

A Lemmatic Commentary of Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* L.281–316

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The Text¹

Ἦφαιστος Ἰδης λαμπρὸν ἐκπέμπων σέλας.	281
φρυκτὸς δὲ φρυκτὸν δεῦρ' ἀπ' ἀγγάρου πυρὸς ἔπεμπεν: Ἰδῆ μὲν πρὸς Ἑρμαῖον λέπας Λήμνου: μέγαν δὲ πανὸν ἐκ νήσου τρίτον Ἀθῶν αἶπος Ζηνὸς ἐξεδέξατο,	285
ὑπερτελής τε, πόντον ὥστε νωτίσαι, ἰσχὺς πορευτοῦ λαμπάδος πρὸς ἡδονὴν <	>
πεύκη τὸ χρυσοφεγγές, ὥς τις ἥλιος, σέλας παραγγείλασα Μακίστου σκοπαῖς: ὁ δ' οὔτι μέλλων οὐδ' ἀφρασμόνως ὕπνω νικώμενος παρήκεν ἀγγέλου μέρος:	290
ἐκὰς δὲ φρυκτοῦ φῶς ἐπ' Εὐρίπου ροὰς Μεσσαπίου φύλαξι σημαίνει μολόν. οἱ δ' ἀντέλαμψαν καὶ παρήγγειλαν πρόσω γραίας ἐρείκης θωμὸν ἄψαντες πυρί.	295
σθένουσα λαμπὰς δ' οὐδέ πω μαυρουμένη, ὑπερθοροῦσα πεδίον Ἀσωποῦ, δίκην φαιδρᾶς σελήνης, πρὸς Κιθαιρῶνος λέπας	

¹ I follow the text given in Raeburn and Thomas, 2001. The major textual issues are discussed in the commentary below.

ἤγειρεν ἄλλην ἐκδοχὴν πομποῦ πυρός,
 φάος δὲ τηλέπομπον οὐκ ἠναίνετο 300
 φρουρὰ πλέον καίουσα τῶν εἰρημένων:
 λίμνην δ' ὑπὲρ Γοργῶπιν ἔσκηψεν φάος:
 ὄρος τ' ἐπ' Αἰγίπλαγκτον ἐξικνούμενον
 ὠτρυνε θεσμὸν †μὴ χαρίζεσθαι† πυρός.
 πέμπουσι δ' ἀνδαίοντες ἀφθόνῳ μένει 305
 φλογὸς μέγαν πώγωνα, †καὶ Σαρωνικοῦ
 πορθμοῦ κάτοπτον πρῶν' ὑπερβάλλειν πρόσω
 φλέγουσαν† εἴτ' ἔσκηψεν εἴτ' ἀφίκετο
 Ἀραχναῖον αἶψος, ἀστυγείτονας σκοπᾶς:
 κᾶπειτ' Ἀτρειδῶν ἐς τόδε σκήπτει στέγος 310
 φάος τόδ' οὐκ ἄπαππον Ἰδαίου πυρός.
 τοιοῖδε τοί μοι λαμπαδηφόρων νομοί,
 ἄλλος παρ' ἄλλου διαδοχαῖς πληρούμενοι:
 νικᾷ δ' ὁ πρῶτος καὶ τελευταῖος δραμῶν.
 τέκμαρ τοιοῦτον σύμβολόν τέ σοι λέγω 315
 ἀνδρὸς παραγγείλαντος ἐκ Τροίας ἐμοί.

Introduction

Clytemnestra's 'beacon-speech' is a 31-verse long speech which 'catalogues'² the geographical sites of a series of beacons, lit in sequence upon the capture of Troy, starting at Mt. Ida and ending on the roof of Atreus' palace in Argos. It represents the first substantial monologue delivered by Clytemnestra in Aeschylus' play. The speech is foreshadowed by the opening of the *Agamemnon* in which the appearance of the last beacon-fire signals Troy's capitulation. The guard, who appears first on stage, is also the last of a long series of watchmen. His speech shares some of its diction and imagery with Clytemnestra's beacon-speech, as shall be

² Raeburn, Thomas, 2011, p. 100

discussed below. The chorus' first intimation of Clytemnestra's news is the burning of sacrifices³ at the city's altars and their first reaction to it is incomprehension and sheer incredulity.⁴ Indeed, prior to Clytemnestra's speech, the appearance of a light shining across the Aegean from Troy and signalling the fall of a distant city does beggar belief. The speech's chief function, therefore, is to explain how the appearance of a light is translated, first by the guard and then by Clytemnestra, into news of conquest. The uneasy tension between a visual proof, τεκμάρ⁵, and the light's surrogate role as a 'messenger', to which it is later contrasted,⁶ is one that affects the tone, and imagery, of the speech. The beacon-speech also elaborates Clytemnestra's ἀνδρόβουλον κέαρ and introduces her as a powerful speaker, undeceived by dreams and rumours, and a powerful agent who is capable of devising and bringing to fruition a complex plan.

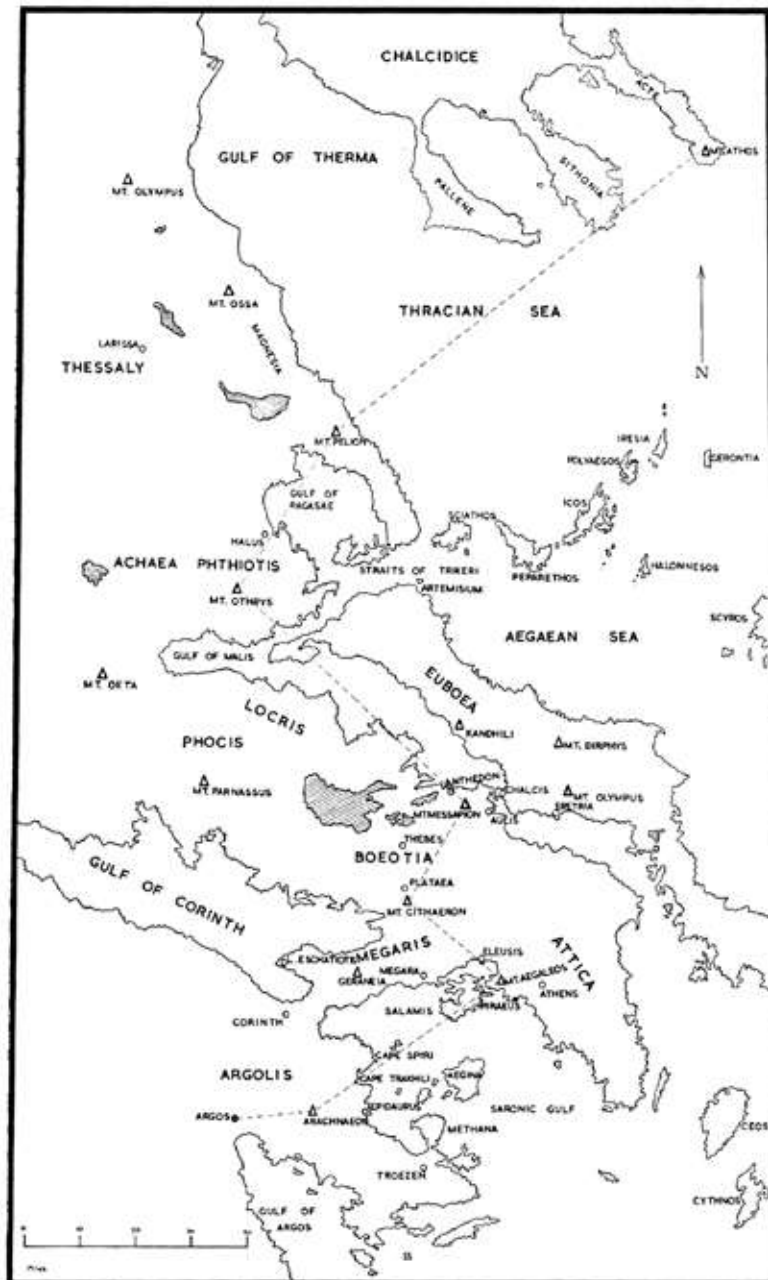
The following is a lemmatic commentary of Clytemnestra's speech, focusing mainly on the literary features of the passage, particularly aspects of symbolism which have not been noted in the magisterial commentaries of Fraekel, Denniston & Page, and others. I focus particularly on effects of the long journey on the beacon's fire – a recurring pre-occupation of the Argive Queen – and on the importance of 'faithful transmission' of the beacon's 'message' from Troy to Argos in understanding its role as a τεκμάρ. This role, I argue, can only be properly understood by appreciating the liminal nature of the beacon as a τεκμάρ which is both *autoptic* and which possesses some of the essential properties of *akoe*. Most importantly, the beacon 'proves' the fall of Troy to Clytemnestra because she knows all the intermediate steps the 'message' has passed through.

³ βωμοὶ δώροισι φλέγονται, Ag. 91

⁴ πῶς φής; πέφευγε τοῦπος ἐξ ἀπιστίας, Ag. 280

⁵ τί γὰρ τὸ πιστόν; ἔστι τῶνδέ σοι τέκμαρ, Ag. 284. τέκμαρ is repeated in Ag. 315

⁶ Ag. 494ff



Commentary

L. 281; alliteration (p)

Ἡφαιστος – ‘a magnificent one-word answer’⁷ to the Coryphaeus’s question⁸ which introduces Clytemnestra as ‘a clever and self-possessed speaker’.⁹ Naming the lame god as the messenger also serves to enhance, to the point of paradox, the problematic speed¹⁰ with which the ‘messenger’ has arrived. Hephaestus is the first of a trinity of deities giving the fire a divine sending off. Since the beacons are fire-signals, Hephaestus is appropriately positioned at start. The overtly religious tone with which the speech starts also serves to enhance the authority of the beacon-fire and, by extension, Clytemnestra.¹¹ The name of the fire-god also serves as a metonym for the beacon-fire and marks the beginning of an uneasy tension between beacon understood to be a divinely sanctioned portent akin to naturally occurring celestial bodies and the beacon understood as a secularized, man-made, signal.

Ἰδης – Genitive of separation or genitive following the preposition in ἐκπέμπων. Ida is also the site of Hera’s deception of Zeus¹² which prefigures Clytemnestra’s deception. The next two sites also follow, in reverse order, Hera’s journey to the Ida’s summit from Olympus.¹³

The geography of Clytemnestra’s speech has been the subject of great scholarly interest. Two distinct positions exist. A ‘realist’ reading (Calder, Verrall, Rose, Beattie, Quincey) proposes that Aeschylus was moved primarily by geographical considerations to identify the sites for the beacon fires. Indeed, such a reading proposes the audience’s knowledge

⁷ Raeburn, Thomas, 2011, *ad loc.*

⁸ καὶ τίς τόδ’ ἐξίκοιτ’ ἄν ἀγγέλων τάχος; Ag.280

⁹ Rose, 1957, *ad loc.*; Raeburn, Thomas, 2011, p. 99

¹⁰ Cf. θοὰ βάξις, Ag.475–6

¹¹ Clytemnestra’s first religious note is stuck at Ag.273.

¹² Hom.*Il.*14.154ff.

¹³ Raeburn, Thomas, 2011, *ad loc.*

of the area around the Hellespont, and possible familiarity with beacon systems, necessitated a realistic description of the fire-beacon stations. The most extreme version of the realist reading is found in Quincey, who suggests that Aeschylus must have mentioned more sites – in the missing portion of text – to bridge the otherwise impossible distance between Mt Athos and ‘Macistus’.¹⁴ The opposite, ‘poetic’ reading grants the poet greater license over the facts of geography. This is the commoner position and is found, to a varying extent, in most commentators’ remarks on the beacon sites. Diels, commenting on the great distance which the beacon fire must cross during its journey from Mt. Athos to ‘Macistus’, quips that ‘the poet’s imagination bridges even wider distances’.¹⁵ Less extreme is the position of Raeburn/Thomas, who propose that the poet’s *chief* concern was the choice of mythologically ‘sinister’ sites. The two views, of course, are not mutually exclusive and each beacon-site should be assessed as an individual location.

σέλας¹⁶ – This word is used to refer to celestial phenomena including daylight,¹⁷ meteors,¹⁸ and thunder.¹⁹ Each of these uses, particularly the first, suits the imagery of the present speech. The beacon fire, ‘rising’ in the west, is a symbolic dawning which ends the guard’s nightly vigil and ushers in a new chapter in Argos’ history. This comparison of the fire-beacon to celestial bodies, particularly in their role as portents of earthly change, is introduced at the very beginning of the *Agamemnon*. The guard, looking to the heavens for the σύμβολον λαμπάδος, has also learnt to track the season-ferrying stars.²⁰ The beacon-fire, like the stars the guard has learnt to track, is a harbinger of a ‘new season’. The association of the beacon with celestial bodies also underlines its religious significance.

¹⁴ Quincey, 1963, p. 124f., *see below*.

¹⁵ Quoted by Fraenkel, 1950, *ad loc*.

¹⁶ Cf. Ἡφαιστότευκτος σέλας, *S.Ph.*987.

¹⁷ Hom. *Il.*19.374

¹⁸ A.R.4.808

¹⁹ Hom. *Il.*8.76; Hdt.3.28

²⁰ Ag.8.

L. 282; Attic correption (δε); alliteration (r); anaphora

φρυκτός²¹ – fire-brand or torch, a rare word, making the anaphora more striking. The repetition emphasizes the uninterrupted sequence of beacons, the continuity of which is essential to Clytemnestra's truth-claims. The generational succession of the fire-beacons may also allegorize the way in which retribution spreads from one generation to the next.²²

ἀγγάρου – corrected by Stanley on evidence of grammarians.²³ A Persian word, used by Herodotus²⁴ to describe the Persian system of message relays in contrast to the Greek λαμπαδηφορία.²⁵ The use of a Persian word is appropriate considering both the oriental origin of the fire-message. Aeschylus may also be alluding to the use of beacons by Mardonius after the capture of Athens in 480 B.C.E. These beacons also covered a similar distance through the same general route, though in reverse, starting from Athens and travelling to Sardis.²⁶ They also signalled the destruction of a city and heralded the coming of a king from the orient.

πυρός – The imagery of fire stirs up thoughts of wanton destruction and 'the destructive aspects of vengeance'.²⁷ It is appropriate, therefore, that the fire, symbolizing the destruction of Troy, should alight on the house of Agamemnon at Clytemnestra's invitation.

²¹ Cf. ὡς ὁ φρυκτός ἀγγέλλων πρέπει, Ag.30

²² Gantz, 1977, p. 31

²³ Et. Mag. pp.6–7: Αἰσχύλος ἐν Ἀγαμέμνονι τὸν ἐκ διαδοχῆς πυρσὸν ἀπ' ἀγγάρου πυρὸς ἔφη.

²⁴ Hdt.8.98.2

²⁵ Cf. Fraenkel, 1950, *ad loc.*

²⁶ Hdt. 9.3

²⁷ Gantz, 1977, p. 28

L. 283; Enjambment, used regularly. It gives an impression of the beacon's quick progress and, once again, emphasizes its continuity between the various stages²⁸; assonance (e);

Ἰδῆ – The mountain itself has become a messenger. This is the first of a series of personification of mountains.

Ἑρμαῖον – 'a mountain of Lemnos, in which Hermes is honoured.'²⁹ Hermes, the god of messengers to whom the messenger himself shall later pray, is the second god mentioned. Clytemnestra's beacon-speech, which takes on the role of a classical messenger-speech, is appropriately sanctioned by Hermes. More problematically, Hermes is also associated the archetypal deceitful woman, Pandora.³⁰

The association with Hermes, once again, grants the beacon an ambivalent nature which is central to the initial exchange between Clytemnestra and the chorus. The beacon is both likened to a messenger appropriately sanctioned by Hermes, most prominently by Clytemnestra, and contrasted to a messenger, chiefly by the chorus.³¹ The chief contrast occurs on the axis between ἀκοή and ὄψις. Thus, Clytemnestra repeatedly assigns the beacon-fires qualities ordinarily belonging to messengers and, at one point, even seems to identify the beacon-fire as a messenger. Hermes' divine patronage, therefore, is crucial. In contrast, the chorus shall call the beacon-fires ἀναυδος and contrast it with a messenger who can utter declarative sentences, ἐκβάξει λέγων. The speech is primarily geared to explain the uncusomary nature of Clytemnestra's evidence – it is *autoptic* and a-verbal rather than a speech from a messenger – and some of its striking characteristics, primarily the speed with which it has arrived from Troy, cannot be replicated by human messengers. The distance, however, would not give Hermes pause. The association of the beacon fire with Hermes, therefore, may help assuage some of the suspicions of the Chorus.

²⁸ Beattie, 1954, p. 80

²⁹ Scholia F.

³⁰ Hesiod, *Op.*, 68–9

³¹ Ag. 496ff. Cf. S. *Ph.* 1459; Jebb, 1932, *ad loc.*

L. 284; Enjambment; alliteration (n)

Λήμνου – in myth, the island is notorious for husband-murdering wives who prefigure Clytemnestra.³²

πανόν – corrected by Casaubon on evidence of the grammarians.³³

τρίτον... Ζηνός – the third deity in the beacon's trinity, supreme in Aeschylean theology. An allusion to τρίτος (σωτήρ) Ζεύς, making the fire-message a mock-good omen, is possible³⁴ but unnecessary³⁵ since τρίτον may simply refer to the position of the beacon in the sequence.

L. 285; Enjambment; alliteration (s)

Ἀθῶν – a familiar land mark to sailors of the Aegean. The proper name is almost indistinguishable from the word ἄθως which raises the possibility of Clytemnestra referring to Ἄθως Ζεύς, a patron deity of the unscathed.³⁶ In the context of Agamemnon's home-coming, contrasted explicitly to Menelaus' and implicitly to Odysseus' nostoi, a reference to safety is appropriate. Like Penelope, Clytemnestra is hopeful for Agamemnon's safe-return,³⁷ though for rather more unseemly reasons.

αἶπος – a height; a rare word, possibly of Ionic origin, first attested in this passage.

ἐξεδέξατο – The correlate of ἐκπέμπων in 281. Clytemnestra emphasizes that the next messenger did not light the fire *sponte*, but only after receiving the appropriate fire-message. Both verbs also imply that the *same* fire and, therefore, the *same* 'message' is being sent forth and received by each messenger. The strict sequence of ignition and preservation of the intact message along the length of the 'testimonial chain' are fundamental to Clytemnestra's claims to possessing a τέκμαρ.

³² Apollon. 1.609f.

³³ Athenaeus glosses 'πανός' as a torch and refers to this passage (Athen.15.700e)

³⁴ Beazley, quoted by Fraenkel, 1950, *ad loc.* τρίτος (σωτήρ) Ζεύς is alluded to shortly before, at Ag.246

³⁵ Quincey, 1963, p. 118

³⁶ Quincey, *ibid*

³⁷ Ag.601–4

L. 286, alliteration (t)

ὑπερτελής – Hesychius glosses this word as ‘having arrived beyond the telos’.³⁸ Fraenkel, following Ahrens,³⁹ argues for this reading. The use of the preposition in the following lines, however, is more consistent with Dennison/Page’s suggestion that ὑπερτελής means ‘overleaping’ which is appropriate given Athos is the loftiest beacon-site. The word may also evoke ὑπερτείλας⁴⁰ which refers to the rising sun.⁴¹

νωτίσαι – νωτίζω generally means ‘to turn one’s back/flee’, though both Fraenkel and Dennison/Page stress the fluidity of meaning in verbs ending with –ιζω. The consecutive clause may mean ‘that (the light) travelled on the back of the sea’⁴² or ‘that the sea fled’.⁴³ The action, therefore, is a consequence of the light being ὑπερτελής which, if understood as ‘overleaping’, would favour a verb indicating the light’s motion. Yet, if νωτίσαι means ‘to skim the surface’,⁴⁴ the reference to the light’s loftiness is rather confusing.⁴⁵ On the other hand, a reference to the sea’s escape from the loftiness or the overreaching nature of the light would involve a transient and abrupt change in subject and, more importantly, a rather obscure image.⁴⁶ Another possibility is to understand the phrase as the otherwise unattested ‘to put the ocean at his back’⁴⁷ which seems to satisfy the requirement of a verb of motion

³⁸ Cf. Ag.301; S.Tr.36

³⁹ Ahrens, 1860, *ad loc.*

⁴⁰ Hdt.3.104.2

⁴¹ Quincey, 1963, p. 120

⁴² ‘Lux dicitur ire ἔπ’ εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάσσης’ (Stanley, 1663, *ad loc.*). cf. Suda, s.v. νωτίζω

⁴³ Taking πόντον as subject of a subordinate clause (Beattie, 1954, p. 77)

⁴⁴ In Homer, travelling ἐπ’ εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάσσης is equivalent to ἄκρον ἐπὶ ῥηγμῖνος ἄλδος πολιοῖο θέεσκον, Hom.II.228f.

⁴⁵ Cf. Quincey, 1963, p. 120 (Jebb, 1932)

⁴⁶ Beattie explains that the reflection of the light would have made the dark waters appear to recede (Beattie, 1952, p. 77). This is acceptable only if πόντον ➔ dark sea ➔ darkness.

⁴⁷ Headlam, 1910, *ad loc.*

with the fire as its subject. The fire, then, was so lofty or so overreaching that it crossed the deep in one swift and sudden motion. Once again, then, Clytemnestra endeavours to explain the problematic speed of the 'message'.

L. 287

ἰσχύς – Ahrens amends this to ἰχθύς (ὥστε νωτίσαι ἰχθύς)⁴⁸, a suggestion which has been accepted by numerous scholars who have also sought to alter πορευτοῦ. Rose defends it on grounds that ἰσχύς has no discoverable connection to the rest of 287–8, while ἰχθύς seems to justify πρὸς ἡδονήν. The prevailing image is of fish rising to the surface in enjoyment of the light traversing over the sea. Such imagery, however, seems to break the prevailing narrative needlessly. Furthermore, the use of ἰσχύς is also justified by a parallel expression σθένουσα λαμπάς,⁴⁹ also associated with the beacon-fire's loftiness.

πορευτοῦ⁵⁰ λαμπάδος – the dominant image is one of torches being carried.

πρὸς ἡδονήν – An adverbial sense meaning 'joyfully' is 'theoretically possible'⁵¹ but is not its normal sense. Accompanied by the genitive, the expression would mean 'to the beacons pleasure' which is absurd.⁵² Thus, the expression πρὸς ἡδονήν becomes a further argument in support of a lacuna following 287.

L. 288; Attic correction (τὸ), caesura in 4th foot, alliteration (s)

A lacuna is marked.⁵³ The sentence offers insoluble problems. These are: (a) the apposition of two subjects, namely ἰσχύς λαμπάδος and πεύκη

⁴⁸ Ahrens, 1860, *ad loc.*

⁴⁹ Ag. 296

⁵⁰ πορευτοῦ: Cornford

⁵¹ Denniston, Page, 1957, *ad loc.*

⁵² Denniston, Page, *ibid.*

⁵³ Paley, 1888, *ad loc.* Followed by Fraenkel, Denniston/Page. Rose, West, Sommerstein, Raeburn/Thomas *etc.*

(b) the lack of a main verb (c) the irregular ‘adverbial’ use of πρὸς ἡδονήν (d) the needless article (e) the accusative plural σκόπας, present in all MSS. and (f) the implausible distance between Mt. Athos and Euboea. Quincey also adds (a) the conflation of two separate images, the transfer of torches and the transmission and (b) the problematic ἐκάς which he amends to ἔκτας⁵⁴

πεύκη – This word is the second nominative, possibly a complement of ἰσχύς λαμπάδος,⁵⁵ in the sentence without a main verb. Two major strategies exist to make sense of the lines. If a lacuna is assumed to exist, a missing line or lines may be proposed. This missing section would have to contain the missing verb introducing the aorist particle παραγγείλασα and with the sense ‘sent’ or ‘carried’. If the missing verb is a transitive verb of motion the accusative plural σκόπας can be retained. Calder has suggested a provisional ἴκωι προσῆξεν ἔνθεν οὐρανίζετο’. Alternatively, one may attempt to amend the text, generally the second nominative πεύκη, generally with the seemingly needless article is usually incorporated into the reconstructed verb.⁵⁶ Against (b), it is difficult to imagine how πεύκη would have intruded into the text.⁵⁷ Secondly, Clytemnestra also mentions withered heather being burnt in the same position a few lines down. Finally, the 3rd century poet Dioscorides uses a remarkably similar phrase ‘εὐφεγγέα πεύκην’ to refer to a torch.⁵⁸

The association of this torch with the marriage god Hymenaeus in this poem⁵⁹ would also add a further dimension to the beacon-fires since the

⁵⁴ Quincey, 1963, p. 119ff.

⁵⁵ Verrall, 1889, *ad loc.*

⁵⁶ Suggested replacements include πέμπει (Enger) and λεύσσει (Beattie) for πεύκη, ἐπύσσει (Koch), ἐπευκτο (Lawson) and προὔκειτο (Kennedy). The latter two are the strongest suggestions on palaeographic grounds. Any such corruption must have happened early since the scholia comment on πεύκη

⁵⁷ Raeburn, Thomas, 2011, *ad loc.* Sidgwick argues that πεύκη, originally a gloss on ἰσχύς λαμπάδος to have taken substituted the original verb (Sidgwick, 1887, *ad loc.*)

⁵⁸ Greek Anthology, Vol. II, 7.407

⁵⁹ Cf. Erinna’s Ὑμέναιος ἐφ’ αἷς αἰείδετο πεύκαις, Greek Anthology, Vol. II, 7.712

return of Agamemnon to Argos, heralded by the flame, is also a return of a husband to his marriage vows.

τὸ – *articuli vis possessiva*.⁶⁰

ὥς τις ἥλιος – The beacon-light is now explicitly compared to the rising sun. This comparison powerfully recalls the guard's description of the beacon-fire as daylight.⁶¹

L. 289; 4th foot caesura, alliteration (s) continues

παραγγείλασα – the verb has military overtones and means 'to pass the word down the line'. In using this verb, Clytemnestra, once again, attributes messenger-like properties to the fire.

Μακίστου – It is unclear whether this is a toponym or a description (superlative of μακρός). It is most commonly regarded as a toponym, identifying a mountain in Euboea.⁶² This identification however raises substantial problems since the distance between Mt Athos and Euboea is of 180 miles, which would render the beacon invisible.

Other problems exist. The scholia are the only source of localization. As Fraenkel points out this may be a deduction from within the text since the light next crosses over the Euripus straight into Boeotia. Quincey further points out that there is a discrepancy in the gender between the poet's and the scholiast's μάκιστος and concludes that the scholiast's familiarity with the mountain should be questioned.⁶³ **σκοπαῖς** – the accusative plural cannot follow from παραγγείλασα. Furthermore, the Doric form of μάκιστος (long alpha instead of Ionic eta) in is 'very surprising for an Euboean mountain'.⁶⁴

L. 290; Attic correption (ἀφρασμόνως; ὕπνω)

⁶⁰ Fraenkel, 1950, *ad loc.*, following Wilamowitz, 1885.

⁶¹ Ag. 22–3

⁶² Schol., MF 'Maciston, mountain of Euboea'. Several Euboean mountains have been proposed, Mt Kandili in Northwest Euboea, being the most popular suggestion. Beattie suggests Dirphys in central Euboea (Beattie, 1954, p. 78)

⁶³ Quincey, 1963, p. 123

⁶⁴ Ahrens, 1860, *ad loc.*

ὁ δ' – Referring either to a personified Macistus⁶⁵ or ὁ σκοπός taken up from 289.⁶⁶ The previous personification of Ida, Hermes' Rock, and Mt. Athos favour the former, while the parallel οἱ δέ in 294 favours the latter. Yet, the personification of Macistus, if accepted, is carried further than the previous personification of mountains since it is thought of as capable of tarrying and of being conquered by sleep. Though this is not an impossible reading, these differences lessen the support offered by the previous personification.

οὔτι μέλλων – the guard's response is immediate. The speed of their response may also have enhanced the alleged truthfulness of their message. Delay in suggesting witnesses in one's favour, the examination of the available witnesses and the delivery of one's testimony are thought to introduce the possibility of deceit, conspiracy and free invention in one's testimony, as Antiphon makes clear at the end of the 5th century.⁶⁷ The guards' efficiency also further explains the speed of the 'messenger'.

ἀφρασμόνως⁶⁸ – poetic, 'senselessly'.

ὑπνω – The reference to sleep harks back to the guard's prologue and his own sleeplessness.⁶⁹

L. 291; Enjambment

παρῆκεν – the verb may be negated by the preceding prepositions in 290.⁷⁰ This is the simplest reading and is supported by Clytemnestra's repeated use of 'poetic negatives' later in the speech. Such an interpretation, however, *may* have conveyed the opposite meaning. In Hdt.2.75, a negated παριέναι indicates that the ibises *intercepted* the flight of the winged serpents and stopped them in their tracks. A negated

⁶⁵ Hermann, cited by Fraenkel, 1950, *ad loc*

⁶⁶ Rose, 1957, *ad loc*.

⁶⁷ Cf. Antiph. 5.31, 6.32

⁶⁸ Cf. Ag.1401

⁶⁹ Ag.14

⁷⁰ Tr. 'and he did not senselessly, (because) overcome by sleep, neglect...' Such a reading is favoured by Fraenkel.

παριέναι, therefore, may suggest that the sequence of beacon-fires has been arrested, a suggestion which is, obviously, intolerable. The negated verb also implies that the guards have appropriated the role of messengers which more properly belongs to the light. If the verb is not negated, the phrase should be translated as ‘they passed on their share of the message’⁷¹ or ‘they allowed their share of the message through’. The latter interpretation has the additional benefit of granting greater autonomy to the fire-message, easing the transition to the use of φῶς as a subject in the next line.

ἄγγέλου – if a descriptor of the fire, it does not mean, strictly speaking, a ‘messenger’, but ‘that which carries the message’, also used of birds of augury.

μέρος – the word carries connotations of fate and, therefore, of the messenger’s eventual destination and the impending death of Agamemnon.

L. 292; Attic correction (δὲ)

ἐκὰς – the adverbial ἐκὰς, far off, seems odd for the relatively short (40 miles) journey from Euboea to Boeotia, when preceded by the far longer (180 miles) one from Mt. Athos. The use of this word, therefore, strengthens the case for the existence of a lacuna after 287 since the 180-mile journey could have been divided into shorter journeys by any intervening stops. The argument, however, is hardly forceful since Clytemnestra is probably referring to the total distance covered in its journey from Mt Ida, an idea which recurs in τηλέπομπον.⁷²

ἐπ’ Εὐρίπου ῥοὰς – Euripus is presumably chosen because of its proximity to Aulis. The expression either indicates the motion of the light⁷³ over the strait of Euripus or refers to the location of Messapion.⁷⁴

L. 293; Enjambment; caesura in 4th foot, alliteration (s)

⁷¹ Paley, quoted by Sidgwick, 1887, *ad loc.*

⁷² Ag. 300

⁷³ Cf. Hom. *Il.* 2.159: Ἀργεῖοι φεύγονται ἐπ’ εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάσσης.

⁷⁴ Quincey, 1963, p. 122

Μεσσαπίου – ὄρος μεταξύ εὐβοίας καὶ βοιωτίας,⁷⁵ identified by Strabo as a mountain in the territory of Anthedon.⁷⁶ The distance between the beacons now gets significantly shorter. Aeschylus' greater attention to the geography overland may be related to his audience's greater geographical knowledge of the sites closer to Athens. Alternatively, he is moved by realism since beacons are considerably less visible over land.⁷⁷

σημαίνει – intensive present tense. The verb alludes to the messenger-like activity of the fire beacons. Indeed, since the verb may be used literally of the beacon-fires, it may legitimize the activity of the beacons *over* that of conventional messengers which can σημαίνειν only figuratively through speech. More problematically, the verb also evokes ambiguous oracular sayings⁷⁸ and, therefore, undermines Clytemnestra's claims to possess unequivocal proof.

φῶς σημαίνει μολόν – 'the light signalled its coming over'⁷⁹ or 'he (ὁ δέ) signalled that the light is come'⁸⁰ or absolutely 'the light, coming, signals'. The first construction is the simplest, makes for the most powerful image, and is to be preferred.

φῶς – The appearance of light, implicit in the numerous comparisons of the fire-beacons to celestial bodies, is an important thematic dimension of Clytemnestra's speech. The appearance of light shining out of darkness symbolizes the passage to a state of knowledge from a state of ignorance. Indeed, Aeschylus explicitly alludes to this symbolism elsewhere in the play.⁸¹ Yet, the knowledge engendered by the beacon's 'message', symbolized by its own light, is problematic since the beacon's 'message' is repeatedly questioned before arrival of the messenger. Indeed, the appearance of the light leads to a divergence in the 'knowledge-claims'

⁷⁵ Schol., M

⁷⁶ Str.9.2.12

⁷⁷ Rose, 1957, *ad loc.*

⁷⁸ Heraclit.B93

⁷⁹ Fraenkel, Kennedy, Verrall, Denniston/Page, Headlam.

⁸⁰ Wilamowitz, 1885, p. 21

⁸¹ Ag.254, 386–7

of Clytemnestra, who readily believes the truth of her beacon-fires, and that of the chorus, who is still subject to incredulity. Furthermore, the beacon's light fails to illuminate the hidden secrets of Argos which drive the play's plot.

The noun *φάος*, which occurs later in the speech, also has a distinct figurative meaning since Homer, that of salvation.⁸² The allusion to safety is important both because the victory shall lead to Agamemnon's perilous nostos⁸³ and to the re-instatement of the proper political and domestic order in Argos and Atreus' palace. The light is thus characterized positively as an omen of victory, marital and political harmony, certainty and truth, homecoming and safety. It falls on the palace roof and illuminates Argos, dispelling the long night which possesses the contrary attributes.

Clytemnestra's use of light also underlines her *ἀνδρόβουλον κέαρ*. Exposure to light, particularly sunlight, belonged to the public world inhabited by men and is implicitly contrasted to the domestic world of Greek housewives, meekly lit by the artificial light of the oil lamp. Though women did display torches in public, primarily in religious settings, the sheer scale, grandeur, visibility and military associations of her beacons strain the 'normal relationship' of an Athenian woman to light. Thus, the public and militaristic beacon-fire, presided over by Clytemnestra, entails a strange, man-like, relationship of a woman to the element of light/fire.⁸⁴

L.294; assonance (a)

ἀντέλαμπαν – 'to vie in brilliance.' The various beacon-fires, therefore, compete to outshine one another. Such an agonistic component to the beacon-signals journey may be detected elsewhere, primarily at the end of the speech. The verb can also mean 'reflect light' and is used by Anaxagoras to refer to a celestial phenomenon, the rainbow.⁸⁵ Such an allusion would double-down on the comparison of the beacon-fire to portentous celestial events. The reference to the notorious atheist would

⁸² Tarrant, 1960, p. 182

⁸³ *Ag.*337f.

⁸⁴ Cf. Parasinou, 2000

⁸⁵ Anaxagoras, Fr. 19. Ἴριν δὲ καλέομεν τὸ ἐν τῇσι νεφέλῃσι ἀντιλάμποιν τῷ ἡλίῳ

also emphasize the tension between the divine and the secular nature of the beacon-fire.

παρήγγειλαν – The repetition of this verb emphasizes the sequential nature of beacon-fires and the proximity of the two verbs emphasizes the frantic activity of the guards.

πρόσω – at the end of the line to add intensity, repeated in 307.

L. 295;

γραίᾱς ἐρείκης – Sophocles fr.784 uses similar expression in the same position of the line.

πυρί – repeated five times in the speech, always at the end of a line. The repetition, once again, emphasizes continuity and generational succession.

L. 296

σθένουσα, μαυρουμένη, ὑπερθοροῦσα – ‘...not a case of piling participles, because each of the three participles has a quite separate syntactical function.’⁸⁶

οὐδέπω – an intensive negative, as in Homer, and not a temporal adverb.⁸⁷ The feebleness implied by ‘not yet faded’ would jar considerably with the power implied by preceding σθένουσα and the following ὑπερθοροῦσα. Furthermore, Clytemnestra has made no reference to the fact that the beacons will eventually become extinguished, nor should she make one when the fire, and her speech, still has some way to go.

L. 297; Consonantalized iota in πεδίον;

ὑπερθοροῦσα – another use of the preposition ὑπέρ emphasizes the altitude of the light travelling over a body of water. Once more, the altitude of the fire is coupled to a reference to its power.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Fraenkel, 1950, *ad loc.*

⁸⁷ Denniston/Page, 1957, *ad loc.*

⁸⁸ Cf. ὑπερτελής... ἰσχύς, Ag.286–7

πεδῖον Ἀσωποῦ – The plain of the Asopus river in Boeotia, north of Plataea.⁸⁹

δίκην – adverbial; dramatic placement of the word at the end of the line, as found in the guard's own speech preceding the appearance of the beacon.⁹⁰

L. 298; Enjambment; alliteration (s)

φαιδρᾶς σελήνης – Another explicit association with a celestial body and divinity. Clytemnestra has now likened the light/torches to the two most conspicuous heavenly bodies, the sun and the moon, both of which rise in the eastern sky. The comparison of the fire-beacon to the moon emphasize the isolation of the beacon-fire in the surrounding darkness, while comparison to the sun emphasizes the intensity of the beacon's light.

Κιθαῖρῳ – Mount Cithaeron in Boeotia. Aeschylus may be referring to the Plataeans and the battle of Plataea for which the mountain served as backdrop. The mountain is also mythically associated with King Cithaeron, who counselled Zeus on dealing with his wife's anger. More ominously, the mountain is also associated to Pentheus' death at the hand of a close female relative.⁹¹

L. 299; assonance (e), alliteration (p)

ἤγειρεν – yet another association of the beacon-fire with wakefulness and, therefore, with dawn.

ἐκδοχήν – cf. ἐκδέχομαι in 285. The repetition of the same lexeme is especially fitting given ἄλλην.

πομποῦ – the word, an epithet of Hermes,⁹² once more underlines the messenger-like qualities of the beacon-fire.

⁸⁹ Cf. *A.Pers.* 805

⁹⁰ *Ag.* 3

⁹¹ Raeburn, Thomas, 2011, *ad loc.*

⁹² *A.Pers.* 626

L. 300;⁹³ 4th foot caesura

φάος τηλέπομπον – this phrase encapsulates the second key image of the speech, a far-travelling light, akin to dawn, which has crossed the gulf between Troy and Argos. Clytemnestra implies, once again, that it is the same light which has travelled from Troy.

τηλέπομπον – repeats πομπός from the previous line.

οὐκ ἡναίμετο – a poetic understatement meaning ‘welcomed’.

L. 301; Enjambment; 4th foot caesura;

τῶν εἰρημένων – the obvious meaning is ‘supra dictis’.⁹⁴ The phrase emphasizes the agonistic element noted already and implies that the light paradoxically became brighter as the distance from Mt. Ida increased. Nonetheless it is ‘a needlessly frigid turn to the sentence’⁹⁵ and suddenly arrests the relentless forward march of the beacon-fires and the beacon-speech with a needless backward glance. The alternative ‘etiam maiorem quam iussi erant’⁹⁶ however, has no parallel.⁹⁷

L. 302; 4th foot caesura

λίμνην ὑπὲρ Γοργῶπιν⁹⁸ – the light, once again, passes over a body of water between two stations.

Some disagreement exists as to whether this phrase is a descriptive allusion⁹⁹ or a toponym.¹⁰⁰ A gloss in Hesychius identifies it with a lake called ἐσχατιῶτις, possibly the Vouliagmeni. The identification however

⁹³ Quincey suggests that L.300–1 are spurious (Quincey, 1963, p. 127). His arguments, however, are largely based on a-priori considerations external to the text.

⁹⁴ Denniston/Page, 1957, *ad loc.*

⁹⁵ Fraenkel, 1950, *ad loc.*

⁹⁶ Weil, quoted by Fraenkel, 1950, *ad loc.*

⁹⁷ Denniston/Page, 1957, *ad loc.*

⁹⁸ Cratin.fr.189

⁹⁹ Beattie, 1954, p. 78f

¹⁰⁰ Quincey, Denniston/Page

is doubtful on geographical grounds. As Fraenkel has argued, the lake must be a body of water between Cithaeron and Αἰγίπλαγκτον, either an insignificant lake or, perhaps, the extreme eastern tip of the Halycon Gulf. Beattie, arguing that the light of the fire-beacon bound to Argos from Mt. Cithaeron must travel over the eastern most part of the Megarid, suggests a sheltered bay opposite Megara. Hesychius' gloss also contains a mythological explanation for the name, one long suspected to be an 'etymological invention to account for a single reference in some poet'.¹⁰¹ If γοργῶπις is merely a descriptive term meaning 'fierce-eyed', Clytemnestra may be referring to the light's reflection which follows the light, like a fiery iris, as it crosses the water. There is no evidence, however, of Clytemnestra referring to the light's reflection elsewhere in the speech. It is, therefore, more prudent to assume that Aeschylus is referring to an obscure, but evocative, name of an insignificant body of water North of Argos.

ἔσκηψεν – the verb, occurring twice again in the last part of the speech, indicates that the light, approaching Argos, has started its descent. The descent from a mountain top of an ἄγγελός irresistibly recalls Iris' descent from Mount Ida to Troy.¹⁰²

L. 303; 4th foot caesura; Attic correption (ἐξικνούμενον)

Αἰγίπλαγκτον – 'mountain of the Megarid',¹⁰³ generally thought to refer to Geraneia, a mountain to the north of Corinth. The suggestion makes geographical sense since a straight line between Kitharon to the western part of the Saronic gulf passes over Geraneia. Alternatively, the name may be a reference to Aegina.¹⁰⁴ The name, however, 'can hardly have suggested to Athenian ears the name of a mountain'¹⁰⁵ which, perhaps, is the point since the rapid sequence of obscure references to geographical

¹⁰¹ Fraenkel, 1950, *ad loc.*

¹⁰² Hom. *Il.* 11.195=15.169

¹⁰³ Schol., M

¹⁰⁴ Beattie (), *ad loc.*

¹⁰⁵ Fraenkel, 1950, *ad loc.*

places would have enhanced the impression of Clytemnestra's δεινότης. The name also recalls Aegisthus.¹⁰⁶

L. 304; Textual corruption

θεσμὸν πυρός – the laws of the fire, may refer to Clytemnestra's instructions,¹⁰⁷ though no parallel for this use exists. Hesychius glosses the word θεσμούς as a collection or pile of wood.

μὴ χαρίζεσθαι – An obvious corruption obelized by Paley.¹⁰⁸ The expected sense of the infinitive, with or without the negative, must be 'obey' or 'not neglect'. Several alternatives have been suggested: the passive infinitive of χατίζειν (Heath),¹⁰⁹ χρονίζεσθαι (Paley, Smyth),¹¹⁰ μηχανήσασθαι (Sidgwick), μὴ καθίζεσθαι (Wieseler), παρίεσθαι (Musgrave).

ῥῥυνε – followed by an understood object, the watch on the goat-ranged mountain and a dependent infinitive whose object is θεσμὸν πυρός.

L. 305; 4th foot caesura, poetic apocope of the final alpha of the proposition in ἀνδαίοντες

ἀφθόνῳ μένει – 'with unjealous mind'. Clytemnestra now reflects on the role of guards responsible for the beacon-signal's nostos rather than the properties of the light or beacons. Alongside vigorous and immediate action, invulnerability to jealousy is a key attribute of their office and assures Clytemnestra of the veracity of their beacon-message. The guards' loyalty is central both to the accomplishment of the beacon-message's successful arrival, and a testament to the power of Clytemnestra's orders.

¹⁰⁶ Raeburn/Thomas, 2011, *ad loc.*

¹⁰⁷ Cf. τῶν εἰρημένων, Ag.301; νόμοι, Ag.312

¹⁰⁸ Paley, 1888, *ad loc.*

¹⁰⁹ It is doubtful whether such a word existed. Fraenkel remarks on the syntactical difficulties of a passive infinitive following ῥῥυνε.

¹¹⁰ Fraenkel objects that 'the use of the middle can hardly stand in view of the general use of χρονίζειν.'

L. 306; Enjambment; 4th foot caesura

φλογὸς μέγαν πώγωνα – a bold metaphor which recurs in Eur.fr.836. The phrase may allude to πωγωνίας, a comet.¹¹¹ The fire-beacon is likened to yet another celestial portent.

καὶ – not a conjunction but an emphatic ‘even’¹¹² however this seems to give the text a ‘false emphasis’¹¹³ since the journey over the Saronic Gulf is a mere 5 miles.

Σαρωνικοῦ – ‘κόλπος πέρι τροιζῆνα’.¹¹⁴ The straight is named after the mythical king of Troizen, Saron, who died at a coastal altar dedicated to Artemis, much like Iphigenia.

L. 307; Enjambment; Alliteration (p) Alliteration (t)

κάτοπτον – Canter’s emendation is widely accepted. West, followed by Sommerstein, suggests κατόπτην. Beattie defends the original which describes the cliff as a shimmering mirror.¹¹⁵

ὑπερβάλλειν – The final use of the preposition before the light starts its final descent toward Argos in the following line.

L. 308; Enjambment; 4th foot caesura; anaphora εἴτ... εἴτ...;
assonance (e)

φλέγουσαν – The participle, which must agree with a feminine accusative in the previous lines, has no noun to agree with as the text stands. This is a key textual problem of the passage.

Other problems include the conjunction καὶ before Σαρωνικοῦ is ‘unintelligible’¹¹⁶ and the construction with the infinitive ὑπερβάλλειν, which is dubious. Fraenkel supports Schutz suggestion ‘καὶ Σαρωνικοῦ

¹¹¹ Arist.*Mete.*344a23, cf. Headlam, 1910, *ad loc.*

¹¹² Cf. Hermann, 1853, *ad loc.*

¹¹³ Raeburn, Thomas, 2011, *ad loc.*

¹¹⁴ Schol., M

¹¹⁵ Beattie, 1954, p. 81

¹¹⁶ Fraenkel, 1950, *ad loc.*

πορθμοῦ κάτοπτον πρῶν' ὑπερβάλλει πρόσω φλέγουσα.' With this reading, the καὶ is a normal conjunction between two main verbs and the nominative feminine participle could more easily take up an implicit φλόξ than the accusative (cf. Ag.292). Nonetheless problems persist. Schutz's correction would substitute an awkward transition of objects with an equally awkward transition of subject and, furthermore, the amendment causes a hiatus in Ag.308.

εἴτ' εἴτ' – 'then it swooped down, then it arrived'.¹¹⁷ The anaphora stresses the rapid sequence of action and suggests the suddenness with which the light entered.

Fraenkel rejects the anaphora since he considers the verbs synonymous and, therefore, referring to contemporaneous action. He argues for interpolation, possibly at the hands of a 'Sophoclean' copyist.¹¹⁸

L. 309 Enjambment; Assonance (a)

Ἀραχναῖον αἶπος – Identified by Pausanias as Arna,¹¹⁹ a ridge between Argos and Epidaurus. The name also prefigures the web by which she shall ensnare her husband.¹²⁰ Such an allusion would emphasize the portentous nature of the beacon-fires.

L. 310, Alliteration (t); Assonance (ει)

σκήπτει – present tense for intensity; the journey of the light has come to an end.

Ἀτρειδῶν ἐς τόδε στέγος – recalls the lament of the guard in Ag.3. The deictic is emphatic. Clytemnestra is pointing to a final piece of evidence which is at hand and which the chorus can see for themselves.

L. 311; 4th foot caesura; Alliteration (p)

¹¹⁷ Beattie, 1954, p. 81

¹¹⁸ It is notable that εἴτα occurs only once more in Aeschylus' corpus though it is frequent in Sophocles.

¹¹⁹ Paus. 2.25.10

¹²⁰ Raeburn, Thomas, 2011, *ad loc.*

οὐκ ἄπαππον – ‘οὐ ξένος, ἀλλὰ συγγενές’.¹²¹ Another poetic negative. The metaphor stresses the generational succession of beacon-fires rather than continuity of the *same* light.

L. 312; Assonance (οι)

τοιοῖδε τοί μοι – word division after Schutz.¹²² τοί has a boasting nuance.¹²³ Fraenkel observes that Clytemnestra’s next speech also ends in the same way, with ‘an expression of her self-assertive pride.’¹²⁴ Clytemnestra’s boast is not misplaced. The grandeur of the fire-beacon and the technical triumph involved is a central theme of the speech.

λαμπαδηφόρων – The word suggests the torch-carrying festivals of Attica, dedicated to Hephaestus. The explicit reference to the festival at the end of the speech is contrasted to the reference to the oriental ἀγγάρου at the beginning. The journey toward Argos has Hellenized the beacon-signal. This ‘appropriation’ of the beacon-signals is a subtle rhetorical appeal to the choir’s and the audience’s emotions.

νομοί – referring to Clytemnestra’s dictates.¹²⁵

L. 313; Resolution of a long syllable into two short ones (in the 3rd foot); anaphora

ἄλλος παρ’ ἄλλου – recalls the anaphora φρυκτὸς δὲ φρυκτὸν and emphasizes, once more, the interdependence of the fire-beacons.

πληρούμενοι – the participial phrase refers to the sequential fulfilment of Clytemnestra’s νόμοι.¹²⁶

διαδοχαῖς – in sequence; a word which occurs in descriptions of the Attic torch-races, another Hellenizing touch.

¹²¹ Schol., F,

¹²² For objections, cf. Denniston/Page, 1957, *ad loc.*

¹²³ Denniston, 1954, p. 540

¹²⁴ Fraenkel, 1950, *ad loc.*

¹²⁵ Accentuated differently by Beattie (Beattie, 1954, p. 81, cf. Murray, 1937, p. 219).

¹²⁶ After Schutz’s ‘leges alio ab alio vices excipiente impletae.’

L. 314; alliteration (t)

νικᾷ...δραμών – concludes the metaphor likening the beacon-signals to the Athenian relay race. The emphatic νικᾷ has attracted significant attention since there existed no genuine competition between teams.¹²⁷ Nonetheless, agonistic elements of the beacon-relay have already been noted. The final reference to the paradoxical victory, in which the first and the last runner both win, at once emphasizes and transcends the agonistic elements already described. The competition between the guards has discovered harmony in their mutual, interdependent, success. The reference to ‘victory’ also emphasizes the safe arrival of the fire in Argos.¹²⁸

δέ – adversative, emphasizing the differences between the fire-beacon relay and more traditional races.

ὁ πρῶτος καὶ τελευταῖος – emphasizes the paradoxical nature of the ‘victory’ in which only one team competed. It is uncertain whether πρῶτος refers to the runner who came first in the sequence or to the one who has crossed the finish-line first. Since there was only one team in the beacon-relay, the expression may refer to one and the same individual.¹²⁹ The ‘runner’ may also refer to the fire itself. This reading also emphasizes a further difference between the torch-race and the fire-beacon, namely that it is the fire alone which is doing the ‘running’.¹³⁰

L. 315; Consonantalized iota in τοιοῦτον

τέκμαρ –ring composition with Ag.272. The issue of proof is first raised by the chorus and the reference to their request signals the end of Clytemnestra’s speech.

Upon seeing the sacrificial fires burning, the chorus sings τίνος ἀγγελίας πειθοῖ περίπεμπτα θυοσκεῖς;¹³¹ The use of the verb πείθειν

¹²⁷ Lawson, 1932, *ad loc.*; Fraenkel, 1950, *ad loc.*; Raeburn/Thomas, 2011, *ad loc.*

¹²⁸ Denniston/Page, 1957, *ad loc.*

¹²⁹ The lack of a second article supports such a reading (cf. Klausen, 1863, *ad loc.*)

¹³⁰ Raeburn, Thomas, 2011, *ad loc.*

¹³¹ Ag.86–7

implies that the chorus is not merely seeking news, but are interested in Clytemnestra's grounds for believing her 'message'. This demand is rendered more explicit immediately prior to the beacon-speech: τί γὰρ τὸ πιστόν; ἔστι τῶνδ' ἐσσι τέκμαρ;¹³² Clytemnestra's τέκμαρ is the fire-beacon on Atreus' palace and the accompanying beacon-speech which justifies Clytemnestra's claims to possess proof. Yet, before Clytemnestra's beacon-speech, the chorus characterizes, negatively, the form of evidence that they shall accept. Firstly, they shall not accept prophetic dreams – also an *opsis* – as sufficiently strong proof. Clytemnestra spurns the accusation that her messenger was a dream. Nonetheless, the beacon-fires and dreams share several important characteristics. Firstly, dreams supply the dreamer *autoptic* 'evidence', much like the beacons. Secondly, like dreams, the evidence of the beacon-fires is essentially private to Clytemnestra who alone knows the trajectory and provenance of the fire beacon. Thirdly, dreams are, like the beacons, divinely sanctioned messages and, therefore, portentous. These similarities to dreams may explain the chorus negative reaction to Clytemnestra's 'proof'. The chorus also states that they will reject as evidence any unfounded rumour, τις ἄπτερος φάτις.¹³³ Indeed, Clytemnestra's proof is neither 'flightless' nor a φάτις. Between *opsis* and mere rumour is *akoe*, a messenger speech, which the chorus yearns for.

The two central problems of Clytemnestra's proof are (a) the impossible speed with which the 'messenger' has arrived in Argos¹³⁴ and (b) the non-traditional means of proof, *autopsy*. Clytemnestra attempts to address both problems with her speech. Firstly, the sequence of beacon-fires explain how the message from Ida to Argos in one night. Secondly, Clytemnestra invests the beacon-fire with messenger-like properties and, especially, a quasi-verbal message. Indeed, her sequential catalogue of beacon-sites also catalogues, in a quasi-Herodotean way, the intermediate 'testimonial sources' for the message. Finally, Clytemnestra traces the fires back to Agamemnon, in whose authority the message of the fire-

¹³² Ag.272

¹³³ Ag.276. For the meaning of this phrase, cf. Denniston/Page, 1957, *ad loc.*

¹³⁴ Ag.280: καὶ τίς τόδ' ἐξίκοιτ' ἂν ἀγγέλων τάχος;

beacon is placed. Clytemnestra also attempts to fortify her evidence by implying that it is itself a portent akin to the stars, rainbows and comets. Indeed, the word τέκμαρ can also be used to refer to a sign and to the moon as omen.¹³⁵ The evidence, then, is also a divinely sanctioned portent. Clytemnestra's rhetoric, however, is ultimately ineffective and the chorus is only fully convinced once the messenger speech is delivered. The chorus, therefore, ultimately reject Clytemnestra's 'translation' of her *autoptic* evidence, the beacon-fires, into news about the fall of Troy but prefer to wait for testimonial evidence from a messenger which is the usual means of 'proof' in theatre.

σύμβολόν – echoes *Ag.8*, where it is used to describe the fire-beacons, and *Ag.144*, where the word means 'portent'. The portentous nature of the fire-beacons, emphasized elsewhere in Clytemnestra's speech, is now made explicit.

L. 316, Enjambment; 4th foot caesura

ἄνδρός – The fact that the message originates with Agamemnon does not diminish Clytemnestra's achievement, rather it corroborates the veracity of the message. The first word of the last line of Clytemnestra's speech, man, balances the first word of the first line, Hephaestus.¹³⁶ This careful balancing of man and god vividly captures the problematic nature of the fire-beacon as natural portent *and*, simultaneously, engineered message.

ἐκ Τροίας – Also used by the guard in *Ag.9*. The references to the guard's speech at the end of Clytemnestra's speech emphasize the accomplishment of the guard's duty and further establish the essential continuity of the beacon-fire's message. This repetition of the phraseology of the message may also emphasize the inviolable, god-sanctioned, content of the beacon-message. The reference to the fire's Trojan origin also emphasizes that the message first takes wing from the fiery devastation of Troy, the only fire to be kindled by Agamemnon. Likewise, the trajectory of the fire can be extended beyond the roof of Atreus'

¹³⁵ *h.Hym.32.13*

¹³⁶ Kinoshi, 1990, p. 58

palace to the altars of the gods in Argos which have been lit. The beacons also herald a 'swift rumour to spread through the town' reiterating the troublesome translation of the fire-beacon into speech. The translation of a destructive to a sacrificial fire bringing relief, happiness and dancing adds a profoundly disturbing dimension to the fire-signals.

ἔμμοι – emphatic placement of the word at the end of the speech.

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