silence not engulf the stage? While both Cassandra and the chorus obey the simple injunctions against the wrong kinds of speech we have just outlined, they are both looking for a kind of speech that is neither here nor there, a kind of generalized, sanitized and ethical speech that does not directly implicate anyone. The procedure is to make one’s own deeply felt experience into the experience of another, to “other” one’s references to oneself. This generalized, depersonalized self can then be spoken of without risk of causing damage or of being censored.

In order to explicate this process, we may look to Herodotus’ narration of the meeting of Croesus and Cyrus, a scene that is echoed in the exchange between Psammenitus and Cambyses.
Cyrus places Croesus on a pyre, and as Croesus stands, engrossed in his troubles, he recalls the advice of Solon:

"ὡς δὲ ἄρα μιν προστίθημι τούτο, ἀνεικάμενον τε καὶ ἀναστεναζούτα εἰκ πολλῆς ἡγουμένης ἐς τεῖς ἀναμάσσαι "Σόλων.""

And when he recalled this, he sighed and groaned, after a long silence, and called out "Solon" three times. (1.86.3)

Croesus breaks his silence at the memory of a conversation with the Athenian lawmaker, which helps him formulate his own troubles in more general and even universal terms. Croesus, having sought in vain to be named the most happy of men, had chastised Solon, and Solon had responded

"Ο Κροίτης, ἐπιστάμενον με τὸ θεῖον πάντων τίμων καὶ παραχώδας ἐπισημνύσας ἀνδριτών προχρόνων πέρι [...], πάντα ἀνθρώπων συμφορή, ἔμοι δὲ ὑμῖν καὶ πλούσιους καὶ δασυλλόις πολλοῖς εἶχαν ἀνθρώπων. Εἰκόνοι δὲ τὸ εἰσεῖν με οὐ κιό σὲ ἀκούσμεν εἶχαν, πιὸ τελευτήσαντα καλῶς τὸν αἰώνα πᾶς ὅμως. [...] σκοπείων δὲ χρή ποιεῖτο χρήσιμον τὸν τελευτήν κη ἀποθάνονται πολλοί γὰρ οἱ ὑποδέξας ὄλον τὸν ἐπερρήκοις ἄνετείσαι.

Oh Croesus, you ask me about human affairs – I who know that the divine is altogether jealous and interfering. [...] Man is all chance. You, for example, seem to me to be a very rich man, and to be king of many men. But I cannot tell you what you ask until I see you end your life well [...] We must look to the end of everything, how it will come out, for the divine gives happiness to many and later tears them up by the roots. (1.32-33)

Croesus explains to Cyrus what Solon had said:

"ὡς τε αὐτῷ τῷ πάντᾳ ἀποδέχθηκα τῇ περὶ εἰκόνος εἶπα, οὐδὲν τι μᾶλλον ἐς ἐσώτερον λέγων ἡ ὁμιλήτης ἐς ἄπαν τῷ ἀνθρώπων καὶ μάλιστα τοὺς παρὰ σοὶ ἀποδέχθηκα ἀναφέρεται εἶναι.

How it all came out for him as Solon had said – though he had been speaking less about him than about humanity, and especially those who considered themselves blessed. (1.86.5)

Croesus recognises in himself an illustration of a principle that applies to others, and in narrating to Cyrus the wisdom of Solon transforms autobiography into an ethical paradigm for the lives of
others. This, his ability to see the other in himself, is what allows him to overcome his personal
grief and to speak. It is also what leads Cyrus to try to save him from the flames:

καὶ τὸν Κρόεον ἀκούσαντα τῶν ἐμηνέων τὰ Κροῖσος εἶπε, μεταγρύλντα τε καὶ ἑνώσαντα ὅτι καὶ
αὐτὸς ἀνθρωπος ἐὼν ἄλλον ἀνθρώπου, γενόμενον ἐνυποῦ εἰδαμονὴ ὡκ Ἐλάσσων. Ζῶντα πυρὶ
dιδοθῇ, πρὸς τοὺς δεῖσαντα τὴν τινι καὶ ἐπιλεξάμενον ὡς συνὲν εἰς τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἀσφαλεῖς ἔχομεν.

And Cyrus, hearing through the interpreters what Croesus had said, repenting, and
realising that he, a man, was putting another man to the flames, one who had been no less
happy than him, feared the punishment for this and thought that there was nothing safe in
human affairs. (1.86.6)

Cyrus recognises in the life of Croesus a foreboding of his own possible future, and moves to
cancel his actions out of fear for himself. Croesus speaks at the moment that his evils become
signs of the evils of others. When Croesus tells Cyrus of his interview with Solon, Cyrus decides
to save him because he sees a general principle, and because he fears punishment for his action.
It is noteworthy that Cyrus is not overcome by pity so much as by fear. Croesus has transformed
his life, through a generalizing interpretation, into a sign of what might happen to Cyrus himself.

The retrieval of Croesus from silence to speech, the movement from his contemplation of
his own pain to his contemplation of another's, is not complete here, but is fully accomplished
shortly after. Saved from the pyre by Apollo (1.87), Croesus is brought into the care of Cyrus. He
remains silent and thoughtful (συνοιθὶ ἐξήμενος ῥηχυκος ὅπευ; 1.88.1). Given permission to speak his
mind, he advises the Persian to stop his soldiers from plundering Sardis:

Οὔτε πόλιν τὴν ἑως οὔτε χρήματα τὰ ἐμὰ διαρπάζει, ὥσεν γὰρ ἐμοὶ ἐτὶ τούτων μέτα, ἄλλα
φέρουσι τε καὶ ἄγωσι τὰ σά.

They are not plundering my city, or my riches – for none of this is mine any more.
Rather, they rob and plunder your property. (1.88.3)
Croesus, in his advice, transforms himself into the other. What was his is now, literally and figuratively, Cyrus', and his ability to act as a counsellor depends on this translation of autobiography into hetero- or allotrio-biography. It comes with his changing status from king to slave:

Επείτη μὲ ίσει ἔθυμαν δοῦλον σοι, δικαίῳ, εἰ τί ἔνοφι πλέον, σημαίνειν σοι.

Since the gods gave me as a slave to you, I judge it right, if I see anything more, to tell it to you. (I.89.1)

Croesus' story illustrates the idea that the contemplation of personal ills causes silence, and that it is only in the transference of focus from these to someone else's evils that speech becomes possible. This trajectory describes the progress of Cassandra as well. She begins to speak at the moment she begins to approach the house, at the moment that her evils and the Atreidae's evils begin to intertwine, just as Croesus had begun to speak again just at the moment that his life became another's life. Part and parcel of the events to come, she tells the past and future of the house of Atreus by transforming her fate into another's.

Agamemnon 1087-1135

During this section, she speaks of the ills of the house of Atreus. Her song becomes more clear as she approaches the house of her master, and the lament over her own death is expressed under the sign of her conjunction with the house of Atreus. So ἄ, ποι ποτ' ἡγαγές με: πρὸς ποίαν στέγην; ("Ah, where are you leading me? To what house?" 1087), at which point her speech turns to the woes of the house of Atreus, and stays with them until 1135.

The chorus' dominant reaction is one of fear, here likened to a mortal wound:
οὐ μὲ ωαδόμεναι λόγος.
ἐπὶ δὲ καρδίαν ἔδραμε κροκοδάφης
σταγάνη, ἀτε καὶ δορὶ πτωσίμοις
ξυναυτείς δόου σῶτος αἰγαῖς.
ταχεία δ’ ἄτα πέλει.

This speech does not cheer me. But a crimson drop runs down my heart, that for men who have fallen by the spear ends with the rays of a setting life. Calamity comes quick. (1120-1124)

Her prophecies are terrible to hear:

κακών γὰρ διαι
πολυπετεῖς τέχναι Θεσπιωθῶν
φόδου φέρουσι μαθέωι.

For through evils the wordy crafts of seers bring fear to hear. (1133-1135)

Agamemnon 1136-1177

In 1136-1177 Cassandra’s prophecies of disaster in the house continue, as does the chorus’ fear.

τί τῶν τοιῶν ἄγαν ἔπος ἰχθυμίσι;
νεογνός ἄν αἰὼν μάθαι;
πάλημμαι δ’ ὑπαὶ ἄγαματ φοινίω
δυσαλγεῖ τύχα μινυρὰ θρεμένας;
Θραίματ’ ἐμοὶ κλέειν.

What is this word you utter, which is far too clear? A child might understand. And I am struck by a bloody sting at your painful fate, as you complain moaningly. It wounds me to hear it. (1162-1166)

The structure of Cassandra’s utterances during this part of the scene (1135-1177) repeatedly links her own calamity with the calamity of the house of Atreus. She longs for the life and voice of a nightingale, contrasting it with her own violent fate and unappreciated voice (1146-1149); the marriage of Paris and the banks of the Scamander are brought into comparison
with the house of Atreus, now the banks of Acheron and Cocytus (1156-1161); her own death at the hands of Clytemnestra is seen as an extension of the fall of Troy (1167-1172). More and more throughout this section, the details of her own life find their completion in someone else’s tragedy, in the death on foreign soil of the foreign king Agamemnon. And as she approaches full integration with this other story, her language becomes more and more articulate, until it breaks from obscurity “like a new bride removing her veil” at 1178.

**Agamemnon 1178-1279**

1178-1279 sees Cassandra prophesy still more clearly the death of Agamemnon: here the chorus denies comprehension (1242-1245; 1251-1255) and expressly desires her silence (1247). The claim not to understand is only a cover for fear, as it were a refusal to accept what Cassandra is prophesying.

> τὴν μὲν Θυέση τον δαίτα παιδείων κηρεών
> ξυνήκα καὶ πέφωκα, καὶ φόβος μ’ ἔχει
> κλύνετ’ ἀληθῶς οὐδὲν ἐξηκασμένα·
> τὰ δ’ ἀλλ’ ἀκούσας ἐκ δεόμου πεσών τρέχω.

I comprehend the Thyestean feast of child’s-meat, and I shudder, and fear grips me as I hear these things told truly, without too much symbolism. But I’m all at sea as to the rest that I hear. (1242-1245)

Their inability to understand Cassandra’s prophecies is willed by their fear, just as their self-censorship was willed by a fear of “too much Apollo” (see Chapter Four). At 1174-1177 their incomprehension was already coupled with some expression of regret over Cassandra’s speech:

> τίς σε κακοφησουν τίθη·
> στι δαίμων ὑπερβαρῆς ἐμπίτων
> μελίζαιν πάθη γοηρὰ θανατοφόρα·
> τέρμα δ’ ἀμηχανώ.

...
What ill-wishing spirit, falling on you – truly a great weight – makes you sing these groanful death-bringing pains? I am at a loss as to the end.

Πάντα γοητία ἅπαντοφία ("groanful death-bringing pains") indicates clearly the chorus' take on Cassandra's utterances: her words not only betoken death, but may be instrumental in bringing it about. They try to stop them by refusing them. Here we see that there is a connection between the chorus' fear and the silencing discourse they engage in at 1247.

The chorus becomes less hospitable to her speech the more capable of speech she becomes by speaking of another's woes. Cassandra's own evils inspire silence in herself and pity in the chorus (for whom they are someone else's evils), while the evils of the house of Atreus allow Cassandra to speak (they are someone else's evils to her), and inspire fear in the chorus and a desire for her silence.

We may see here the exact workings of Apollo's curse. Cassandra is not believed because the more capable of expressing her prophecy she becomes, the more fearful the chorus becomes, and the more they attempt to silence her. They do this because, as we have outlined already, the logic of censorship dominates their reactions to all forms of speech – including Apolline speech, which they identify as just as dangerous as other speech (see Chapter Four). When they try to silence Cassandra's prophecy at 1247, they do so because they cannot recognise prophecy as anything other than dangerous speech, according to the rule we have already seen, that no healing is possible, and that Apollo himself is just another vengeful figure. In other words – and this is a terrible irony – Cassandra is disbelieved because Apollo turns out to be exactly what she thought he was – dangerous,¹⁹⁷ his love destructive. Therefore the curse consists only in the
realisation of her own fears, *krainein*, and Apollo remains a dangerous vengeful figure, the reason for censorship and its logic, which is now starting to take its own victims.

Cassandra’s sin, the rejection of Apollo, is duplicated in her punishment, being silenced by this chorus. But if this indicates Apollo’s vengeful character, it is also true that the chorus’ adherence to the logic of silence allows Apollo’s curse to be fulfilled. Cassandra’s inability to be heard, ultimately, is the product not of Apollo’s vengeance, but of the chorus’ desire for silence. Thus it is silencing discourse and its dominance that allow Cassandra to be punished. But there is great irony in this, for Cassandra’s curse—that she not be believed as a prophet—is fulfilled only in so far as her credentials are excellent. It is Apollo, speaking through her, that the chorus attempts to silence.

*Agamemnon* 1280-1342

The last part of the scene sees a change in Cassandra’s interpretation of her story, and with it comes a change in the chorus’ reaction. In this final section, Cassandra is able to integrate herself fully into a cosmic narrative; a new prophecy at 1280-1285, that her death will be avenged, allows her to progress towards a new and fully generalized perspective.

It is not until this part of the scene, when the ills of the house have been eclipsed by Cassandra’s grief over her own end and her hatred of Apollo (1256-1294), that the chorus is able to free themselves of fear. Having been rebuked by them, and disbelieved again after the all-too-clear prophecy of 1246, Cassandra’s lament returns to her own condition. But her vision of herself has changed. The long speech at 1256-1294 is not self-centred contemplation of the kind
that had earlier given rise to her silence. At 1284ff she sees herself integrated into a narrative that ends with the return of Orestes, and is motivated by a divine jury:

\[\text{ὅμωμοι.poll.lit. ὡφόρος ἐκ Θεῶν μέγας,}
\text{αῖεῖν ἦν ὑπτίάσμα κειμένου πατρός,}
\text{τί δὴ τ᾽ ἐγὼ κάτοικος ἱδὰν αὐταῖνων;}
\text{ἐπεὶ τὸ πτωτὸν ἐδοὺ Ἡλίου πόλιν}
\text{πράξασαν ὡς ἐπράξασαν, οἴ δ᾽ ἐλον πόλιν}
\text{οὕτως ἀπαλλάσσουσιν ἐν Θεῶν κρίσει,}
\text{ἰοῦσ᾽ ἀπάξω, πλήσομαι τὸ καταφείν.}
\]

For a great oath of the gods has been sworn, that his father’s body, lying supine, will bring him. Why then do I groan so pitiably? Since I first saw the city of Ilium faring as it fared, and they who took her have come out thus in the judgement of the gods, I shall go, begin the sacrifice, and endure to die. (1284-1290)

The sorrow and anger that had led her to strip herself of her prophet’s adornments and to rail against Apollo (1256-1279) modulate into a more general understanding of the events she witnesses and undergoes. The gods have decided these matters, and there is no reason for her to pity herself (1286). Solon’s ethical instruction to Croesus had consisted in two related bits of information: first, that the jealous gods control the destiny of men; and second, that man is all chance (I.32). Cassandra’s speech here articulates the equivalent of the first: everything that has and will happen is part of a narrative determined by the gods. She thus integrates her own story into a broader context. This refocusing of her own narrative frees the chorus of the fear they had experienced before, and faced with what seems to be a story about Cassandra’s death and avenger they return to feeling pity (“Oh wretched one, I pity you your divinely uttered doom,” ὦ τλῆμον, νικήσω σε Θεσφάτον μόρου, 1321). But this is not a repetition of the pity they had felt at 1069. This new pity is more detached and philosophical, and it is shared by Cassandra herself:

\[\text{iω βρότεια πρᾶγμα᾽ εὐτυχοῦντα μὲν}
\text{σκιά τις ἀν πρέψειν, εἰ δὲ δυστυχῇ.}\]
Alas for the affairs of men – one might compare a lucky man to a shadow. And if someone is unlucky, a wet sponge dashes away the trace. And I pity that much more.

(1327-1330)

Thus Cassandra ends her sojourn on stage not with further laments and rage, but with a general reflection on the fate and affairs of men. She has integrated herself into a general moral perspective, a process that began at 1284, that, simply put, man is all chance – the second part of Solon’s teaching to Croesus (Herodotus 1.32). This is perhaps the lesson of archaic Greek ethics with the highest profile, and Cassandra has – finally – arrived at an understanding of it. She is able to pity the genus of which she is a species – that is, she, like Croesus, achieves speech after silence by “othering” herself, understanding her life as an illustration of a general principle. Both she and the chorus are now contemplating generalia.

Cassandra is able, after a great struggle, to find an inoffensive way of speaking. The chorus also, who until this point in the play has been fearful to the point of paralysis, concludes their scene with Cassandra with a song that seems disinterested, even theoretical in its ethical pronouncements.

τὸ μὲν εὖ πράσσειν ἀκόρετον ἡμὺν
πὰντα βροτοῖς ἀπαγορευθέντων ἡ'
οὔτε ἀπειπεῖν εἴργει μελάριοιν,
"μηκέτ' ἐσέλεης τάδε" φωνῶν.
καὶ τῷδε πόλιν μὲν ἐλείν ἔδοσαν
μάκαρες Πειάμου,
Ἀθηναῖοι δ' οἰκάδ᾽ ἱκάνει,
νῦν δ' εἰ προτέρῳ αἷμ᾽ ἀποτείσῃ
καὶ τούτι θανοῦσι θανῶν ἄλλων
ποινὰς θανάτων ἐπικράνης,
τίς ἄν ἐξεύθετο βρετῶν ἀσίνει
δαίμονι φῶναι τάδ᾽ ἰκούσιν:
“Doing fine” is never enough for mortals — no one sends it away from the notable halls, speaking it away, and saying, “no longer enter here.” To this man [Agamemnon] the blessed ones gave it to take the city of Priam, and he comes home honoured by the gods — but now if he is to atone for the blood of his ancestors, and by dying for the dead pay the punishment for the deaths of others, what mortal will boast that he was born out of reach of the gods, when he has heard this? (1331-1342)

To Cassandra’s final general interpretation of her life and others, the chorus responds with a gnome (1331-1334). Then the possibility of Agamemnon’s death is used to illustrate the sentiment that even Cyrus had understood, when faced with Croesus’ narration of Solon — who can boast that he has unblemished happiness? They are a long way from the early songs’ tremorous attempts not to say what they say, to silence their own fearful intuitions — the fate of Agamemnon, if it is to be thus, only illustrates a general ethical point.

The cosmic and ethical content of the final part of Cassandra’s scene arises out of a struggle to find speech in a context that most obviously inspires silence. Similarly, the brief and gnomic choral anapaests that end it arise out of, and enter into a dialectic relationship with, silence and silencing.

The argument of these lines is recognisable. It has been made before by this chorus; those who rise too high will fall too fast. In a context we have already discussed (Chapter Two), they say

τὸ δ’ ἵπποκρίτως κλέατις
εὖ βασιλείᾳ ζαλλεταιγὰς οἱ-
κοις Δίας ἐν κηραυνῷ.
κρίνω δ’ ἀφθονον ἄλθεν.

To be a famous man is really serious. For the thunder of Zeus will hit his house. I choose an unenvied happiness. (468-471)
In Chapter Two we interpreted this as a justification for the chorus' own self-silencing, and it is *in nuce* what they say again at 1331-1342.

We argued in Chapter One that silencing discourse (or speech that attempts to censor) was an attempt to prevent or nullify some utterance that had the potential to bring destruction. The same philosophy of self-censorship occurs here, but now silence is seen not as the refusal of hubris, but as its acceptance. "No one sends it away from the notable halls, speaking it away, and saying, 'no longer enter here'" (1332-1333) designates the absence of silencing discourse (silencing discourse is, of course, not itself silence). This can be demonstrated by comparing what is designated here as absent with what occurs in silencing discourse itself. In silencing discourse an attempt is made to prevent the inauspicious from occurring, through the invocation of some protector. Apollo Agyieus or Παιάν. In two of these occurrences the image is of a figure who stands before the door and prevents entry (see Chapters Two and Four). Here that prevention (ἀπεμπόν οἴγυς, 1331; see 1026-1027) fails or is absent, because what enters appears to be good. But the χάρις (grace) of the gods is Ζήλως (violent; *Agamemnon* 182). Out of this silence arises disaster; witness the possible peripeteia of Agamemnon (1335-1340). Their critique of silence becomes a justification of the only speech they can endorse – the speech that silences, that wards off words of ill omen. The result can only be silence – "what mortal will boast that he was born out of reach of the gods, when he has heard this?" (1341-1342).

Let us summarise the trajectory of the chorus and Cassandra during their exchange. Cassandra has had to deal with the difficult tactical problem of not being able to speak of her own sorrows (these are better served with silence), while at the same time not being able to
speak of the ills of the house of Atreus, into which her own end is integrated (because to do so brings the ban of censorship from the chorus). The more she is able to talk about her own end, the more the chorus becomes alarmed. Her solution to this is a kind of general and tactful ethical exposition: the gods control human affairs, and no one can be called happy. Because she is no longer speaking of herself or of Argos, she can be heard. The chorus, on the other hand, as soon as they hear her message packaged in this euphemised form, can connect this basic insight with their own concerns over silence: no one can be happy—therefore do not boast that you are so, or invite more happiness.

To see the true significance of this scene we must see what does not happen in it. Cassandra does not achieve any heroic stature: she does not rise beyond the curse on the house of Atreus, or Apollo's punishment, which together conspire to cause her death. Rather, she learns to "bear the bridle" (1066), as Clytemnestra had required of her, and she submits to the bloody unfolding of what had been planned. Similarly, the chorus is ultimately no more effective than before, although in their anapaests they express words of wisdom and insight. Their understanding has been enriched only to the extent that they have discovered more support for their practice of silence, and this only reinforces their resolute inactivity.

If their last lines in the Cassandra scene reveal the depth of their commitment to silence, the twenty eight lines which immediately follow bring out the tragic condition in which they find themselves, the inactivity that results, and its unambiguous connection with silence, in excruciating and bathetic detail. References to silence frame the scene. Their first reaction to the cries of Agamemnon is silence (σιγή, "silence!" 1344), and the advice that prevails at the end of their panicked deliberations is not only not to act, but not even to talk:
Aeschylus’ startling device here, unique in Greek Tragedy, is to atomise the chorus, replacing its normally unified voice with a clamour of conflicting opinions. This has the dramatic effect of raising the climactic nature of this scene, since in the panic the chorus loses its familiar univocity, as though a whirlwind had erupted in the orchestra. But Aeschylus’ device also reveals the tragic divisions that run through the chorus, and suggests a strong connection with silencing discourse.

After the initial trochaic couplet, which is spoken collectively and opens the discussion that follows (“let us take collective council,” 1347), two possible courses of action are debated. The first is proposed by choreutes 1, and consists in summoning the townspeople to a council (1348-1349). The second chorus speaker to offer advice proposes immediate and violent action (1350-1351). He is supported by the next three speakers, on the grounds that the time is ripe to forestall a tyranny (1353-1357). The sixth and seventh choreutai express confusion, on the grounds that talk and action both seem ineffective (1358-1361). Then action is again advocated, in strong anti-tyrannical terms (1362-1365). But the final three speakers express uncertainty and doubt, and this opinion will prevail; the chorus will do nothing. Thus the deep division on the part of the chorus is a tragic division: torn between two possible courses of action, they wither under the weight of the dilemma.

Their justification for this collapse is that of the logic of silencing discourse. The tenth chorus member to speak casts aspersions on the projects of both action and council without
visual evidence of wrongdoing. His carefully chosen words strongly suggest the same rejection and silencing of Apolline speech that had dominated the third stasimon and had played a crucial role in the Cassandra scene ("shall we prophesy [μαντευομασθα] that the man is dead on the basis of some tokens drawn from groans?" 1366-1367). His use of μαντεύομαι ("prophesy") recalls their description of Calchas (186, 201) and Cassandra (1099, 1105, 1275) and Apollo (1202, 1275) with words like μάντις, μαντικός, and μάντευμα, and further suggests that the chorus' prejudice against prophecy is still a strong motivation. The groans of Agamemnon in this couplet begin to resemble a silendum, an ominous noise which might serve as the basis for prophecy, and might cause more disaster, just as the omen of the eagles and the hare had brought about disaster. Indeed, the words of the eleventh chorus member to speak bear comparison to the aposiopesis that had concluded the parodos. He proposes that they should not even deliberate — that is, that they should be silent — until they know exactly what is going on. His mantra, σάω' σιδίναι ("to know clearly" 1369, σάω' σιδότας, 1368) recalls what the chorus had said at 248-254, "I will not say what happened next — you know what happened when Calchas spoke. Things will become clear in the light of the dawn." Here, as there, they will wait for revelation. The voice of the house has finally spoken (see 37-38), and it turns out to be a voice that should have remained silent. They do nothing because, as is characteristic, they reject their information as inauspicious.

The inability of this chorus to do anything, because of their submission to the logic of silence and silencing discourse, is, as I suggested in Chapter One, of central interest in the Agamemnon. The Agamemnon is less a tragedy of fate or revenge than it is a tragedy of powerlessness. Deeply disturbing events unfold in the background close to the skene while a vividly characterised chorus stands in the orchestra and worries — but ultimately is unable to do
anything. And in fact, as I argued in Chapter Four, their commitment to the logic of silence actually aids in the production of precisely the thing they wish they could avert. It is a play which presents for us the horrible automatism inherent in archaic ethics and political life, in which fear produces its object, and a self-perpetuating cycle of violence is inaugurated.

Far different are the Choephoroi and the Eumenides, in which a moment of irreversible choice occurs. We can compare, for illustration, three critical moments from each of the plays. In each case, there is deliberation and worry: in two out of three cases, a choice (krisis) is made which leads to action. In Agamemnon 1343-1371 there is no choice. Rather, the tragic condition, the submission to two conflicting options, results in silence and doubt. The corresponding moment in the Choephoroi is far different. As Clytemnestra stands before her son and dares him to smite the breast that fed him, Orestes finds himself pulled in two different directions. On the one hand, the horror of matricide: on the other, the command of Apollo. He appeals to Pylades, who speaks, suddenly and surprisingly:

Or. Πυλάδη, τι διάσω; μητέρ', αἰδεωθῷ κtauεῖν;  
Py. ποῦ δαί το λατρίν Λάξιου μαντείματα  
tά πρόκρησα, πιστά τ' ευφροματα:  
ἀπαντας ἔχθεις τὼν θεῶν ἄρεὶ πλέον.  
Or. κρίνω σε νικάν, καὶ παραινεῖ μοι καλῶς.

Or. Pylades, what shall I do? Shall I be ashamed to kill my mother?  
Py. Where in the future will be the Pythian Oracle of Loxias, and the trusty oaths? Prefer all men to be enemies rather than the gods.  
Or. I choose that you win. And you advise me well.  
(Choephoroi 899-903)

“I choose that you win” (κρίνω σε νικάν) is Orestes’ response, and Clytemnestra is thereby moments away from her death. Unlike the chorus of the Agamemnon, whose response to the situation at Argos is best summed up by their response to Clytemnestra “This blame answers
blame, and it is a hard fight to choose” (οὐείδος ἥκει τῶθ ἀντ’ οὐείδος, δύσμαχα δ’ ἑστὶ κρίναι, 1560-1561), Orestes is able to choose, and thus to act. In doing so, he frees himself from the potential stillness that threatens, as two equally strong imperatives compete in his mind. This is an example of Karl Jaspers’ “unique” and “irrevocable decision,” the insertion of an element of history into the cycles of revenge, punishment, and divine command that afflict the house of Argos.

This crisis or “decision” is repeated in the redemption of Orestes in the Eumenides.

Or. ὦ Φοῖβ’ Ἀπολλων, πῶς ἀγών κρίθησεται:
Χα. ὦ Νέξ, μέλαινα μήτερ, ἃρ’ ὁφαίς τάδε: Ορ. νῦν ἄρχαινης μοι τέμματ’, ἢ φάος Ἴλπειν. 
Χα. ἢμιν γὰρ ἐθεῖν, ἢ πρόσω τιμὰς νέμειν.

Or. Oh Phoebus Apollo, how will the trial be decided (krithesetai)?
Cho. Oh black mother night, do you look upon these things?
Or. Now it is either the noose or the light of day for me.
Cho. For we will go to naught, or have honour henceforth.
(744-747)

The Athenian jury on the Areopagus is instituted by Athena precisely for the purpose of extricating herself, and the city as a whole, from a tragic situation, that is, the competing and compelling demands of the Erinyes on the one hand and Orestes as a suppliant on the other. It is choice – in this case a particularly impenetrable choice – that allows Athens to be released from the stasis of Olympian and Chthonic forces.

The use of krino at 744 to describe the jury’s decision (it is used also at 677, 682, and 741) reflects the Greek judicial distinction between dikazein (“judgement”) and krinein that we discussed in Chapter Three. The function of judgement, which was implicit in the nature of the sovereign implied by silencing discourse, was to allow the actualisation of a proposed course in
situations where the procedure at law had removed the shadow of a doubt about the proper course of action. Where the procedure had been inadequate to establish what was to be done, a new procedure was undertaken; this was called *krinein*, and it involved the judge's making a decision, under oath, between the various positions. The distinction between *krinein* and *dikazein* amounts to a distinction between the locus of responsibility for the course of action to be undertaken: in the case of *dikazein*, the judge is able to displace the authority for his decision onto a formally instituted procedure (the swearing of oaths, production of witnesses, and so on). His responsibility is simply to observe that the form of the procedure is correct, and to authorise whatever that procedure makes necessary. In the case of *krinein*, the procedure has been shown to be insufficient to decide the matter. As a result, the judge (now not a *dikastes* but a *krites*) must make a decision on his own authority, without the support of the legal procedure. In order to protect his decisions from the accusation of interest or bias, he swears an oath. The logic of the oath is that he takes the responsibility for his judgement — if his judgement is crooked, he will pay the penalty for perjury. Central to the function of choosing or *krinein*, then, is the assumption that the *krites* is wholly responsible for whatever decision he makes. Here I am not so interested in the fact of his responsibility as I am in the necessity of formalising his responsibility with the oath — his position (as judge, leader in the community, etc) is not sufficient to guarantee the appropriateness of his judgement. The individual responsibility of the judge is as it were undermined or put into question by the suspicion of his own arbitrary nature: at the heart of our apprehension of the judge, there is the recognition that the outcome of his choice cannot be perfectly foreseen, that he is not absolutely predictable on the basis of ethical, legal, or logical considerations. This should not be a surprise, since the transference of legal
authority from the dikastes to the krites is accomplished under conditions where the absolute certainty of procedural reflection no longer applies: since the logic of the procedure at law was unable to determine the proper outcome, and since the procedure at law is supposed to be the only legitimate manner of determining a proper outcome, it follows that when this procedure is ineffective, the act of choosing should itself not be subject to procedural governance. This means, in short, that the krites’ choice cannot be predicted. In order to guarantee the validity of this basic unpredictability that lies at the heart of the process of choosing, the oath is introduced. In other words: the necessity of the act of choosing or krinein is based on a fundamental undecidability in the procedure, but this fact means that the outcome of the choice is itself unpredictable.

We may compare the institution of the jury and its decision in the Eumenides with the indecision of the chorus of the Agamemnon at 1343-1371. In both cases, a tragic condition prevails: in the Agamemnon, the chorus is of two minds, while in the Eumenides, Athena, and Athens by extension, is at the mercy of two equally compelling duties. But where the chorus of the Agamemnon does nothing, Athena institutes a jury of kritai to choose a course of action.

The trial begins with Athena questioning both sides. Both Orestes and the Erinyes ask Athena to decide the matter – the verb is krino (433, 468). That both parties use krinein indicates that they have both accepted the undecidability of the case. Athena reiterates it again, and extends its ramifications, immediately after:

to pragma meizou, el' tis oistai tode
'非常多 dikakesin' oude mhn emai thumis
fonou diamevin ezmenvitou dikas,
allois te kai ou mhn kataxunikos t' hmoi
ikisth prosthles katharos adhlaiths domos,
This affair is too much, if any mortal thinks he can judge it. For it is not right even for me to choose in a case of wrathful slaughter, especially since you come to me tamed, a suppliant, purified and harmless to my house. But they have a demand on my attention that is not easy to dismiss.

(Eumenides 470-476)

It is important to follow Athena’s argumentation here. She does not simply deny that the case can be judged. Rather she acknowledges that not even a divine decision can solve the issue.

This affair is too much, if any mortal thinks he can judge it.

This means simply that no mortal can judge a case like this, precisely because it is not clear by procedure who is to win. But at the same time

For it is not right for me to choose in a case of wrathful slaughter ...

That is, if no mortal can judge, not even I (a god) can choose. Διαϕείω, which has the sense of “divide, prefer” - i.e. choose201 - is used synonymously with κρίσις and διαργῶναι in this scene (489, 630; cf. 749). Athena cannot choose because she is constrained in both directions. And so not even Athena can bring the conflict to an end. For this, the Areopagus is needed. Let us consider her first characterisation of this new institution:

...
Even though this affair has landed here, I will nonetheless choose judges of murder under oath from the city, who are blameless and will honour the law that I will set for all time [...] and having chosen the best of my citizens I will come to decide truthfully on this matter. [let them not disobey their oath in their just hearts].

(482-489)

489, which is doubted by Page, is retained by Sommerstein,²⁰¹ and West puts it after 485. But if the text is troubled, the sense is not. It is most important that the new tribunal will honour their oath.²⁰² In fact the two most common things said about this jury are (1) the eternity of its institution (see 485) and (2) that they must honour their oath. In addition to 482-489, Athena makes reference to the Areopagites’ oath at 708-710:

οδυομαι δὲ χρῆ
καὶ ψήφον αἴσθεν καὶ διάγνωσιν δίκην
αἰδομένους τοῖν ὑρκον.

You must stand up, and pick up your pebble, and choose the outcome, honouring your oath.

And the Erinyes also refer to it, at 679-680:

ὥρκοῦσα ἡ ὁ ὥρκοσσατ', ἐν δὲ καρδία
ψήφον φέροντες ὑρκον αἰδομένη, ξένοι.

You have heard what you have heard. Cast your vote and honour your oath in your hearts, friends.

Every time Athena addresses the jury, the oath is mentioned, except 674-675 and 566-573, which is interrupted by Apollo’s entry.²⁰³ The value of the jury’s decision appears, indeed, to be contingent on its honouring its oath. The oath guarantees a decision that would otherwise be radically arbitrary. The jury’s decision represents a point of utter and inalienable arbitrariness. There is no persuasion or threat that can coerce it.
It is true that both the Erinyes and Apollo attempt to sway the jury of *kritai* with threats, the Erinyes with the threat of a curse on the earth (711-712), and Apollo with the authority of Zeus (713-714). But Athena is present with her diplomacy to assuage the injured party (as she does for the defeated Erinyes between 794 and 915). And a number of factors preserve the ability of the individual jurors to vote their conscience, not according to fear of one or the other supernatural advocate. The first factor is the fact that their choice is a negative rather than a positive one: in acquitting Orestes, the jury is not saying that he is innocent but rather that he is not guilty, not that he may go free, but that he may not be punished by the Erinyes.

The positive interpretation (that the jury is saying that Orestes is innocent rather than not-guilty) is in fact impossible in the light of the structures inherent in *stasis* and silence. The jury must impose an end. If they allow Orestes to be killed and tortured by the Erinyes, they must, for their decision to be final, disallow Apollo from taking action against the Erinyes in turn. In other words, in saying that Orestes is guilty, they would in fact be saying that the Erinyes would be not-guilty in their destruction of Orestes. But in designating Orestes as not guilty, they are in fact being altogether unclear on what *Orestes is*, or what positive thing will happen to him. What the jury means precisely in its decision is indefinite.

The second factor is that the ultimate and individual responsibility of each *krites* is undetermined. This is only true of bodies of critics who vote anonymously, not of single magistrates who swear and choose, as at Gortyn. The choice made by a jury with a limited set of options is a statistical effect, and cannot be referred back to any specific juror, only to the jury as a sovereign body. We never know what the jury thinks, only what it has decided.
The indeterminacy of their decision, which is due both to its collective nature and to its negative nature, serves as a shield for each individual juror, just as the divine protection of Athena serves as a shield for the city as a whole. The moment of criticism in the *Eumenides* is a moment of radical and inalienable human freedom, and it extricates the cosmos from the tragic *stasis* in which it had been entwined. Aeschylus captures this in the tied vote, which – finally and irrevocably – points up the jury's free and indeterminate nature.

In this I think we can find a valuable allegory for tragedy itself. The tragic, like *stasis* and silencing discourse, produces nothing on its own except paralysis, and this paralysis serves, as our analysis of the consequences of silencing discourse has shown, to enslave humanity, to subject it to invisible forces. But with the addition of crisis or choice, it is possible for the tragic to be transformed into tragedy. The full visibility of events in the *Eumenides* may be read as support for such an allegorical reading. Both the *Agamemnon* and the *Choephoroi* had as the centre of the action some event which was concealed behind the *skene*: in the *Agamemnon* this was the murder of Agamemnon, first as this is concealed as an intent in the mind of Clytemnestra, and then as it actually occurs, out of sight from the chorus and the audience, and still, after the cries of Agamemnon, the object of wonder and speculation. In the *Choephoroi* the same concealment is at play, but the cardinal directions are reversed: the intention to kill Clytemnestra is concealed in the minds of the chorus, Electra, Orestes, and Pylades, but they occupy the space in front of the *skene*, and keep their plans concealed from those within the house behind it. Both plays are also dominated by the unseen presence of higher powers: the Erinyes figure prominently throughout the *Agamemnon*, as does Apollo in the Cassandra scene,
and Apollo's presence is felt throughout the *Choephori*, as well as the spirit of Agamemnon, the object of Electra and Orestes' great song – in fact we watch the events of this play from the other side of the mound where his dismembered limbs lie entombed, if that is to be imagined as occupying the orchestra. Everywhere there is felt the shadowy presence of Zeus. In the *Eumenides*, on the other hand, all the relevant metaphysical forces are brought on stage; Apollo is here in vivid detail, as is Clytemnestra’s ghost, the *Eumenides*’ counterpart to the dead Agamemnon in the *Choephori* and perhaps also a counterpart to Iphigenia, conjured in the narrative of the chorus in the parodos of the *Agamemnon*. The Erinyes, also, make their ghastly appearance on the *ekkyklema* at the beginning of the play. This last appearance is all the more startling for the pointedness with which their invisibility is felt at the end of the *Choephori*, when they afflict Orestes:

εἰςι καὶ μὴν οὐχ ὁρᾶτε τἀκριβείαν, ἤγιος ᾦ ὕπομή.

You cannot see them, but I can see them! ... (*Choephori* 1061)

When A.L. Brown says of the appearance of the Erinyes in the *Eumenides* that their visibility there is part of a poetic strategy to “end the trilogy on a note of hope and joy, which expresses, perhaps, an emotional faith in what might be ... rather than a belief about existing reality” he comes close to the mark. These figures are present, simply, because the *Eumenides* requires as part of its narrative plan that they compete before a jury of Athenian *kritai* who have been elected final arbiters in the *stasis* which afflicts the cosmos. The jury’s choice, which serves as the climax and the central moment of dramatic interest in the play, requires the presence of divine forces before them. *Krisis* or criticism brings concealed powers, and silent sovereigns, into full and dramatic view; criticism facilitates staging.
This is true in the *Eumenides* for all the relevant figures save Zeus: he alone remains aloof and invisible. His hand had been felt since the opening of the *Agamemnon*. The chorus had attributed to him a guiding and inviolable sovereignty (160-183, 469-470), and Apollo repeatedly derives his authority from Zeus in the trial in the *Eumenides* (620-621, 713-714). One might object that, if freedom from the tragic condition imposed by silencing discourse is to be achieved, Zeus himself must be brought before the human tribunal. And indeed, the fact that the Athenian *kritai* give Athena the occasion to side with her father suggests that in the end his sovereignty is not set aside, that human freedom remains subject to his inexorable will. But another interpretation is possible. I argued in Chapter Four that the forward movement of crime and punishment that characterises the first two plays of the trilogy comes from the application of the principles of silencing discourse at a cosmic level. Both the chorus and Apollo are driven by that logic, since Apollo identifies himself as censored by his father at line 649-651. But characterisations of Zeus uttered by the subjects of silencing discourse should be expected to enshrine him as a silent sovereign. Cassandra’s understanding of the events which afflict the house of Atreus offers another perspective. She remarks that the suffering of Agamemnon comes about because of the decision (*krisis*) of the gods (*ἐν Ζεὺς κρίσις, Agamemnon* 1289). Is Zeus’ sovereignty like that of the Areopagite jury? The chorus of the *Agamemnon* also suggests that Zeus has an indeterminacy similar to that exhibited by the jury:

*Ζεὺς ὃσις ποτ’ ἐστιν, εἰ τὸδ’ αὖ-
  τῷ ἁλον κεκλημένῳ,
  τούτῳ νῦν προσευνάπω.*

Zeus – whoever he might be – if it pleases him to be so called, I call him by this name ...

(*Agamemnon* 160-162)
These lines echo traditional cultic invocations to a god by his many names and the many places where he may be found. But by this very fact they suggest the collective anonymity of the citizen jury: the god is a force beyond his names, his individual appellations and abodes, a force that arises out of a collection of religious notions, epiphanies, and cultic practices, just as the decision of the jury arises out of a collection of individual opinions. The human kritai repeat the divine krisis that started these events, both in its characteristic freedom to choose, and in its statistical nature, the presentation of a single though indeterminate face. Thus Athens is safe from the anger of the Erinyes not only because of Athena’s diplomacy but because the jury’s decision repeats the sovereign choice – not will – of Zeus. And this may help to explain their unusual prestige in the cosmic order:

Παλλάδος δ’ ὑπὸ πτεροίς
οὕτας ἄζεται πατή.

And the father will revere you [people of Athens], under the protection of Athena. (Eumenides 1001-1002).

ʿΑζειμαί is normally reserved, comments Sommerstein (25), to describe a mortal’s reverence for the divine. Perhaps the father of gods and men is in fact to be seen in the strange and indeterminate choice of the Areopagus.

This suggestion finds support in the phenomenon of panhellenism, as this is imagined by Gregory Nagy. According to Nagy, the notion of panhellenism can be used as a heuristic tool to describe the effects of the increased mobility of singers, storytellers, and intellectuals in the archaic period. As singers and storytellers travel, they find themselves faced more and more with competing local variants of the same myth. It becomes a tactical necessity for each storyteller to find a way to mediate between these competing versions, and to tell stories that are
acceptable to various different audiences, especially in the contexts of panhellenic festivals like that at Olympia, when they are faced with an international rather than a local audience. The result, according to Nagy, is a “synthetic and critical” tradition of myth.\textsuperscript{207} The term “critical” is chosen carefully. For according to Nagy, it is precisely the process of krisis or criticism that marks the sorting out of the “correct” (=panhellenic, or universally acceptable) version of the myth. He gives an example of the role of krisis in the archaic processes of panhellenism in the opening of the “Days” section of Hesiod’s Works and Days:

\begin{quote}
τριτῆ ησυχίας ἀρσιστὴς
ἐρημὴ τ’ ἐποπτεύειν ἡδ’ ἀρμαλίην δασσάσαι,
εὐφ’ ἅν ἀληθείην λαοῖ κρινότες ἅγιον.
\end{quote}

The thirtieth day of the month is best for looking at work and for apportioning food, whenever the people choose (krinontes) what is true (aletheien). (Works and Days 766-768)\textsuperscript{208}

The thirtieth, or the last, day of the month was always in question, since each lunar month had either 29 or 30 days. Each city, argues Nagy, had its own traditions about the calendar, and it was in determining the last (and therefore the first) day of each month, that a panhellenic “norm” had to be established.\textsuperscript{209} In other words, a tragic situation arose at the end of each month, in which the calendar was subject to conflicting ways of counting, and as a result a choice (krisis) had to be made. A similar interpretation may be applied to the judgement (krisis) of plays at the Greater Dionysia. A crucial element in the dramatic festivals was the judging of the plays entered into competition. The procedures for judging plays follow the same pattern as those for the Athenian law courts, and those outlined by Athena for the new Areopagus court in the Eumenides (482-489), and the vocabulary is the same: jurors were called kritai and their process of deciding was described by the verb krinein: the entire process was called a krisis. The tragic
jurors were selected according to a procedure that is in all consequential details the same as that of juridical jurors, and voted by placing their judgement in an urn. The judgements were then removed by the archon and a decision was reached. The presentation of multiple plays at the Greater Dionysia apparently required a formal procedure of adjudication that was somehow similar to the adjudication of conflicting legal demands at law. For Nagy the polis is itself a panhellenic phenomenon (in that it promotes an “international” community of tribes). The choice of performances by the jury of kritai at the festival is itself a function of the choosing of the “best” “panhellenic” presentation. In this case also, we may say that the polis, faced with an agon or competition, finds itself in a situation where competing versions of the “best” play or choral performance are brought to bear (a tragic situation); the only way out is a choice (krisis).

“Zeus, the god who is the planner of the universe, is an appropriate symbol for the organising principle that underlies the panhellenic perspective.” From another perspective, this organising principle is krisis. Nagy does not focus, as I have been doing, on the necessary arbitrariness of the choice implied in the notion of krisis, largely because he does not investigate its opposition to notions like dikazein. If we keep this in mind when looking at his analysis of the relationship between krisis and panhellenism, we may make a remarkable hypothesis: that panhellenism, when it is imagined either at the level of Greece as a whole or at the polis level, is built on a moment of radical indeterminacy. This would support my notion that the chorus’ apparent recognition, in the hymn to Zeus in the parodos of the Agamemnon, that Zeus’ names are something of a shield which contains a mystery is of a part with the opacity of the Areopagus’ choice in the Eumenides. If the kritai at Athens have an urn to guarantee the anonymity of their choices, Zeus has language.
If, as I have argued here, tragedy arises from the addition of *krisis* or choice to the tragic in the sense intended by Karl Jaspers when he claimed that “tragic knowledge ... contains an element of history ... the crucial events are unique and are always moving on. They are shaped by irrevocable decisions, and they never recur,” and if we may understand the tragic or cyclical patterns that form the background for tragedy or tragic knowledge in the *Oresteia* as related to silencing discourse, and further if the addition of criticism to the tragic may be seen as throwing light on the movement from the tragic to tragedy, then we must cast a final glance at the *Agamemnon*. This play, it might be suggested, does not contain a moment of choice or crisis. Rather, it sets the moralising but ultimately ineffective dithering of the chorus against the background of an inevitable and mechanical process of crime and retribution. Beyond the interest brought to this play by Aeschylus’ paramount verbal and dramaturgical artistry, there appears to very little of truly dramatic interest, no moment when “it all seems up in the air.” The long crescendo of suspense during the Cassandra scene, ultimately, is only about *when* and not *if* Agamemnon will finally be killed. But if there is no crisis, no critical moment in the play, how can we speak of it as a tragedy?

An initial answer suggests itself, that the *Agamemnon* is not a discrete play but forms a unity with the *Choephoroi* and the *Eumenides*, and therefore we do not need to worry that there is no moment of crisis or choice in this play, since there is one in the *Choephoroi* and one in the *Eumenides*. While this answer is satisfying at a general level, it does not explain the strange fact that, with or without its accompanying plays, the *Agamemnon* consists of nearly 1700 lines of verse without a single moment of crisis, and yet remains unquestionably compelling. I believe
that it is possible to locate the crisis or choice necessary for the transformation of the tragic into tragedy in the mind of Aeschylus. We have seen that the chorus of the *Agamemnon* is most remarkable for their inactivity, their commitment to silence. Their immediate reason for the elaborate obscurities that make up the silencing discourse in the parodos of the *Agamemnon* is a concern not to say anything that might make Agamemnon's situation in Argos more precarious, although they know that he carries his own guilt. In a sense the chorus of the *Agamemnon* can be read as torn between an implicit loyalty to the Argive crown and a painful memory of the guilt of the current king: their attempts to unsay what they narrate in the parodos are in a sense an attempt to negotiate this conflict. The chorus of the *Agamemnon* is torn by conflicts within its members' own memories: they have memories they would rather not have, memories that seem to threaten the current situation at Argos, and they attempt to silence them. In essence, the difficulty this chorus faces is an inability to resolve the ethical status of Agamemnon. Scholarly opinion varies over whether or not Agamemnon bears the guilt for his killing of Iphigenia.¹¹⁵ What is clear is that this ambiguity, which in a sense underlies the doubts and fears of the chorus, was not invented by Aeschylus. Agamemnon is a figure who is often deeply ambivalent in the tradition which Aeschylus inherits. The most famous example of this ambivalence comes in book nineteen of the *Iliad*, when, making peace with Achilles, Agamemnon claims that it was not he that was at fault in the slighting of Achilles that began the events of the epic, “but Zeus, and Fate and the Erinys ... since they cast a ruinous blindness on my mind, on that day when I arrogantly took the prize of Achilles from him” (19.86-89). Questions like the one raised by this speech – is Agamemnon responsible or not for his actions, given the many forces that came to
bear on him at the time – are the sorts of questions that more often than not cause the mind to strangle on its own cogitations, and to a certain extent they bring the mythical tradition to a cognitive standstill. The interpretations of this passage have varied widely – they range from seeing in this a central if paradoxical facet of Homeric ethics\textsuperscript{216} to seeing in Agamemnon’s speech an ironic and elaborate lie.\textsuperscript{217} The relevant point here is that the \textit{Iliad} does not assist us in our resolution of the problem. The \textit{Iliad} is not about the blindness of Agamemnon. It is about the wrath of Achilles. But the ethical problem nevertheless resides, unilluminated, in the tradition. Just as this passage from the \textit{Iliad} brings its readers to a standstill, their memory of the events at Aulis brings the chorus of the \textit{Agamemnon} to a tragic standstill. The chorus does not achieve a moment of criticism, and are unable to act. The tragic here is in the realm of memory, and the unsolvable problems of our cultural inheritance. The act of criticism here belongs, perhaps, to Aeschylus, rather than to Agamemnon; in staging the way in which cultural memory can crash on the reefs of its own contradictions, Aeschylus is able, by referring the issue to the eyes and ears of the audience, to escape the tragic situation of his own tradition.

The contradictions inherent in our memories and our cultural or ethnic consciousness most often produce silence, avoidance, or denial. By placing the tragic chorus and its failure to act before us, and by illustrating the consequences of their silence, Aeschylus forces us to face the issue. Ultimately, what tragedy may be is a kind of \textit{literary} criticism, a way of freeing oneself from tragic elements in the stories one has inherited, by means of their critical representation on the stage. The \textit{Agamemnon} is compelling, despite the fact that no character ever reaches a critical moment, because we are aware at every single moment throughout the play of the stunning feat Aeschylus has accomplished in showing us a chorus so very much like
ourselves, so utterly sympathetic, and so completely in line with the basic outlines of archaic ethics, and yet ultimately so utterly useless in the prevention of the catastrophe of Agamemnon, and even, perhaps, complicit in it. The unique moment of history that must belong to every tragedy belongs to Aeschylus' decision to turn critically against his own literary past. It is thrilling to watch him do it.
Endings
I have argued that the characteristic inactivity of the chorus of the *Agamemnon* is derived from an adherence to a particular logic associated with silence, and that this adherence is represented verbally in a rhetorical form I called "silencing discourse" that is in strong evidence in the parodos. I then argued that the structures implicit in silencing discourse reflect archaic Greek ethical and political thought and appear to mirror in structure the narrative of the *Oresteia* as a whole, up to the trial scene in the *Eumenides*, and that the fact that the universe of the *Oresteia* is structured in a manner similar to silencing discourse is the product of the application of silencing discourse itself. That is, silencing discourse in a sense has produced the structures inherent in the *Oresteia*. In my final chapter, I contended that silencing discourse has a significant relationship with the tragic, which I defined as the submission of an entity to two conflicting laws or causal regimes. But since the tragic, like silencing discourse, does not make for good drama on its own, I argued that a necessary supplement to the tragic was "criticism" or crisis, and that this was evident in the *Choephori* and the *Eumenides*. Finally, returning to the *Agamemnon*, I tried to argue that the critical moment there was not in the action of the play, but in the choice of Aeschylus to criticise the ethical structures that facilitated silencing discourse in the first place.

Implicit in my argument has been the suggestion that silence, and a commitment to the maintenance of barriers of silence, leads to inactivity, apathy, or nauseous repetition. In my analysis I have mainly focussed on silence as an aspect of censorship: but, as my pages on *stasis* in Chapter Five try to suggest, censorship leads to and reinforces a division of the polity into hostile groups. This may apply equally to an academic environment as to a political one; disciplines and methodologies often come into apparently irresolvable conflict around a common
issue. This is *de facto* tragic by my definition, and more often than not may lead not to open conflict or debate but to a kind of mutual silence and lack of communication between students of the same bodies of texts. The result is the semblance of progress in two places, and real progress in neither. “Criticism,” the strange means of arbitration that is offered in the *Oresteia* as a solution to the problem of silence and *stasis*, is a word which clearly invokes a literary practice, and I would like to be heard in my use of the term a proposed renovation of an old notion. Particularly, I propose the use of this term to characterise the work of comparative literature. The act of comparison becomes critical at the moment when literary artefacts from different traditions, with different horizons and historical situations, are brought into conflict with each other, at the point when questions of value or meaning become undecidable precisely because of conflicting hermeneutical demands. There is here a simple and, I think, clear coincidence of comparison and criticism. But it is possible to do literary criticism in this sense with respect to a single text or literary tradition, precisely when two competing cognitive or epistemological paradigms seem to come to bear on it. The paradox here is that I believe we can be doing comparative literature even when we are reading a single work. That is, I believe that we can call it comparative literature — and criticism as I have just outlined it — when, as sometimes happens, a single text or a single national literature comes under the purview of two radically opposed and mutually cancelling lines or traditions of interpretation. Comparative Literature — criticism — may see itself as a way out, when antinomies and conflicts arise in the study of literature and culture. Our position — our inscrutability (for comp. litters are inscrutable, often, even or especially to ourselves), and our marginality (we sit just outside of the normal procedures of literary study, but are unquestionably part of them), among other things, suggest that we could be
valuable, to others and to ourselves, in precisely the role of transforming the tragic into tragedy, in the literary realm.
Endnotes


4 Krisis and kritai are also important for the context of tragedy, in the form of the representatives of the tribes who voted to choose a victor in the tragic competitions during the greater Dionysia. Strictly speaking I refer here only to the krisis which I want to identify as existing immanent within the structure of tragedy itself, although Aeschylus’ opinions about krisis and tragedy may also be read as a positive commentary on the role of krisis in the institutions of democratic Athens. See Chapter Five below.


7 Any number of possibilities has been suggested. See Sommerstein ad loc.


10 Simonides fr. 582 PMG.
H.D.F. Kitto, *Greek Tragedy: A Literary Study* (London: Methuen, 1961) says of the Sophoclean chorus that “it can no longer surround and control the action but it is always concerned with it” (157) and that the chorus to Euripides was a “nuisance” (159).

I reproduce the manuscript reading for line 1. Nauck emends to κόσμος δὲ στιγμῇ στεγάζωσ αὐτοῦ ὡς κακοῖς, “Silence is an all-encompassing [or watertight] adornment for a good man.” Some support for taking στιγμῇ in an oblique case dependent on κόσμος and thus for the manuscript may be found in Bias, ἐὰν … στιγμῇ κόσμου (10.3.17 DK).


Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazousai* 295.


I translate the final line with Blomfield’s emendation, κειμᾶν’ Ἀχαῖος οὐκ ἀμήνιτον Ἴαῶν.

Fraenkel *ad loc.*

*TrGF* t.311.

H. Lloyd-Jones, “Artemis and Iphigenia,” *JHS* 103 (1983) 87-102, has argued that Artemis is angry about the eventual fall of Troy – that is, that she is angry about what the omen signifies. K.
Clayton, "Artemis and the Sacrifice of Iphigenia in Aeschylus," in P. Pucci, ed. *Language and the Tragic Hero* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988) 1-24, on the other hand, argues that Artemis is angry because of the omen itself, that is at the signifier. In any case the omen also contains the remedy of her anger (which is only the cause of more anger). So J. de Romilly, "A propos d'Iphigénie dans l’Agamemnon d’Eschyle," *ICS* 19 (1994) 20f.

21 This echoes Clytemnestra's boasts during the scene with the chorus at 1448-1576, which I discuss in Chapter Two. The basic legal problem – the question of whether the agent or the inciter is to be held responsible – is the same in both cases.


24 ταῖς τε (γάρ) ὀψεσι καὶ τοῖς μύθους πρὸς ἐκπλήξειν τερατώδη μᾶλλον ἦ πρὸς ἀπάτην κέχονται, “his staging and his diction were designed more with the effect of portentous terror in mind than out of a concern for dramatic illusion” – *Vita* (*TrGF* t. III T.1) 25-26.

25 See *Eumenides* 458ff and below.


27 See *Agamemnon* 250.

29 cf. Plutarch, *Moralia* 613b, 643a; Athenaeus X 437c-d. Montiglio, 21-22 discusses the ritual purification of murderers.


31 So too in *Iphigenia at Tauris* 1208-1210, where it is not the voice but the gaze of Orestes that pollutes – cf. the scholium to *Eumenides* 285, cited above.

32 The last word of 1218 is printed in the Oxford text as φόνον (“fear”), and attributed to Blomfeld. But the fact that this is clearly an example of the ritual silence of the blood-guilty may support the manuscript reading φόνον (“slaughter”).


34 S. Montiglio, 38-45 discusses the association of silence and the Erinyes, with reference to the *Eumenides* and the *Oedipus at Colonus*. But Sophocles’ play is set about the sanctuary of the Eumenides, a place where ritual silence is required as it is in other chthonic and even heroic cults (see below) while the other brings the Erinyes into contexts where they would not normally be found – Apollo’s sanctuary, the sanctuary of Athena, and this fundamental difference is elided.


36 See J. de Romilly (“Iphigénie”).


39 A temple to Φήμη was erected in Athens following the victory of Cimon in Pamphylia (see Thucydides I.100; Plutarch, *Cimon XII-XVI*). Apparently the city celebrated the victory on the day after it was won – *Scholia in Aeschinem* ed. M.R. Dilts (Leipzig: Teubner, 1992) l.279a.

40 J. Russo (A Commentary on Homer’s *Odyssey* t.III (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 54) notes that at this moment in the narrative (VIII.117, but also XX.120, where the same formula is used) the poet uses κληροῦν to indicate that messages are being sent to a privileged audience – Odysseus – capable of understanding and interpreting them. In *Agamemnon* 228-247 we may have the opposite procedure; Agamemnon is trying to prevent Iphigenia’s κληροῦν from being heard by other privileged audiences – the Erinyes, perhaps, or Zeus himself.


42 292-396; see *Iliad* 16.514-16; Euripides *Bacchae* 556-75, Aristophanes *Clouds* 270-3 and Sommerstein ad loc.

43 Sommerstein ad loc.

44 Cf. *Agamemnon* 681-690.

45 For the adjective used with the sense of an objective genitive, see Fraenkel, Bollack ad loc.


47 See Fraenkel and Page *ad loc.*

48 See also *Agamemnon* 1250, σὺ μὲν κατέφγυ κτλ for a reference to prayer directed against ill-omened speech.

49 The division belongs to S.E. Lawrence, "Artemis in the Agamemnon," *AJPh* 97 (1976) 98.

50 So Page *ad loc.* and Lawrence 98.


54 Blomfield, 185.

55 Finley, 253.


57 Lebeck, 35.

58 Lawrence, 106.

Sommerstein, "Artemis."

So Lawrence.

Page ad loc.

The evidence can be reviewed in LSJ 1676-7.


καίνω is related to κάγα "head:" Benveniste, 333.


See also Herodotus I.63, VIII.115, VIII.137; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Roman Antiquities 19.5.3.

For the connection between εὐφημεῖν and the acceptance of ξηθόνες see Bouché Leclercq, t.1, 158.

That omens can be called off (or, better, that people try to call them off), see Herodotus V.56. It is more common in Rome. See A.S. Pease, ed. M. Tulli Ciceronis de Divinatione Libri Duo (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963) ad I.103, Bouché Leclercq, t.IV, 137; Halliday, 49.

Lebeck, 13.

See Fraenkel ad loc. for the syntax.

71 Page *ad loc.*

72 Page *ad loc.*

73 Fraenkel *ad loc.*


75 ὑπέρ as ἀγαθός, see Denniston 167-70.

76 For the chorus’ general aversion to prophecy, see 975-1034, 1099; Thalmann.

77 *ad loc.*

78 *ad loc.*


Poe, 117.

Sophocles *Laocoon* fr. 370 (TrGF t.II), *Oedipus Tyrannus* 919-920 (see below); *Electra* 637-638; Euripides *Phoenissae* 631. Other references are gathered at Poe, 131.

Farnell, IV.148.

Farnell, IV.371-372, nn 48-51. At Athens Farnell reports an inscription 'Ἀγαμηνὸς Τύχης Ἀπόλλων Πρόστασις Ἀττικῶν Ἀγαμή (Farnell IV.371 n.48a)

Herodotus VII.99.


The scholiast proposes that Orestes is referring not to a god but to Pylades, but τῷδέ would be more natural if this were the case – see Garvie *ad loc.* Agamemnon has also been proposed: Taplin, *Stagecraft* 339 n.3, Fraenkel, 491 n.1.

So Garvie *ad loc.*

So Wilamowitz *ad loc.*

Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse (TrGF t. I 76 F 6).

Page obelises κράτος ... γ', for good reason, since the strongly adversative μέντοι ... γε seems out of place here. He prefers κρατεῖς μέντοι παρεῖς ἐκών ἐμοί. But surely the substance of the line is for Agamemnon to submit to Clytemnestra’s authority, and for this certainly κράτος is the appropriate word.
If the Areopagus lets Orestes off on the assumption that he acted on Apollo’s warrant, then they also incidentally let off Clytemnestra (since she acted on the warrant of the curse of the house). But in doing so they convict Orestes, again.


And *vice versa*: see S. Bartsch *Actors in the Audience: Theatricality and Doublespeak from Nero to Hadrian* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994).

So in Plutarch the ἀληθηγέιοι listen secretly for the noise of grain being ground, unknown to the grinders of hoarded grain (*Moralia* 523B). Xenophon (*Cyropedia* VIII.ii.11) recognises the undecidability of the question “who is a spy?”


Cf. Aeschylus *TrGF* t. III F 281a; Orpheus *ap. Demosthenes* 25.11; Sophocles *Oedipus at Colonus* 1381f.

*Cyropedia* VIII.ii.11.

See Plutarch *Moralia* 523B; *Solon* XXVI.

See *TrGF* t. I fr. adesp. 486, 493.

*TrGF* t. I 43 F 19.6

A great deal of what follows is based on Gernet, 61-81.


See Antiphon 6.38-42

Text is in M. Gagarin (Drakon), xiv-xvi. His supplement of the missing letters is provided above, p. 46.

Wolff, passim.

Benveniste, 333.

Aristophanes Thesmophoriazousai 6ff: Sophocles Antigone 259 & 289ff, Euripides Andromache 1096.


SA 8. At SA 8n1 he flags our passage as an “uncertainty.”

The note in Page (75-76) is too short to develop a full defence of their position that Clytemnestra was on at some time before 83 and remained throughout the parodos. They have space only to claim that “the form and content of this address to Clytemnestra strongly and immediately suggest that she is present on the scene” and that the usual parallels for a chorus addressing a silent character, Euripides’ Hippolytus and Sophocles’ Ajax, are fundamentally different.

“It is well-known that in Greek tragedy the chorus can in their lyrics apostrophise characters who are offstage” (SA 281).

120 See SA 302-304.

121 Verrall, cited by Fraenkel *ad 84*.


123 Surely a staging more violent to the possibilities of Greek tragedy than the presence of a chorus on stage before the “parodos” (which would then no longer be a parodos). Sommerstein (92-93) uses the *ekkyklema*.

124 Sophocles *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1223-1307; Euripides *Hippolytus* (but with a slightly different configuration) 1173ff.

125 Wilamowitz, 294 *Actio*.

126 Argued against by Taplin, SA 338-339, but not obvious to me: the action may simply move from the centre of the orchestra to the space near the *skene*. See Garvie xliii-xlvi.

127 See *Choephoroi* 653ff.

128 Sommerstein 100, 113-114, sends Apollo off, and brings him back on, as does Taplin (SA 365); Wilamowitz, 294 *Actio* says that Apollo “non discedit sed ἀφαίνει γέρνεται.”

129 Taplin lists the *Prometheus*, Sophocles’ *Electra*, and the *Helen* and *Heracleidae* of Euripides.

130 Aeschylus *Suppliants, Choephoroi; Sophocles Oedipus at Colonus; Euripides Iphigenia in Tauris, Rhesus*.

131 *Silences* 58.

133 Hesychius s.v. κατάφονας.


135 So Page *ad loc.*

136 Fraenkel *ad loc.*

137 See above.

138 Fraenkel 293.


140 Fraenkel *ad loc.*

141 *Iliad* XV.254, 735; XXII.333; *Odyssey* IV.165.


145 Rutherford, “Paeanic Ambiguity” 79.
146 παιώνος: Agamemnon 512, 848, 1199; παιών, Agamemnon 99, 1248; παιάν (as “song”); Agamemnon 246, 645, Choephoroi 151, 343.

147Fraenkel, following Wilamowitz (see Fraenkel ad 245ff), believed that Aeschylus used the form παιών to designate the song; thus there would have been complete homophony between the word for “healer” and the word for “paean.” Page (in the critical apparatus to 246), allows, on manuscript evidence, παιών at Agamemnon 246 but retains παιάν at Agamemnon 645 and Choephoroi 151. He also reads παιών at Agamemnon 1248 as “song” rather than “healer,” which is possible but less easy to make sense of. In order to illustrate the distinction between the figure of the healer and the paean as a genre of speech, I have retained παιάν for the song form rather than preserving the presumably original homophony.

148 Garvie ad loc.

149 Choephoroi 751; Sophocles Antigone 1206; Electra 683; Iliad II.11; Hymn to Ceres 20; Pindar O.9.109, N 10.76.

150 For Δίκα as the subject of ἐποίχεται see 936 ἐμολέ µέν Δίκα Πειραμίδαις χρόνοι and Garvie ad loc.

151 Persai 1050; cf. Persai 389.

152 Garvie ad loc.

153 λάσχω appears seven times in the Oresteia, all in Agamemnon and Choephoroi. At Choephoroi 788, Agamemnon 865 and 1246, it describes vengeful and dangerous utterances. At Agamemnon 596 and 614 it is used by Clytemnestra to describe her utterances: she means the ololobe that she shrieks to be auspicious, but we know that it conceals a deep and dangerous aggression.


Sommerstein ad loc.

Frisk, s.v. μέλλω. But see O. Szemerényi, “The Verb μέλλω.” AJPh 72 (1951) 346-368.

Herodotus I.32.

See the arguments in Chapter Three.

The argumentative movement of this ode has given commentators difficulty. The chorus appears at the beginning to be convinced of the fall of Troy by Clytemnestra’s story of the beacon-fires, and their meditation on the end of Troy seems to be based on this conviction. But the epode (475-487) seems to represent a change of mind. Now they appear not to trust her story, or the tendency of women in general to quickly believe rumours regardless of their truth.

Fraenkel 245-249 gives a summary of the older views. His own is that the scepticism voiced by the chorus at 475ff is dictated “by considerations of dramatic structure, that is to say the eventual need for an effective foil to the herald’s speech. The possibility, however, of the old Argives’ making such utterances at all is based on true psychology ... the elders ... will naturally be the prey of contradicting emotions, of cheerful confidence followed by distrust and gloom.” Page (114) says, “there is nothing in this play or any other properly comparable with the present example, in which the foundations of a whole stasimon are undermined in the epode with sudden
and total ruin ... taken with what follows, the volte face is very effective; taken with what precedes it is completely out of joint.” Winnington-Ingram (“Aeschylus: Agamemnon 1343-1371,” CQ 47 (1954) 25) suggests that the chorus, having passed through a consideration of Agamemnon’s guilt in the middle of the ode, now does not want him to come home, possibly to be punished, and so (conveniently) begins to doubt Clytemnestra’s testimony, masking this in a reflection on the nature of women in general.


163 “If the poet did not wish his hearers to think ... of the function of a πνευτάτης, it is unlikely he would have used the uncommon πνευτατήγιον to express the simple local meaning.” – Fraenkel ad loc. Πνευτάτης is used of Apollo Agyieus at Sophocles Trachiniae 209.

164 Cf. 1080, 1140-1145.

165 1075, 1078, 1154-5, 1255.

166 Lebeck, 32-36.

167 Thalmann, 99-118.

168 So Scott.


171 Ibid. 114.

172 Clytemnestra expresses a ready credence of the chorus' capabilities at Agamemnon 1421-1425, but from the entrance of Aegisthus neither she nor her consort shows anything but distrust and a desire for their silence.

173 There have been questions about how precisely the deception of Apollo is supposed to have occurred. The text appears to suggest that Cassandra received her prophetic gifts from Apollo because of his desire for her (1202-1203), that she lost her ability to convince because of her sin (1211-1212), and that there was some space between her receiving the gift of prophecy and her punishment (1209-1210). The problems are not solved: most recently Kovacs has replaced 1204 and 1203 to their original positions in the manuscript and introduced lacunae after 1202 and 1203; the hypothesis has some value, even if Kovacs' interpretation that she either was unfaithful or terminated a pregnancy resulting from the union may go too far.

174 There is one exception: at Agamemnon 671 ἵππωα means "is alive." ἐξπνέω at Agamemnon 1493 and 1517 means to expire (life).

175 Agamemnon 376 also figures the hubristic sinner as "breathing beyond what is just."

176 See Garvie ad loc.

177 Iliad III.8; XI.508.
178 *Choephoroi* 33 and 952, *Eumenides* 840 and 873.

179 Fraenkel *ad loc.*

180 *Agamemnon* 1425, 1619-1623, 1649 and Lebeck, 25-29.

181 This is not true of Hamlet – at least for the first four acts of Shakespeare’s play. But Hamlet is perhaps one of the few quintessentially modern expressions of tragic knowledge.


183 That is, *Agamemnon* died dishonoured, not silent. See *Agamemnon* 1343-1345.


185 This opinion is shared by Plato, *Republic* V.470b.

186 See the comments in the spurious III.84 on the triumph of human nature over the law.


For law, see "Demosthenes" 25 (after 300) 15-16, and Guthrie, t. III, 75-78; language, Plato *Protagoras* 322a, *Cratylus* 384d *et passim*; Diodorus Siculus I.8.3-4.

For νόμος as "melody," see Pindar *O.1.101; N.5.25*


Montiglio, 177, 233-238 discusses Phaedra's silence.

Knox, 114.

Evidently the line is difficult – see both Fraenkel and Page *ad loc*. But the idea that persuasion would have an emotional effect, that it acquires its effectiveness through its ability to control the ἡγήσεως, is perfectly in keeping with both the archaic and the Aeschylean imagination. See the ιδιωτικὴ εἰς ἑξίστασαι δεξιώτας φανερῶν in the *Eumenides* (331-2; 344-5) and J. de Romilly, *Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1975).


See *Agamemnon* 1203-1212 and above, Chapter Four.

For *krainein* and its role in vengeance see above, Chapters Two and Three.

In addition to the passage in Herodotus we have quoted, see Pindar *P.* VIII.95-100, the passages collected in Fraenkel pp. 620-621, and Simonides 521 PMG.

LSJ s.v. ἀριστεύω.

Sommerstein *ad loc.*


See Sommerstein *ad loc.*


See Fraenkel *ad loc.*


ibid. 57

West's text inverts 768 and 769, inserting Ἀιδή γὰρ ἡμέρας εἰσί Δίος μετάστηντος before εἷς ἄν κτλ.

ibid. 63


treats the tragic *kritai* in respect of their silence, but it comes from a considerably later period, and bears only a tangential relationship to the mid-fifth century context.

212 Nagy, 67

213 *ibid.* 402-403

214 *ibid.* 63

215 See above, note 7.


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